

Joint CHICC (Young people and Senior Managers)

Tuesday 4 December 2018, Hertford Theatre, 6.00pm – 7.30pm

Minutes

- 1. Attendees**
- 2. Progress with actions since last Joint CHICC**
- 3. Overview of the year from CHICC and catch up on 2 key pieces of work**
- 4. Discussions led by young people on specific topics**
- 5. Recent CHICC surveys**
- 6. Thank you to our young people**

1. Attendees

Apologies: Marion Ingram (Operations Director, Safeguarding and Specialist Services); Jonathan Jack (YC Youth Engagement and Participation Manager); Jenny Coles (Director of Children's Services); Teresa Heritage (Lead Member for Children's Services); Sue Lowndes (Head of Adoption and Fostering)

The following people were present at the meeting:

Young people: Alanan; Alex; Alicia; Jade; Kelly; Shannon; Arun; Jack; George; Sarah W

Staff and Members: The following Hertfordshire County Council Staff and members were present:

Graham McAndrew (Deputy Lead Member)

Matt Ansell (Operations Director Children and Families)

Lindsay Edwards (Operations Director Services for Children and Young People)

Joanna Jacobs (Participation Worker)

Nancy Burge (Participation Officer)

Mark Hinton (Participation Worker)

Rachel Daughtry (Team Manager, Independent Reviews)

The meeting was chaired by Alanan and Nancy Burge

2. Progress with actions since last Joint CHICC

Lindsay Edwards (Operations Director Services for Children and Young People) gave feedback on actions from the last meeting, as follows:

Driving Lessons

The Virtual School considered this and agreed to extend payment of lessons from 5 to 10. This news was welcomed. The offer will be linked to 3 months good attendance in education, training or employment. Virtual School will also refund provisional licence, 1 theory test and 1 practical. Graham McAndrew (Member) asked how far back you could go to get the extra five lessons. Lindsay said she would get clarity on this.

Housing issues

Lindsay brought with her draft guidance for care leavers on housing issues. Most of the issues that CHICC had requested clarity on would depend on a young person's individual circumstances. The best thing is for all young people to access the guidance once available and discuss with workers. Nancy Burge (Participation Officer) added that John Short agreed to be filmed talking about local connection and other housing matters. This can then be put onto the website and accessed by young people.

Shared accommodation: CHICC had wanted to know how care leavers could access this. Lindsay advised that the best way to access this is by privately renting. There can be complications eg, who is responsible for the tenancy if one person leaves etc.

Local connection: CHICC had wanted to know if this was still an issue for care leavers. Lindsay advised this is looked at on a case by case basis by the housing departments. Young people need to talk about where they would like to live and get this into their pathway plans as soon as possible. It should be possible to be re-housed in a different area to where you came into care from, if that is where you get your support, and if this is discussed early enough and put into the pathway plan.

Hostel accommodation: CHICC had wanted to know if everyone had to go into a hostel before getting their own tenancy. Lindsay advised the key issue is to make sure a young person is ready before they get their own flat. Again, this would be looked at on a case by case basis. As well as hostels, there are other ways of accessing support with independence skills and showing that a young person is ready for their own flat.

One young person asked what age you should start learning independence skills, and how can you prove that you can pay bills? Another young person said you can do AQA certificates when you are living in supported housing. There was then a wider discussion about how you can prove that you are ready for a tenancy. Managers responded that this could be confirmed in a number of different ways, eg by your IRO, P.A, carer, through AQA

certificates and other skills courses. All would be able to verify whether a young person is ready.

Action: Lindsay Edwards to seek clarity on how far back the original 5 lessons can be, to access the next set of 5

3. Overview of the year from CHICC and catch up on 2 key pieces of work

Overview of the year

Mark Hinton (Participation Worker) gave a very quick overview of the CHICC year. There had been many events and activities, and good turn out and staff support at all events. New initiatives this year included: a new CHICC group for LDD young people; a new CHICC group for unaccompanied young people; a new group for young people who have a social worker involved with their families; Project Positive in National Care Leaver's Week; Out of County Day.

A more detailed overview of the year had been given at the CHICC staff conference on Monday 3 December. Those who attended gave very positive feedback about the event, and in particular the young man who spoke about his journey from Afghanistan to the UK. Rachel Daughtry (Team Manager, IRO Service) said the film about not wearing your badge was great, using humour to get an important message across. Mark Hinton will try to get the film onto Hertfordshire CC website so all teams can access it. It's an important message from young people.

Nancy gave an update on the Christmas Appeal for Care Leavers: £1000 was raised through the sale of travel mugs (thanks were conveyed to Shannon and her team for this). £260 was raised through collections at County Hall and Farnham House. Lots of items were donated by HCC staff including throws, kitchenware, Christmas decorations and chocolate. One hundred and sixty boxes were made, packed with lovely items. In addition, one hundred and forty bags were made up, meaning 300 care leavers will benefit from a Christmas gift this year. An increase of about 100 on previous years. Nancy thanked Jo Jacobs (Participation Worker) and Mark Hinton for their tireless work on the Christmas Appeal. Flowers and biscuits were presented to them.

