

From: Roger Gough, Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Education.
Matt Dunkley, CBE, Corporate Director for Children, Young People and Education.

To: Corporate Parenting Panel – 1st November 2018

Subject: Update on Mind Of My Own App for Children in Care and Care Leavers

Classification: Unrestricted

Summary: This overview report provides Members of the Corporate Parenting Panel with an update on the delivery and implementation of Mind Of My Own (MOMO)

Recommendation: The Corporate Parenting Panel is asked to **NOTE** and **COMMENT** on the progress of the roll-out of Mind Of My Own (MOMO).

1 Aims of the Project

- 1.1 Mind Of My Own (MOMO) is an app and web-based application designed as a tool to help young people to share their thoughts and feelings with the professionals they work with. It can encourage young people to structure their thoughts and consider what is going well in their lives, what they are worried about and what they would like to happen to make their life better.
- 1.2 It was commissioned by Kent in response to young people telling us they wanted a quick and easy way to have their views heard, either independently or with the assistance of their carer, another professional or trusted person.

2. Background

- 2.1 MOMO is used by over 60 Local Authorities throughout the country.
- 2.2 After the MOMO app was piloted in North Kent, it was subsequently commissioned to roll out the MOMO One and MOMO Express Service across Kent. A 24-month subscription was agreed.
- 2.3 A project plan was put together by the SCS Participation Coordinator in post at the time detailing a roll out plan to train front line staff in September 2017. Members of the Corporate Parenting Panel were provided with an overview of the delivery and implementation of the App across the services that sat under Specialist Children's Services.
- 2.4 In March 2018, as take up was slow, the responsibility for promoting MOMO and increasing its usage became the responsibility of the VSK Participation Team.
- 2.5 In Kent, there are two versions of MOMO available for use:

- **MOMO One:**

MOMO One is designed to be used independently by young people over the age of eight whenever they want and is an easy way for them to express themselves. It allows children and young people to raise a problem, suggest a change, share good news or prepare for a meeting or worker visit among other options. Young people require an email address to sign up for a young person's account. It is used independently or with the worker on a smart phone, tablet or laptop.

MOMO Express:

MOMO Express is designed to meet the needs of young children under eight and those with learning disabilities. It is equipped with visually stimulating pictures and sounds appropriate for them. Children can answer questions about themselves, their education, their health or their social care. Express is designed to be "co-piloted" by the worker with their young person using a worker account and is used with a worker on a tablet or laptop.

3. Roll-out Update

3.1 Training:

3.1.1 Training for professionals facilitated by MOMO took place on four dates in September and October 2017.

3.1.2 In response to feedback received after the training that professionals found it difficult to take the time to travel to central venues for training sessions, further training was prepared and delivered by the VSK Participation Team Officers and took place between May and July 2018 at 8 different locations through Kent. Multiple dates and times were offered, and training sessions were shortened to make them more accessible to professionals. Invitations were sent to Social Workers in all localities, Social Workers within the Disabled Children's Team, Independent Reviewing Officers and 18+ Personal Advisers.

3.1.3 181 workers in total signed up for the training.

