

Committee: Safeguarding Sub-Committee	Dated: 10/02/2020
Subject: Children in Care Council (CiCC) and Participation Service Update	Public
Report of: Andrew Carter, Director of Community and Children's Services	For Information
Report author: Zak Darwood, Workforce Development and Participation Lead, Department of Community and Children's Services	

Summary

This report provides a summary of the developments in the Children in Care Council (CiCC) and Participation Service since the departure of the previous Participation Lead. It provides an indication of the potential developments being explored by the new lead and the officer recently recruited to the post.

Recommendation

Members are asked to note the report.

Main Report

Background

1. The City of London has run a Participation Service for several years. The service is delivered by a Lead Officer who established and embedded the service. The long-standing staff member left in mid-2019 and a new officer was recruited in November. As per the recommendation of the previous Lead Officer, a review of the service and future needs analysis has been undertaken to enable the service to meet the changing needs of our children in care population, of which the City of London Corporation is the Corporate Parent. This review is continuing and will culminate with a consultation session delivered by Inclusive Solutions in February 2020.
2. An initial change in the service has been the change of the managerial oversight. This is now being overseen by the Workforce Development Lead who, in previous roles, has overseen youth and participation services and holds youth work qualifications. The new Participation Officer is an experienced youth advocate, holds counselling and child development qualifications and has extensive work experience within Leaving Care and Children in Care services.

Children in Care Council (CiCC)

3. The CiCC continues to be the mainstay of the Participation Service. While all children in care are automatically members of the council, attendance at the council sessions had declined during 2019. The reduction in attendance occurred alongside changes in the Young People's Chair. Throughout 2020 we will be working with the current chair to ensure a consistent presence, and we will

secure one or two vice-chairs. In their role leading the Council, the chair and vice-chairs ensure that the service is led by young people, promoting independence and providing skills that can be used in the future when entering the workplace.

4. Consultation with the CiCC is being reviewed, with an initial decision to ensure that any consultative work is integrated into wider pieces of work. For example, a housing/placements consultation session being linked to a wider ongoing piece of work around housing options, budgeting, preparation for independence and work, managing young people's expectations when they are housed.
5. Since the introduction of the new officer, two CiCC sessions have been held, the first of which continued the trend of a small number of attendees, with five young people. However, the second session, held in December had 14 attendees. This CiCC session focused on planning for 2020, scoping exercises on the summer trip, preparation for a session with the Town Clerk in January, and it concluded with an ice-skating trip. For some of our young people, this was the first time they had been ice-skating. During this session, we were also able to present each young person with a Christmas gift.

Increasing Numbers

6. The number of children the City of London is Corporate Parent to is steadily rising; this means the number of children who automatically become members of the CiCC and are entitled to attend Participation Services has also increased.
7. Previously, due to the low numbers of children and young people entitled to attend the Participation Service and annual holiday, all young people were able to attend each holiday, activity or trip. However, as the numbers have increased, the service has either the option of increasing the services on offer (such as having two or three trips per year) or introducing criteria for attendance.
8. The increasing numbers also pose other issues, including ratio of officers to young people during activity trips, the ability of the Participation Officer to meet individual needs, and the increased cost of delivering the service. These issues are being explored by the Participation Lead alongside the Participation Officer.

Workshops and Holiday Provision

9. As part of the review and future needs analysis, the service is commissioning an organisation called Inclusive Solutions to run a consultation workshop. This session is focused on supporting the young people as well as officers and senior leaders to develop commitments for the service for the immediate future and over the next year. This session then produces a blueprint for the future development and design of the Participation Service.
10. The consultation session will be delivered in the February half-term holidays. Other workshops include a session with the Safer London Foundation on Consent and the Law, reflecting the need for our young people to understand the difference in the law in the UK compared to their country of origin. We are also

exploring the feasibility of having a Health Drop-In run by the looked-after children's Nursing Service, to run in a side room away from the main group activity, allowing members to discretely access the service.

Future Developments

11. The Participation Service will develop its workshop offer to meet emerging and changing needs, alongside continuing to support the CiCC's development. In summer 2020, the service will deliver the first Preparation for Independence Programme; this programme will consist of a range of workshops covering subjects such as Budgeting and Healthy Cooking. The service will also explore the potential to accredit this programme, therefore increasing the qualification profile for those young people who complete the sessions.
12. The Participation Officer is currently engaging with the small number of young women who do not currently access the service. While every service and session is open to this group, they do not access the wider participation activities due to the large number of young men. Therefore, a bespoke service is being delivered with the intention of integrating the two groups in the coming year when possible.

Conclusion

13. The Participation Service will continue to grow, with an increase in the offer of support and development sessions for our children and young people. These sessions aim to support young people to further develop their independence skills and reduce their future need to access support services.
14. The service will provide feedback on the consultative work being undertaken in the February sessions. Once complete, the Participation Service Blueprint and commitments will be shared as appropriate.

Zak Darwood

Workforce Development and Participation Lead
Department of Community and Children's Services

T: 020 7332 3306

E: zak.darwood@cityoflondon.gov.uk