

Children In Care Council Report Update August 2020

Current :

Chair Person : Rafael Antunes

Vice Chair : Christopher Bennett

Members in total : 11

Monthly Meetings: These have been regular with a break in August 19 for Summer Holidays . However, for August 20 we have agreed to meet due to loss of 2 meetings due to Covid 19 Lockdown and inadequate equipment to meet via Zoom until May 20.

Our meetings are due to continue to be held via Zoom until it is safe to meet in our usual meeting hall.

Visitors:

CICC have welcomed many guests over the last year who include the following
Sheila Murphy – Director of Children’s Services Early offer of Help

Janet Simon - Strategic Lead Children’s Looked After Service

Dan Jones – Senior Manager of Fostering/Adoption Placement outside of
Thurrock and Under 18 Fostering

Sandra Clark – Head of Foster Carer Team

Keeley Pullen – Head of Virtual Schools

Carly Banks - Participation and Engagement Officer

Thurrock Inspectors

Our speakers and visitors have presented The Big Wide World, Mind of My Own App and asked questions for consultation including what makes a good Social Worker, planning for 2020 Children In Care Awards Ceremony, and the Inspectors who attended Thurrock last year took a whole meeting with the members to discuss their experiences of being in care.

Meetings Attended by CICC and or Representatives

The Chair and Vice Chairpersons have attended all Corporate Parenting Committee meetings and have then reported back to the CICC members about any information they have gained about changes or plans for the future.

This has been found to be very interesting to the young people as they generally do not have information about plans and progress. Many members attended and enjoyed the Halloween Ball hosted by Thurrock Council and took part in watching the presentations, magic being performed, having a caricature drawn of themselves, the photo booth, food and festivities. A very good evening indeed.

CICC has been invited to assist in the planning for the 2020 Awards event also and have offered their thoughts and perceptions of how they feel another good evening can be planned and what can be included as well as what may not have been so enjoyable for them.

The Christmas event traditionally has been a meal out at a restaurant but this year the members requested a Christmas Party with music, traditional games such as musical chairs, charades etc and a buffet style spread to be enjoyed in combination with another group run by Open Door. We all enjoyed a fun evening and gifts were also presented as a thank you for the time and effort our members give to the Children In Care Council.

Recently two members took part in a Regional research workshop about their feelings and experience with depression and anxiety. This was hosted by a researcher at UCA University.

Topics of Discussion by CICC

Our discussions are varied and suggested by our members and include

Length of service of Chair and Vice Chair

Design of Current Leaflet to promote CICC to other young people in Care

Recruitment of new members

Dear Future Me Cards sent by Children's Commissioners

Thurrock Pledge

Preparation for further Education, University

Transition to adulthood

Discussion about what a young person in care wishes to know about a placement and what they feel the placement need to know about the individual young person.

Discussion about discomfort in school when they are taken into care

Discomfort with friends regarding after school activities e.g. visiting their friends houses or their friends visiting them.

Placement breakdowns and how frequently they might happen

Our members have discussed a number of issues and have agreed that they can be made to feel quite invisible on occasions when in meetings where their life is being discussed however on the positive side members have advised that some have great Social Workers and feel very involved. It appears to be inconsistent and dependant on the social workers, IRO's and meeting attendees.

Our members are very interested in any news that may be being disseminated to them and are happy to discuss and give their views on just about any subject.

Summary

Overall, our members have enjoyed the topics of discussion and have been happy to be able to converse directly with Managers of Thurrock Council. The lockdown has been a very big difficulty for everyone, but we have continued to meet via Zoom and have maintained the profile for CICC and the importance the young people feel is attributed to this group.

In recent months during lock down some members have struggled with the internet and that they only have their telephones to work on to connect with the group. Unfortunately, they often do not have the resources to have internet at home once they have left care. This remains an issue despite Open Door funding some tablets which have been distributed, the young person still needs access to internet connection.

Our aim that we have highlighted and discussed, will be to widen our scope of members by being able to host Zoom members along side the more local members and this will allow far more young people to attend and have their voices heard.