

## **Corporate Parenting Panel Feedback**

On 19<sup>th</sup> October 2021 15 members from the CICC met with Durham County Council's Corporate Parenting Panel (CCP) to give their suggestions of how things could be improved for children in care and care leavers in the county.

The CCP listened to these ideas and made some changes, which are described below.

This was shared with CICC members on 28 April and at the CPP meeting on 29 April.

### **Support for Care Leavers:**

#### **Young people said:**

- Young people are not aware that Care Leavers automatically get an interview for DCC jobs, if they meet the criteria
- Young people would benefit from some support when applying for jobs, and with preparation ahead of interviews
- Young people may need help/money to get a suitable interview outfit
- Young people do not feel that the care leavers allowance is enough to live on
- The emotional support for some care leavers is not adequate, especially if they don't have any support networks, which impacts on their mental health.
- Some young people felt that more support is needed when they transition from care to supported accommodation, and felt that this was unfair as young people who live with their families can take their time and move out at a point which is suitable for their needs
- Young people feel that transport is still an issue in County Durham, and the waiting list to get driving lessons is too long



#### **What we did:**

- Our Local Offer to Care Leavers is available on the internet.
- The DurhamWorks offer included in our information to Care Leavers, includes the job interview offer. This has been shared at CICC meetings and at the CPP meetings
- Reviewed our Local Offer in comparison with national Care Leavers offers

- The transport offer has been improved, with all but one college now offering bus passes that are not deducted from bursaries
- All young people in years 12-13 are now eligible for an all time top up bus pass, which can be used in addition to college travel
- The financial offer for care leavers is being reviewed
- Care leavers are eligible for Freedom Cards
- Dedicated Care Leavers team
- Opened a Care Leavers hub



Care leavers at the opening ceremony of the hub

### **Family Time:**

#### **Young people said:**

- Young people felt that the rooms where family time takes place were not always suitable
- Young people felt that the frequency and length of their family time should be considered on an individual basis. Some felt that they did not have enough time to do a nice activity, whereas some felt that their family time was too long for the circumstances / venue
- Young people said that they would like some guidance around family time as they were unsure what the rules and guidance was relating to Covid e.g. needing permission when hugging parents etc
- Young people felt that alternative options should be considered for family time, including virtual family time or phone calls which could be more frequent than in person meetings, as they often miss their families
- Young people said that sometimes, they are not given a reason for not being able to contact their family when they wanted to



#### **What we did:**

- Reviewed family time spaces
- Reviewed all family time plans
- Stopped using some venues
- Updated some venues

- Made requests for some new venues that we can use for family time
- Explained the every changing Covid rules (as best as we can)
- Had a renewed focus on everyone understanding their family time plan after Covid

### **Stigma and Discrimination**

#### **Young people said:**

- Some young people said there are rules for them, which would not be there if they were living with their own families e.g. sleepovers
- Some foster carers do not allow sleepovers with friends without visiting the home and meeting the family in advance
- Young people are not allowed to sleep over in their foster brother/sisters' rooms
- Young people said that there are still lots of negative headlines in the news about children who are in care. Some young people also experience discrimination from other parents
- Young people stressed the importance for social workers and other professionals to be truthful e.g. sometimes young people are told they're going to stay with a family member / going on a short holiday etc when they are actually being taken into care.
- Young people felt there could be more awareness in schools e.g. teachers sometimes advise young people to 'leave your worries at the door'
- Young people shared their ideas to produce a film, detailing some of their life experiences and demonstrating what it's really like to be in care.



### **What we did:**

- The Art Stops project, to reduce stigma of Care Experience, is expanding across the region.
- Introduced opportunities to celebrate success in 'proud moments' at each CPP.
- Use of language agenda item at social work team meetings, and six-monthly updates at CPP.
- Film produced by young people.
- Met with community midwives to discuss corporate grandparenting
- PCSO training to build positive relationships with the Police
- Foster carer training delivered to potential foster carers
- Fostering Stars Awards.
- Met with Josh McAlister as part of the care review.
- Care experience of a young person was shared on care day and with Josh McAlister
- CPP elected members asked to share positive stories within their communities



### **Future changes:**

#### **We are also going to:**

- Send meeting notes of CICC meetings to all CLA
- Develop a Care Leavers pack
- School Governor CPP members will be asked to raise the profile of care experienced young people, in a positive way
- Establish the Care Experienced Scrutiny committee
- Develop a Young Inspectors programme
- Develop an entry to Care Pack
- Share young people's experiences in film and other media
- Seek to broaden the attendance of children and young people at the CICC