3.2 Usage:

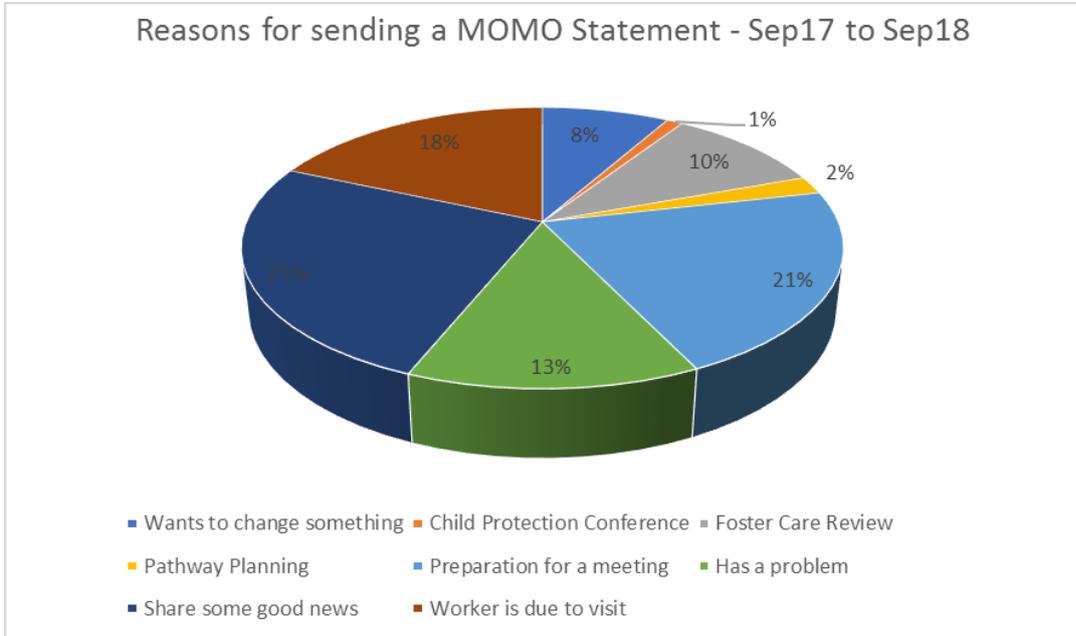
3.2.1 Kent now has 244 workers using MOMO and 280 young person accounts. Sign up has more than doubled since May 2018 since further training sessions have been run and workers now have mobile devices.

3.2.2 Usage is continuing to increase as workers are signing up independently as understanding of MOMO is now more widespread. MOMO is a very simple tool to use, and the training is not compulsory, with workers and young people being able to use the 'Kent User Guide to MOMO' to further aid ease of usage. VSK Apprentices have been tasked with promoting MOMO to the young people they are working with and are helping young people download the App and set up their user accounts.

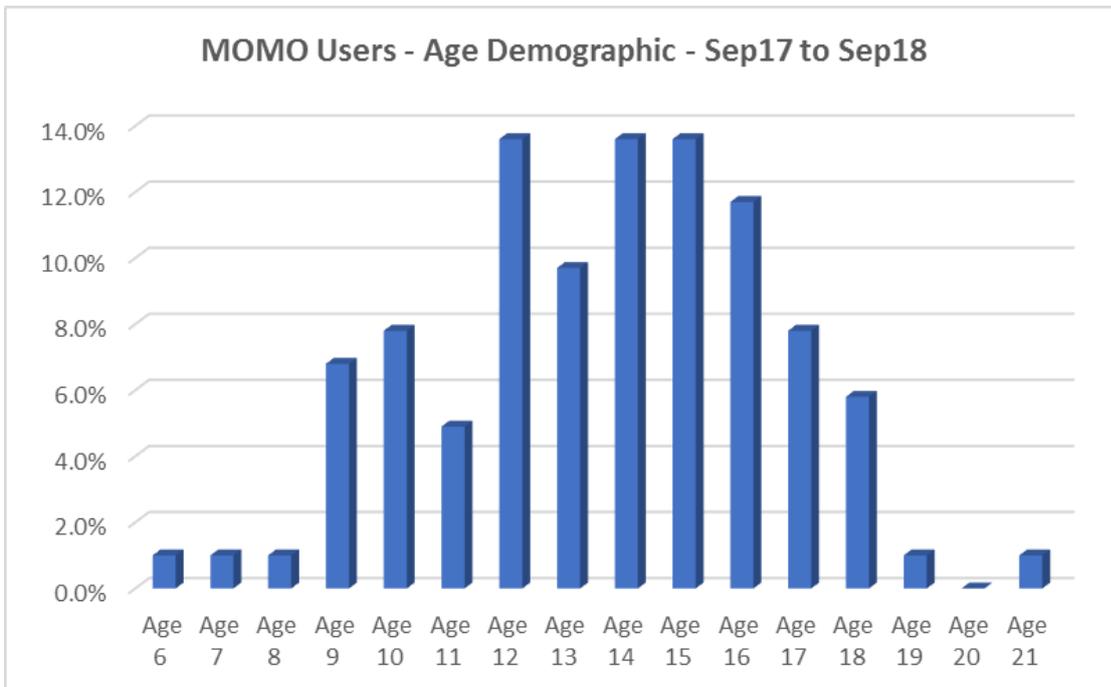
3.2.3 The majority of MOMO statements (87.7%) are sent via a young person's account. This fits the best practice model as devised by MOMO where young people should, wherever possible, use their own account to complete and send MOMO statements.