Catch up re Reviews work

Reviews Project: Rachel Daughtry (Team Manager, IRO service) and Nancy Burge gave an update on progress. An action plan for 'personalising' reviews was developed, following the Joint CHICC a year ago, where CHICC put forward their views about reviews. Workshops were held throughout the year and the last one is due to take place on 11 December. Achievements include: refreshments at all reviews; small boxes of 'distracting' items for all IROs to carry with them – this is in response to young people saying they feel 'stared at' so the box of activities diverts attention away; piloting of 'My review, my choices'; 'What Makes a Good Review' – going into the IRO boxes. It was felt good progress was being made and the project was drawing together. We will need to do another survey in 2019 to see if all the changes have an impact for young people.

Momo: Rachel explained that HCC is looking at options now as contract due to come to an end in 2019. Rachel explained that Momo is an app that young people can use to get a message straight to their social worker, IRO or other professional. Young people can use it to get their views into their reviews. Rachel asked if any of the young people had used Momo. Two young people had, with mixed experiences. Rachel asked young people what they thought was the best way of getting their views into reviews. One young person said the consultation form should be put on line. Another young person asked if young people could have the IRO's mobile number. Rachel said yes, and this should happen anyway. Rachel agreed to look into the possibility of business cards for IROs so young people can easily contact them – a very direct way of getting views across.

Action: Rachel Daughtry to look into business cards for IROs

Catch Up re Teens and Carers project

Nancy explained that through a series of workshops with young people, carers, participation team, fostering and social workers, a set of draft guidance was produced – this was circulated. The guidance includes a set of principles that all carers should be able to sign up to and then suggestions on how to deal with certain issues including around identity, mobile phone use etc. Unfortunately, the final workshop, due to take place last week was cancelled due to illness. Next steps were discussed in the next part of the meeting, below.

4. Discussions led by young people on specific topics

Young people chose 2 topics to discuss before the meeting.

1. How can carers and workers learn from young people?

Nancy and young people explained that the teens and carers workshops showed how useful it was for carers and workers to have open conversations with young people. How could this be rolled out so that more carers and workers can benefit? One young person said that she had often heard workers say 'I wish I had a young person with me to give me advice!'

We came up with the following ideas:

- Speak to L and D to get something into the training programme
- Continue having young people at Skills to Foster sessions and develop more content re specific issues raised by teenagers
- Explore 'on line with a young person' weekly sessions – live chat to help workers with specific questions
- Could Mocking Bird be used in some way to enable dialogue between young people and carers?

One young person sadly commented that from their experience, no matter what you say, carers will have their own rules and won't listen. Their experience of carers was that their attitude was it was their house, their rules and they did things their way.

Nancy said she would share the minutes of this meeting with fostering colleagues, and we will discuss these ideas at the final workshop (to be arranged for the New Year).

Action: Ideas for enabling workers and carers to learn from young people to be further explored at final Teens and Carer's workshop in early New Year.

2. Can the Herts Awards recognise other achievements, ie not just linked to education?

A young person explained the reason for the question. Sometimes, things can be very unsettled for a young person and it may be impossible for them to focus on education at that time. It would give encouragement to young people to be rewarded for other things too, for example sustaining a placement successfully after a series of placement moves.

Lindsay Edwards responded. She said that there are awards for things unconnected to education. Lindsay agreed to get clarity on this and let us know.

Action: Lindsay to get clarity on whether Herts Awards nominations can be made for things unconnected to education and let CHICC know

5. Recent CHICC surveys

In small groups we looked at 2 surveys completed by CHICC in 2018 to discuss what the results were telling us and what actions should be taken

1. Top Ten Tips for Carers

Fifty one young people had voted on a series of statements. 'Be there for us' and 'Involve us in Family Life' came top of the list and 'make sure we have nice things' came bottom. One young person said they were shocked that 'let us be ourselves' was on the list. It should go without saying that young people should be able to be themselves. We discussed how to get carers to know about and use all the tips. One young person felt a booklet would not help as carers wouldn't take any notice. There was a general feeling that training might be more useful.

2. Opportunities to do 'fun and 'cultural' things

52 young people completed this on line survey. We discussed the results. People were concerned that only just over half the young people had been on holiday in the last year, especially as this is in the Pledge. Even things like going to a professional sporting event scored low (17%). The results of this survey also linked to the results of the top ten tips for carers – young people are saying they want to be part of a family, and doing fun things together is so important. It was felt that young people should have the opportunity to do all the things on the list.

Actions

- 1. Rachel Daughtry will ask IROs to ask in reviews about opportunities young people get to do fun and 'cultural' things**
- 2. Matt Ansell (Operations Director Children and Families) and Nancy Burge to meet and agree an action plan to improve young people's involvement in fun and 'cultural' things**

6. Thank you to our young people

We ended the meeting by thanking all our young people for their hard work in 2018, presenting some chocolates and wishing everyone a Merry Christmas.

Dates for meetings in 2019 will be circulated in the New Year.