

BY:	Kay Weiss
TO:	Children's Champions Board
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CLASSIFICATION:	Unrestricted

SUMMARY OF REPORT:

This report provides the Children's Champions Board with an update on the development of the Children in Care Council

BACKGROUND

1. (1) Care Matters has introduced a number of proposals to improve the delivery of Corporate Parenting. One of these is the expectation that every local authority will put in place (from April 2009) a Children in Care Council (CICC), with direct links to the Director of Children's Services and Lead Member (Care Matters, White Paper, page 22). The Children in Care Council is also highlighted as one of the key components for delivering effective corporate parenting in the National Children's Bureau model of effective corporate parenting.
- (2) Not all Looked After Children (LAC) will see the CICC as being the preferred way to express their views. The development of the CICC must therefore work alongside other mechanisms already available for children and young people to express their views, such as Student Voice, Viewpoint and Upfront (Kent's LAC Advocacy Service).
- (3) The design and delivery of the CICC should ideally meet the following requirements:
 - a) Inclusiveness (to all LAC in Kent)
 - b) An opportunity for meaningful participation of children/young people
 - c) Effectiveness – the ability to influence practice and services and for children/young people to feel confident that their voices are being heard
- (4) Achieving these goals presents Kent with greater challenges than most other authorities, whose LAC populations are smaller and less diverse. Therefore, a fully formed 'Children in Care Council' in Kent will take more time to develop. Initially Council meetings may involve a relatively small number of children and young people and increase in scope as the framework fits into place and evolves.

Proposed framework

2. (1) It is proposed that the CICC is built around a framework, beginning with the development of a central council and enabling at a later stage the development of district/area councils and sector councils (representing the needs of particular

LAC groups such as Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children, LAC with a disability, KCC LAC placed out of Kent and OLA LAC) over a 2 to 3 year timescale.

- (2) The children/young people attending council meetings will be aged 11 years plus. It will be the responsibility of the CICC members to ensure that the views of younger children are represented and considered in council meetings on all issues where this is relevant. The CICC will also be expected to look at how they consult with and keep younger children informed of what is discussed at CICC meetings.
- (3) Members of the CICC will initially be identified through Upfront and 16plus, with the aim that each district/local partnership should have a young person representative on the central council, including asylum and disability. In the longer term, each area/sector council will select a representative to sit on their behalf on the central council.
- (4) It is proposed that the CICC should be encouraged to develop strong links with Kent's Youth Council, including enabling a place on the Youth Council to be reserved for a CIC representative.
- (5) An initial CICC event was held on 15th April at Swattenden, which was attended by 25 children and young people. This included disabled children/young people and unaccompanied asylum seeking children/young people. A presentation has already been provided to CCB on the outcomes of the days event at 20 May 2009 meeting by Lisa Warne (Upfront) and Jo Bingham (16plus).

Recent developments

CICC meetings/events:

- A CICC event was held on 4 August at Port Lympne Zoo, which focussed on discussing with the provisional CICC taking forward the launch of the LAC DVD 'Care to Listen' (later launched at Maidstone Cinema on 2 November 2009). A discussion around the healthy care standards also took place.
 - Another CICC meeting took place at County Council Chambers, Sessions House on Saturday 5 September 2009. The meeting was attended by 9 LAC/Care leavers and also included two young people representatives from Kent's Youth Council – who gave a presentation on how the Youth Council was run. The key issues discussed at the meeting were:
 - Finalising plans for the launch of the DVD 'Care to Listen'
 - Agreeing the job description for the first of two CICC apprenticeship posts
 - Discussing elections
 - Revisiting issues raised at the previous meeting
 - Details regarding the October trip to the Houses of Parliament
 - A further CICC event took place on 27 October 2009, which involved a tour round the Houses of Parliament and an opportunity to meet with one of Kent's MPs (Julian Brazier). There was an opportunity for the CICC members to meet and ask Julian Brazier MP questions after the tour – which focussed around the need for more social workers and better placement choice in foster care.
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- Arrangements are being made for the next CICC meeting, which is expected to take place in December 2009/January 2010. The meeting will finalise arrangements for CICC member elections, which are planned to take place in March/April 2010.

CICC Apprenticeships:

- Alongside CICC meetings/events – work has also been focussed on implementing the first of two CICC apprenticeship posts. This apprenticeship post focuses on providing administration support for the running of the CICC. A KCC Care Leaver has been recruited to the post and began working on 9 November 2009.
- A copy of the Job description for the apprenticeship post is presented at appendix 1.
- The apprenticeship post is being supported via KCC's Key Training Services.
- The second apprenticeship post will be recruited to after the CICC member elections – in April/May 2010. This post will focus on Human Resources functions of the CICC and the post holder will be expected to take on a leadership role for the CICC, including acting as a consultant on children/young people's involvement and attending professional meetings – including Kent's Corporate Parenting Group (KCPG). A copy of the job description for this apprenticeship post will be made available to the children's champion board once this has been developed and approved by the CICC and KCPG.

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