

**Open Report on behalf of Janice Spencer OBE,
Interim Director of Children's Services**

Report to:	Corporate Parenting Panel
Date:	14 November 2019
Subject:	Voices for Choices (V4C) Update Report

Summary:

This report gives a summary and overview of activities with regard to V4C between July and October 2019. V4C is Lincolnshire's Children in Care Council with the aim being to share experiences of being looked after in Lincolnshire and to inform teams who support Looked After Children what does and does not work for them. V4C meetings are held within Children's Services locality quadrants and are delivered by Senior Youth and Community Development Workers and supported by Children's Services Participation Officers.

This report also provides Corporate Parenting Panel with an update with regard to the planning and progress, further to discussions at previous panel meetings, that has taken place to develop V4C in terms of utilising new and alternative venues to those that have been historically used.

Actions Required:

The Corporate Parenting Panel is requested to consider and comment on the report and highlight recommendations regarding:

- Planning and use of future venues outlined in the report
- Future use of LCC youth centres for delivery of V4C meetings and activities

1. Background

The following items are discussed within this section:

- V4C update and venue planning:
 - Lincoln and West Lindsey
 - East Lindsey
 - North and South Kesteven
 - Boston and South Holland
- Summary of V4C venue planning and visits
- Use of Royal Air Force venues for V4C meetings
- Use of Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue Service venues for V4C meetings
- V4C budget summary

- The 'Imps Trail' – potential new V4C project
- The Big Conversation

V4C activities and planning are detailed below and have been outlined within the 4 quadrant areas:

Lincoln and West Lindsey

A summary of attendance is provided below:

Month of meeting	Venue	Number of children and young people attended
June	Welton Youth Centre, Lincoln	12
July	Welton Youth Centre, Lincoln	12
August	No V4C meeting due to holiday youth work activities held	Not applicable
September	Washingborough Bowl (10 pin bowling)	10
October	Washingborough Bowl (10 pin bowling)	12

The following venues are timetabled to be utilised between November – March 2020:

November	The Escape Room, Lincoln. Outcome to support the group to work as a team and communicate more effectively
December	Christmas meal – venue to be confirmed
January	Ice skating venue
February	Gainsborough Leisure Centre
March	To be confirmed

After the summer break the first meeting took place at Washingborough Bowling as a 'Welcome Back' providing the opportunity in a relaxed atmosphere to get the group back together and discuss positive events over the summer and any issues the young people had come across over this time and welcome any new members.

The change of venue went down well with the young people and one new member attended.

Since this meeting it has been agreed that the V4C groups will meet in different venues each month although the subsequent meeting was again held at Washingborough Bowl due to limited time to book another venue.

Discussions about the use of different venues and possible places the group could meet in the future were held. The young people indicated they are keen on visiting different venues and came up with the venues outlined above.

The group discussed the Big Conversation and its structure and purpose and the importance of joining in with the discussion, and undertook some further review of the Care Pledge in terms of its content.

Discussions have been held about how the sessions are to be run including content, delivery methods and the balance between fun social time and constructive discussion and work.

As a result the group agreed they will develop their own pledge in terms of V4C to outline what staff expect from the group and what the group expect from the staff with the aim being to help provide that effective balance between fun activities and more formal discussion.

It was also agreed that young people will take the lead on some sessions to help develop their confidence in leading and taking part in more formal discussion.

East Lindsey

A summary of attendance is provided below over the reporting period:

Month of meeting	Venue	Number of children and young people attended
August	No V4C meeting due to holiday youth work activities held	Not applicable
September	Skegness Youth Centre	12
October	Lazerquest, Skegness	8

The following venues are timetabled to be utilised between November 2019 – March 2020:

November	Back2Bear Outdoor Activity Centre, Kenwick Hill, Louth Meeting at the centre. Campfire cooking and tasted marshmallows on the outdoor cooking area. Followed by trust games being delivered by the Back to Bear Staff.
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December	Eastside Ceramics, Mablethorpe Paint activities - Christmas pottery. Finished items will be delivered back to young people in time for Christmas. Meeting/discussion to take place during activity.
January	Christmas pantomime trip
February	North Sea Observatory and Chocolate Workshop.
March	Chequered Flag Karting, Holton le Clay Meeting before activity in activity room.

