

From: Peter Oakford, Cabinet Member for Specialist Children's Services
Andrew Ireland, Corporate Director of Social Care, Health and Wellbeing

To: Corporate Parenting Panel – 20 March 2017

Subject: **CORPORATE PARENTING – CHALLENGE CARDS**

Classification: Unrestricted

Electoral Division: All

Summary: This report provides Members with an overview of the Challenge Cards process, progress made and current challenges.

Recommendation: Members of the Corporate Parenting Panel are asked to **CONSIDER** and **COMMENT** on the Challenge Card process and progress to date.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 In February 2015, through consultation with young Care Leavers and Children in Care (CiC), the Virtual School Kent (VSK) Participation and Engagement Team developed the concept of Challenge Cards. Further information on the background to the development of the Challenge Cards is attached as Appendix 1.
- 1.2 The initiative came about through various discussions at Kent's Children in Care Council (OCYPC) meetings, where young people told us that they would like a formal way to have the opportunity of having their voices heard by their corporate parents and the decision makers in the council.
- 1.3 The young people also wanted a way to be able to 'challenge' or make suggestions about how improvements could be made to the care system. The idea of the Challenge Cards has evolved and these cards are now used to support CiC and Care Leavers to 'challenge' their corporate parents around the issues facing them as looked after children.

2. Process

- 2.1 A process was agreed and was signed off by the Corporate Parenting Panel (CPP) and is outlined below:
 - Any young person in care or Care Leaver can raise a challenge. The challenge is then taken to one of the CiC Councils (Super Council – the Junior Council), OCYPC or our Young Adults Council (YAC). A challenge is highlighted to the Assistant Director for Corporate Parenting and raised at

the Children in Care Council meeting. The Challenge is discussed and if it is agreed upon by three or more members it is agreed.

- Agreed Challenges are then taken forward; they were previously taken to the Kent Corporate Parenting Group - a multi-agency forum consisting of KCC Senior Officers and other Kent agencies responsible for delivering effective corporate parenting for CiC. Since this group is no longer in existence, Challenges are taken to the CiC Service Manager Meetings chaired by the Assistant Director Corporate Parenting. The Assistant Director Corporate Parenting will ensure that the actions are allocated to a lead officer and they will ask the VSK participation officer to ensure there is a response and reported back to the CiC Council Meetings.
- The CiC Council meeting will have an opportunity to advise if they are satisfied with the outcome and agree that the Challenge has been completed and 'sign off' the card. The VSK participation lead will be on hand to support, explain and advise if there are particular reasons as to why a Challenge cannot be progressed. Sometimes challenges received are personal child-specific issues; these are discussed with the young person and then passed onto their social worker or Personal Advisor for resolution and other times the challenges are on a large scale with significant cost implications and the CiC Council has to consider the impact of such requests and whether these are achievable.
- VSK Care Leaver Apprentices who are members of the CPP provide regular updates to CPP as to the outcome of the Challenge Cards. CPP provides comment and can influence responses to Challenges.
- Outcomes of Challenges are disseminated to CiC who are not CiC Council members via the VSK Newsletters that is published three times a year.
- Challenge cards are discussed at every Super Council, OCYPC & YAC meeting.
- A detailed log is kept by the VSK participation lead recording the Challenges, responsible officers, outcomes and providing updates to young people.

3. Previous Challenges

3.1 May 2015

Involve CiC in designing business cards with social workers' details and contact information on them to help CiC know who their social workers are and how they can contact them

Action: Responsible Officer – West Kent CiC Service Manager

This Challenge was agreed and VSK ran a competition for young people to design the business card. The chosen design was made into a business card

by Communication Team and cards have been shared with children in care social workers.

For KCC to set up a bank account for CiC where they 'match fund' or pay amounts into that the young people can access when they are 18

Action: Responsible Officer – Assistant Director Corporate Parenting
Pocket Money and Savings Guidance has been written by the Assistant Director Corporate Parenting and is a Kent Policy for Specialist Children's Services. The CiC Council requested an easy to read version and this has been provided.

For young people in care to be able to see their younger siblings who still live with their parents or live in another placement. To meet in a safe place with a contact manager and not with the rest of the family

Action: Responsible Officer – Service Manager for Safeguarding and Quality Assurance

Agreement to advocate more for sibling contact where is it safe and appropriate. A decision was made to include a discussion in the Looked After Child Review meeting so young people's views on the subject are sought. Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs) have been tasked with ensuring this is a consideration for social workers.

3.2 September 2015

For young people to see their social worker more often, and for social workers to listen and co-operate more with issues, particularly around placement

Action: Responsible Officer – Assistant Director Corporate Parenting

A response provided and reported back to Children in Care Councils. The Assistant Director Corporate Parenting produced an article that was published in the December 2015 newsletter explaining the role of a Social Worker to young people, what they can do and how to access their social worker. There was also a pen picture of a social worker's role and some of the pressures in their work.

3.3 February 2016

Why social workers are all so different? Why do some make things happen and fight our corner more than others? How can you help other children understand what their social worker is meant to do for them?

This challenge resulted because young people were not happy with the answer they received to their Challenge about social workers and wanting to see them more regularly.

Action: Responsible Officers – CiC Teams

Service Managers and Team Managers from the CiC teams attended the CiC Council meeting to answer questions from young people directly. Young people reported that they were very happy that their questions had been answered

directly and that they had a much better understanding of the role of their social worker. A synopsis of the Questions and Answers was published in the VSK newsletter to reach a wider audience.

3.4 May 2016

A lot of young people were reporting that they still hadn't received copies of the new Kent Pledge Cards or the Business Card from their social worker. They felt they had worked hard on both of these initiatives and that young people should be receiving them

Action: Responsible Officer - Director Specialist Children's Services

The Director undertook this to ensure that IROs specifically addressed this issue in CiC Review meetings. The Participation Team undertook to ensure that all CiC teams had sufficient supplies.

3.5 July 2016

Young people asked for Corporate Parenting support to help all the CiC Councils achieve their purpose

Action: Responsible Officer – Assistant Director Corporate Parenting and CPP Members

This challenge came as a result of consultation with the young people and checking what they wanted the purpose and role of CiC Councils to be. There is now a clear work plan which defines the purpose and future work of the Councils.

4. **Current Challenges**

4.1 February 2017

A request for the Local Authority to provide a young person's railcard to YAC members to help them with their travel costs as a reward for becoming a YAC member. It would make jobs more accessible, and encourage independence

Action: Responsible Officer – Assistant Director Corporate Parenting

The costs of the rail card, along with the numbers of young people who would be eligible to have one, are being reviewed.

A decision will be made by the Assistant Director Corporate Parenting and the Director of Specialist Children's Services by March 2017.

If a young person over school leaving age decided to be fully independent and work full time, paying their own rent, would the Local Authority, as a 'Corporate Parent', act as the young person's guarantor?

Action: Responsible Officer – Assistant Director Corporate Parenting

This is currently being investigated in terms of the liability to the Local Authority (LA) if they were to become a rent guarantor. It is unlikely that the LA can take on the responsibility of being a guarantor and legal advice is being sought on

this issue. There is, however, other support that can be put in place that will enable young people to obtain accommodation and secure their tenancy. This includes care leaving service providing the deposit and a month's rent in advance; this would limit the LA's liability. The LA is working to ensure that there is sufficient housing that is accessible for young people.

5. Recommendation

5.1 Recommendation: Members of the Corporate Parenting Panel are asked to **CONSIDER** and **COMMENT** on the Challenge Card process and progress to date.

6. Background Documents

None

7. Contact details

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