

<b>Committee:</b>	<b>Dated:</b>
Safeguarding Sub-Committee	<b>17/09/2020</b>
<b>Subject:</b> Children in Care Council (CiCC) and Participation Service Update	<b>Public</b>
<b>Report of:</b> Andrew Carter, Director of Community and Children's Services	<b>For Information</b>
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### Summary

This report provides a summary of the City of London Participation programme for looked-after children and young care leavers delivered throughout summer 2020. The report also provides an update on staffing of the service and plans for the remainder of this year.

### Recommendation

Members are asked to:

- Note the report

### Main Report

#### Background

1. The Participation Service staff held a vision planning event with a group of young people in early 2020. This Visioning Piece, (see Appendix 1), was used to plan a programme of events throughout the year. However, the national lockdown and restrictions have curtailed the ability of the Participation Service to facilitate several of these activities. The summer programme was modified to be delivered online, but engagement was limited as the young people did not want to engage virtually.
2. At the beginning of the national lockdown, the participation officer decided not to continue in the post. An interim officer was recruited and immediately began delivery of the summer programme. The officer has quickly begun to establish positive relationships with young people and the professional network. Interviews for the contract post have been completed and the locum officer was successful in their application and will join the Corporation as an employee shortly.

## **Children in Care Council (CiCC)**

3. The CiCC continues to be the mainstay of the Participation Service. All children in care are automatically members of the CiCC. Attendance at the council sessions in 2019 had been in variable, however, this had improved throughout early 2020. Proposals for the election of vice-chairs to sit alongside the Young People's Chair were paused at the beginning of the national lockdown and will be resumed in the autumn.
4. The CiCC meeting due to take place in the summer was postponed due to the young people finding virtual participation difficult. With the new officer in post, and relationships being developed, the autumn meeting will go ahead as part of the October half-term programme.

## **Workshops and Holiday Provision**

5. The national lockdown has had an impact on the delivery of the Participation Service programme and the annual holiday. The annual holiday is open to all children in care and care leavers, but it has been postponed until 2021. The Service's ability to deliver this will depend on the guidance and restrictions in place at this time. This was upsetting to all the young people, especially those who were unable to attend the previous holiday in 2019.
6. The CiCC in the Summer Programme, (see Appendix 2), was developed for virtual delivery. This was an ambitious programme, developed to provide a range of activities over three-and-a-half weeks. The programme was a combination of activities from the City of London Youth Service and directly commissioned activities that had been modified for virtual delivery.

As detailed in Appendix 2, the CiCC in the Summer Programme contained a variety of health and wellbeing, preparation for work and independent living skills sessions, alongside a few online accredited courses. The mixed programme provided the young people with the opportunity to pick and choose attendance around their other activities, while giving them the opportunity to also choose daily sessions.

7. Engagement in the CiCC in the Summer in the Programme was limited, with some sessions being postponed due to a lack of attendance. However, those who did attend the sessions gave positive feedback. The low attendance can be attributed to several factors. The largest impact was due to the national pandemic and the resulting change in activity delivery. Many of the young people found it difficult to engage online and stated a preference for face-to-face delivery. At the time of the programme's delivery, the restrictions on socialisation were being eased and the young people were keen to spend time in person with their peers.
8. While there were some negatives, the positive outcomes achieved for those who did attend showed that the programme had been beneficial: attendees learnt how to cook a meal and were then able to share this with their housemates and carers. Several attended a Realities of Independent Living session, designed to give them more realistic expectations of what life will be like when they move to

their own accommodation. Others attended workshops on CV writing and interview skills and had the opportunity to practise this in a mock interview.

## **Future Developments**

9. The Participation Service will develop its workshop offer to meet emerging and changing needs. The new participation officer will continue to support the CiCC's development. In autumn 2020, the service will deliver an activity programme that is partly virtual, with some face-to-face activities. This will consist of sessions similar to the CiCC Summer Programme, and new sessions to support the young people with their independence skills, and with changes to day-to-day life due to the pandemic.
10. The new participation officer will build on the work of the previous officer to engage 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 male participants. Therefore, a bespoke service is being delivered on a one-to-one basis, as requested by the young women.

## **Conclusion**

11. 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, mapped to the CiCC Visioning Piece, will continue to be prepared for delivery, both virtually and in person, to enable continuation in the event of another national lockdown. Work will be undertaken to increase the engagement of young people with virtual and face-to-face delivery, provide the opportunity for the new officer to build rapport with the young people, and continue to promote the voice of the young people in service development.
12. The service will report on engagement, and the progress of the new officer in due course.

## **Appendices**

- CiCC Visioning Piece
- CiCC in the Summer 2020 – activity brochure.

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