3.2.4 Since September 2017, 356 MOMO statements have been sent by young people: 80% of these were MOMO One statements sent independently by the young person. 10% were MOMO Ones sent with the support of a professional from their worker’s account. The remaining 10% were sent using MOMO Express from a worker’s account. Since March 2018 the number of MOMO statements received has increased by 30.5%

3.2.5 The most common reasons that young people are sending MOMO statements are to share some good news, plan for a meeting or because their worker is due to visit them.



3.2.6 12 to 16 year olds are the most common users of MOMO with the youngest user being age 6.



3.2.7 65% of young people using MOMO are female and 35% male.

4. Feedback

4.1 Feedback from children and young people:

Feedback from children and young people has been very positive. VSK Apprentices have gathered the views and responses from young people at Children in Care Council meetings and informally when they are interacting with young people at events like activity days. Some of their responses have been:

- *'It's an easier way to contact my Social Worker'*
- *'It's good for kids if they have anxieties about stuff'*
- *'Sometimes it's difficult to say stuff face to face, so MOMO makes it easier.'*
- *'Easy to use as you have your phone on you any time of the day and whilst you're thinking about it.'*
- *'Quicker to get a problem sorted if you're not seeing your social worker for a few weeks.'*
- *'Enables a young person to contact their social worker without going through their foster carer.'*
- *'Alternative way to communicate instead of lots and lots of paperwork that we remember filling in.'*
- *'Safe and recorded, so evidence of it all rather than someone forgetting or not getting the details of a conversation.'*

4.2 Feedback from Professionals:

4.2.1 Feedback from Children in Care Teams has been largely positive and social workers using the app have confirmed it is another useful tool that they can access to help ensure they have good communication channels with the young people they are working with.

4.2.2 Fostering Social Workers have shown particular enthusiasm for MOMO. Several have suggested that they be added as a worker type so that young people can complete the Foster Care Review Section and send it directly to them. Currently MOMO has a drop-down list of worker types, for young people to choose when using their account; these include their child in care social worker, Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) and teachers. The role of Fostering Social Worker is not currently a "worker type" on the system, so this would require Kent requesting a system update for any future versions of MOMO.

4.2.3 MOMO's limitations have also been noted; in particular, it does not have the facility for the worker to respond directly to the young person through MOMO. The young person only receives notification that their MOMO statement has been sent. There has also been some concern that MOMO may be a novelty to young people and their usage of it may drop, particularly if they don't think they have received a timely response.

4.2.4 Another observation is that the app is only available in English- this concern has been fed back to MOMO.

4.3 Case Examples:

- *'I have used MOMO on one occasion when a young person contacted me to let me know he was feeling unhappy and low. We were then able to arrange a meeting and as a result he is now open to CAMHS for a full assessment. I genuinely believe this young person would not have contacted me without the MOMO app'. **Social Worker – Dover Children in Care Team***
- *'Quite a few of my young people have been using MOMO. I think it has been a good way to encourage them to communicate with me. One of my young people aged 15 uses it to raise any problems she has, and it has been effective in giving her an outlet to express her views as it makes her think about the problem and what she would like to happen. I have had other young people use it to tell me about good news or to prepare for a meeting.*

I have tried to use it instead of the paper consultation documents for a Child in Care Review, but I don't think the forms encourage enough detail. For example, on one of the forms they are asked 'what's good in your life' and then there are a range of symbols that they can click on, i.e. school etc. I have found that most of my young people just click on the symbols and don't write any detail about why something is good.