Feedback about the above schedule from the children and young people has been positive overall and there has been acceptance that at times some activities may be more suitable than others for different age groups. The group also suggested that some activities should be specific for future regular attendees and contributors.

From a staff perspective the October meeting and activity progressed well although it was difficult at times to maintain the attention of attendees due to the amount of distractions.

North and South Kesteven

A summary of attendance is provided below over the reporting period:

Month of meeting	Venue	Number of children and young people attended
July	North Hykeham Youth Centre	6
August	No V4C meeting due to holiday youth work activities held	Not applicable
September	Sleaford Children and Young Persons Centre	5
October	Ancaster Leisure - Bowling	7

Planning for future venues and activities is to be confirmed:

November	Pottery Painting Café, Sleaford
December	Planned Christmas activity – ice skating
January	To be confirmed
February / March	To be confirmed, Bowling at Grantham to be planned in one of these months

During the September meeting Andrew Garbutt, Participation Officer, discussed the 'My Placement' game, and this was played with the young people to gauge their interest in learning more about the game and how they could use this as a training tool with workers.

Discussions were held with the young people around their Christmas celebration activity, and what they would like to do. The young people expressed a desire to do an activity, and then have a celebration at North Hykeham Youth Centre with snacks and presents similar to last year.

The October meeting was held at Ancaster Leisure for ten pin bowling. Andrew Garbutt attended again to discuss further with the young people in more detail the 'My Placement' game, and began to highlight young people who may be more interested in training, and also who would be suitable for this.

Some young people did become restless and slightly disruptive as they just wanted to bowl and not take part in the discussion.

For the November meeting it is planned to be held at the Sleaford pottery painting cafe, where young people can engage in discussion whilst making something for Christmas. Some of the young people had said that they have been to this centre previously and enjoyed going there.

The December meeting is expected to be an Ice Skating trip, although this is as yet unknown where, and depends on if there is the ice rink in Lincoln this year.

The Senior Youth and Community Development Worker has also attended a supported accommodation meeting to discuss V4C and will be in regular contact with them from now on and plans to visit premises to talk to young people there so that they get an understanding of V4C to encourage future attendance.

Boston and South Holland

There has not been any attendance for V4C meetings in Boston and South Holland over this reporting period.

Please see the table below for planned venues to re-launch the V4C groups in Boston & South Holland. The Youth and Community Development Worker has undertaken communications with teams, children and young people to publicise the V4C meetings and activities.

October	Boston Bowl, Boston. V4C Re-Launch Session
November	Fun Farm, Spalding: Laser Storm
December	Boston Bowl
January	Alley Catz, Bowling, Spalding
February	'Play Towers' (climbing) Boston.
March	Scalextric Racing, Spalding.

Summary of V4C Venue Planning And Visits

The Participation Officers and Senior Youth and Community Development Workers have undertaken a series of visits to a range of external venues. This is over and above those mentioned earlier in this report. In addition, following desk top research on suitable options, the Participation Team has a wider summative list of further venues to be explored.

Venues visited are outlined below of which a range can be considered possible options for future V4C meetings. Note: visits have been focused on Boston, South Holland and East Lindsey areas where V4C attendance has had the lowest figures of attendance.

Boston and South Holland
Boston United Football Club
Fun Farm (Spalding)
Lincolnshire Wildlife Park (Friskney)
Alleycatz Bowling (Spalding)
Ark Wildlife Park (Stickney)
Scalextric (Spalding)
Doodles (Spalding)
Baytree Owl and Wildlife Centre (Spalding)
Leisure Centre (Spalding)

East Lindsey
Back 2 Bear (Outdoor activity centre at Kenwick)
Altitude 44 High Wire (Skegness)
Meridian Leisure Centre (Louth)
London Road Pavilion (Louth)
Skegness Pool and Fitness Suite
North Sea Observatory
The Seal Sanctuary Wildlife Centre (Mablethorpe)
The Storehouse (Skegness)
Hardy's Animal Farm (Ingoldmells)
Tattershall Farm Park
Tattershall Karting Centre
North and South Kesteven
Adventure Lincolnshire (RAF Cranwell)
Lincoln
Active Nation

In order to raise the profile of V4C further, activities are being undertaken to help increase awareness including:

- New leaflets and publicity are being produced which will be distributed out to Children's Services teams
- Participation Officers and Senior Youth and Community Development Workers are visiting teams and contacts within their quadrant areas to discuss and publicise V4C
- Updates regarding V4C are being given to groups such as the Children's Services Stakeholder Engagement Group for representatives to feedback into their teams

Use Of Royal Air Force Venues For V4C

The Participation Team has spoken with the Public Communications Officer at RAF Cranwell who explained that many sites are Phase One (basic/initial training) Training Units and so there is an issue of safeguarding on MOD establishments which means that V4C meetings could not be held on these sites.

