

Wednesday 19th September 2018
Corporate Parenting Panel Update-
On behalf of the Children in Care Councils and Young Adult Council

Virtual School Kent's Award Ceremony:

On Sunday, VSK held their 6th annual award ceremony to celebrate the incredible achievements and progression that young people have made both in and out of school.

It was a very rewarding day to see the young people getting their awards from Roger Gough & Matt Dunkley and see the smiles on their faces. After the first award ceremony which was our Early Years and key stage 1&2 children, we went outside for a lovely BBQ, games, activities and to promote the three Children in Care Councils, MOMO, Activity Days and the lots of other things VSK do to engage with Young People.

It was so nice to meet new faces who hadn't heard of the participation team before. After lunch we went back in for key stage 3&4 awards, after all the nominees collected their awards then the participation team talked about what we do as a team and all the fun things we engage young people in, it was such a lovely experience and we can't wait to see what year brings

Children in Care Countywide Event:

The Countywide Children in Care Celebration was held on 1st August 2018. The event was attended by the children in care council members and some other who wanted a taster of what the Children in Care Councils are about. Some members of the Corporate Parenting Panel and key staff attended the event and met with our young people. The purpose of the event is to bring all 3 council groups of different ages, (Super Council, OCYPC and YAC) together to celebrate the work they have done over the past year and to also work on a current topic or issue together.

The Participation Team delivered a presentation welcoming everyone and talking about what the Councils have been up to throughout the year. The apprentices had made a timeline, to show the Children in Care Councils progress throughout the years.

We then had a discussion between our tables about what is a Corporate Parent, what does a Corporate Parent actually mean and discussed what are the 10 things that are most important to young people when thinking about their corporate parents. After that we shared our points with the other groups and placed all the ideas on a board. Feedback included:

- Looking after health
- Consistent Communication.
- Stability and Listening
- Feeling Safe
- Support for Care Leavers
- Responsible

There were 2 key themes that were brought up repetitively they were Feeling safe, and Stability. Then we had a break to enjoy chocolate brownies, lemon cakes and scones with cream and jam.



After all the cakes were finished we got in our teams for the Countywide obstacle course. The events were, the caterpillar, ring toss, inflatable darts and an inflatable climbing wall what ended up being lots of laughs and giggles.

The Participation Team are now collating all the feedback from young people to produce a 'Young Person's Guide to Good Corporate Parenting'. A focus group has been arranged with young people next week to ensure they are happy with what has been put together. We then plan to have tis printed into a guide that will be available to all our children and young people.

We are really pleased to report that membership of the children in Care Councils continues to grow;

Number of Children in Care Council Members 2017/18:

YAC	17
OCYPC	29
Super Council	24

Membership has now reached 70 young people, and next plan is to develop a 'virtual' children in Care Council so young people who are in our care but don't live in Kent also get opportunities to be involved.

Young Adult Council September Meeting Update:

One of YAC's longest standing members is moving onto University this year, members took the opportunity to thank her for her contributions and wish her luck for her future studies.

YAC helped us to finalise the questions that young people are asked when they are completing their section of the PEP. There are been several consultations with different groups of children and young people over the Summer and we are now confident we have sets of questions that young people want to be asked about their education. These questions will now form part of the new ePEP.

VSK Participation Team Update:

We are happy to say that our new apprentice Tia has joint the team in July along with our former YAC member Rob who joined us in August. They have both settled into the team well and we are looking forward to involving them more in the work we do. Tia made her public speaking debut on Sunday at the Awards Ceremony and we were all glowing with pride that she spoke in front of such a huge audience.

We will be having our Mentoring Training at the end of September which will help give our team the right tools to give extra support to Children and Young People in Care.

Co-Production Training:

In the summer holidays we supported 3 days with our colleagues in Early Help and Headstart along with our Children in Care and members of their Kent Youth County Council to look at devising and delivering Participation and Co Production Training to ensure that all children and young people in Kent get a voice and that decision makers in the council are aware of the importance of this.



The sessions were a great success with both groups coming together with ideas for the training sessions that will be taking place. We will be trialling our first training session this Saturday at the Ashford Youth Hub.

Boy's Group:

Following the success of the girl's group in East Kent, 'I'm Worth it' in February in conjunction with Fostering, the Participation Team are planning a new group for teenage boys between the ages of 13-17. Participants will be identified by recommendations by Fostering, VSK and Social workers. The boys' group will be taking place in term 2 and will follow the same format as the previous girls' group which is a 6 week programme on a Monday evenings at The Far Academy.

The Far Academy is a Community Interest Company and Social Enterprise, the boys will be designing and constructing their own skateboards and have skateboarding lessons. At the end of the programme each young person will take home their own product they have made. The programme will also have weekly informative talks about relevant topics such as drugs, alcohol and mental health. These talks will be delivered by a collaboration of the Children in Care Nurses and outside agencies such as Addaction and Barnardo's.

The intended outcomes of the programme are to increase the young person's self-esteem, build their confidence, gain skills and knowledge to increase their ability to keep themselves safe.

A further girls group will be run again after Christmas.

Kent Cares Town Website:

The VSK's website for Children in Care and Care Leavers 'Kent Cares Town' has had a massive re-vamp over the past few months. There has been lots of consultations with different groups of children in Care to get their views and opinions on how they would like their new website to look. At the VSK Awards Ceremony the audience were shown how the new website looks. It will be launching on the 1st October 2018.

The new website has 3 separate portals, one aged at primary aged children, one for Secondary and one for young people preparing to and leaving care which will host the 18+ Local Offer information. We believe the 3 portals will enable to keep information more relevant to what young people want to know at various age ranges and stages.

Summer Activity Days and Events:

We had a very busy and fun summer travelling across the county putting on our activity days for our Young people and supporting the Adoption Family Picnic, the West Kent summer fun Day and the DCS Summer Fun day. We put on 9 activity days over the summer. As usual these days were a great success and we have received very positive feedback from children and from their carers. These are just a few of the things they have said:

Feedback from Carers:

"It was great fun - I loved all the activities and I made new friends"

"I want to come again, it was amazing, and I liked the people there"

"I liked it because I met other children in care and I also got to try new things"

"I had fun with the staff, they are the best"



Feedback from Foster Carers:

"My child had just come into care. It was so wonderful for her to meet others in the same position and talk! She made friends and just loved the day"

"It gives the children the opportunity to make friends in similar situations as themselves, gives them a sense of feeling important in a non-judgemental way in a safe confidential way. They have fun and learn new skills"

"Both children often refuse to TRY! when we are present, so leaving them with other children with the same worry of new things gave them reassurance that feeling was normal. They tried everything and they both said how proud they were of themselves"

"She attended her first one. She was delighted. She is the only child in her school in care and has no one to talk to of her age. We support at a home but it's not the same. She was so bouncy afterwards and feels she's not the only one!"

"The activity days out are great as they are well planned and organised. I always feel confident leaving my children with VSK workers. I also must mention the welcome my child who was an unaccompanied child felt. We managed to get him and another boy linked up and they both truly enjoyed the activities. Which brings me to the opportunities - my children have met people they would only see on TV! ie Paul Carter. They are beginning to understand who runs what and why. They know who is accountable and who to go to for help. Keep up the brilliant work!"

For our October Activities we have planned the following:

- 23rd October – West/North Kent Art Activity Day
- 24th October – East/South Kent OCYPC Extra
- 25th October – East/South Kent Art Activity Day
- 26th October – West/North Kent OCYPC & Super Council Meeting.

We also have the VSK Post16 Awards Ceremony on Wednesday 17th October – details will be sent out to you this week – it would be lovely to see some of you there