I also find it frustrating that you can't respond to young people using the MOMO app. This means that there can be several days delay between them sending the MOMO and you speaking to them about the issue. It would be so much better if we could communicate with them through the app. I have also found that it has been difficult to maintain my young person's interest in using the app. I get a lot of MOMO's when I first tell them about it but then the novelty seems to wear off a bit. I think this is in part because they don't get the immediate response back. I think it would retain their interest if we could send them messages/information via the app as then I think they would use it more often.' **Social Worker – Ashford Children in Care Team**

- *'I have received a few MOMO statements from one of my children and have found this to be a very useful tool for both the child and me. This particular child has permanence in her placement and so my visits are only once every 3months. Within this time there are significant things that happen in her life, that she wishes to share with myself; however she is of an age where she does not have her own mobile phone to be able to communicate directly with me in that way. This child has now been able to send me messages on MOMO telling me about significant events but also highlighting any areas that she is struggling with. I am then able to make contact with her via her foster carer to arrange an additional visit or have been able to discuss with her on my next visit. This has allowed her to feel listened to, and she loves telling me all about her horse riding!' **Senior Practitioner – Swale Children in Care Team***
- *'I have supported two of my young people with the MOMO app. Both young people were extremely interested and thought it was a good way to share information without being face to face. I have noticed how they prefer using the downloaded app to the internet. My only concern is once they have sent one MOMO message it seems they lose interest and could perceive the app to be a bit of a novelty'. **Newly Qualified Social Worker - Thanet Child In Care***

- *'It's a straightforward app and I am impressed at how easy it is to use. I don't see why everyone isn't going to use it. Why wouldn't they?'* **Practice Mentor for Newly Qualified Social Workers**

4.4 Feedback from MOMO

MOMO have recently communicated that Kent is now one of its top users. They recently wrote to the Corporate Director to advise that over the past few months the uptake of MOMO in Kent has increased dramatically and noted the hard work, commitment and enthusiasm from Kent to embed MOMO in its Services.

5. Moving forward

- 5.1 Plans are in place for VSK apprentices to introduce the idea of MOMO to young people not yet using it via their Designated Teachers in schools.
- 5.2 MOMO is being promoted on the newly updated Kent Cares Town website, with plans for a short film to be made with the support of the Children in Care Councils to help promote it to young people.
- 5.3 More time will be allocated to exploring how MOMO could be useful to engage with young people who live Out of County, to ensure we are aware of their wishes and feelings.
- 5.4 The idea of offering MOMO to a wider audience of young people needs to be explored further.

6. Conclusions

- 6.1 Our conclusions so far are that MOMO is a valuable resource for young people to have access to. It also fulfils their request of having easier ways to contact the professionals who are responsible for them.
- 6.2 We do, however, think that MOMO has limitations and are involved in MOMO's practice development events to feedback our thoughts and suggestions as MOMO are very open to hearing from Local Authorities to improve their products. One key area would be that we were able to have a system that enabled the worker to communicate back directly to the young person through the App. It is not likely that MOMO would be able to have this facility.
- 6.3 Workers are now clearer that in the vast majority of cases young people will use MOMO on their own devices so social workers not having access to mobile technology themselves is not a barrier to young people using the App. It was previously thought that, if social workers did not have use of their own mobile device for work purposes, it could be a barrier to the use of MOMO by young people, but this is in fact not the case.
- 6.4 There needs to be mechanisms to remind workers and young people that MOMO is available for them to use as the data shows usage peaks when training with professionals and events with young people have just occurred.

- 6.5 To increase the use of MOMO, it may need to be embedded further in workers' practice so that it becomes a widely used resource for professionals to encourage participation and capture the voice of the young person.
- 6.6 MOMO is not viewed as a suitable alternative to any statutory requirements but rather another method of engaging children and young people and enhancing our work with them.

7. Recommendation: The Corporate Parenting Panel is asked to **NOTE** and **COMMENT** on the progress of the roll-out of Mind Of My Own (MOMO).

8. Background Documents

Appendix 1 – Update of Mind of My Own App for children and Young People – September 2017

9. Contact Details

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