There is a Community Support Team that works with children with a service connection or the Community Development Officers who work with schools and groups to run selection and recruitment types of activities, although these would normally work within school hours.

Advice was given to contact the Armed Forces Careers Office to discuss any support they may be able to offer but this would not be based at an RAF venue.

Use Of Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue Service Venues For V4C

Planning is ongoing to establish V4C in potential fire stations and the Participation Team met with the Premises Officer for Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue and a representative from the Corporate Property Board in September. V4C was

explained to them along with what the requirements would be for running the groups.

The Premises Officer has since met with all of the Divisional Commanders in October and they are currently undertaking planning within each division to establish which stations will be best suited as venues and ensuring appropriate staffing is available for delivery of potential activities.

Once specific fire stations have been identified as appropriate V4C venues these will be able to be scheduled into future venue timetabling.

V4C Budget Summary

There is a £3,625 annual budget for V4C activities which is located within the Quality and Standards Service Area. There is additional £2,010 annual budget for the Youth Council for youth participation and consultation work. Budget forecasting planning undertaken in October indicates that the costs of the above V4C activities along with Youth Council activities can be accommodated across both budgets, if pooled, based on maximum numbers of attendees on specific activities.

The Imps Trail - Potential New V4C Project

The Senior Youth and Community Development Worker for North and South Kesteven has identified a potential exciting opportunity for V4C that could also help to promote the groups.

In recent years the Lincoln Business Improvement Group (Lincoln BIG) have run two trails around the city with painted sculptures: the Knights and Barons. They have just announced that next summer they will be doing an 'Imps Trail'.

It will be explored whether the V4C groups can submit a joint design from the young people of V4C, and then work with the organisers to bring this to life, either as part of the 30 main sculptures, or one of the 60 education sculptures. The young people can come up with a design that represents them in some way, and then paint it themselves with the support of the organisers. This could then be used to go towards both an ASDAN award, and a Bronze Arts Award for the young people.

Big Conversation

The next Big Conversation is due to take place at The Showroom in Lincoln at the end of October. Currently 18 young people are confirmed to attend with 14 choosing to take part in the Climbing Wall activity being offered in the afternoon. The event will be attended by senior Children's Services staff and Councillors who chair and sit on the Corporate Parenting Panel. The agenda for the meeting is to discuss the 'Language that Cares' initiative and the refresh of the Lincolnshire Care Pledge. Refreshments, lunch and the activity are all provided as part of the event.

2. Conclusions

Work has been undertaken to identify potential alternative venues for V4C meetings has been progressing over this reporting period. Progress has been made in developing:

- A summative list of potential venues and organisations across the county which can be updated on an ongoing basis
- Appropriate venues via a number of physical visits completed
- Outline schedules of V4C meetings in each quadrant to be held in a range of venues running through until the end of the financial year in March 2020
- Venues and activities that have taken place in October

It is intended that by the end of March 2020 the venues and activities that have been used and delivered will be evaluated to inform planning into the new financial year.

The use of different venues has been welcomed by attendees of V4C however there has been issues with regard to behaviour management and distractions within certain venues and it is noted that there may be difficulties to balance the fun and social activities against constructive work and discussions at times.

A V4C programme, using similar alternative venues to youth centres across each of the 4 locality quadrants over a full 12 month period will be difficult to achieve within present budgets. Further work to identify potential free to use /minimal cost venues is needed with the fire service venues will help towards this.

As a result it is recommended that consideration is given regarding the continued use of some current youth centre venues, possibly on a rota basis.

3. Consultation

Have Risks and Impact Analysis been carried out?

Risk assessments carried out via the Senior Youth And Community Development Workers

4. Background Papers

This report was written by Ben Lilley, Team Manager (Quality and Standards), who can be contacted on 07876 212470 or at ben.lilley@lincolnshire.gov.uk

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