



Policy and Scrutiny

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

Report to:	Corporate Parenting Panel
Date:	12 March 2020
Subject:	Outcomes from the 2019-20 Tell Us Survey and Big Conversation 20

Summary:

This report gives a summary and overview of 2 key elements of participation and engagement work within Children's Services over the last quarter period of the year:

1. The Tell Us Survey: this annual survey is designed to capture the views of children in our care about various aspects of their care experience with the intention being to identify how services can be improved and ensure children and young people have a forum to raise issues and concerns about their experiences in order to help Children's Services develop support further where needed.
2. The Big Conversation: Big Conversation events are held three times a year (February, May and October) and provide an opportunity for children in our care to share their experiences and help shape and improve our care services. The Big Conversation meetings enable children and young people from the four locality based Voices 4 Choices groups (Lincolnshire's Children in Care Council) to come together, also with care leavers to share their views on a range of topics and issues.

Actions Required:

Members of Corporate Parenting Panel are requested to consider and comment on the Big Conversation and Tell Us Survey update report and highlight any recommendations for future consideration.

1. Background

Tell Us Survey 2019-20

The latest Tell Us Survey was undertaken in December 2019 for children aged 12+ in care. The survey was completed on 20th January 2020 and an overview is provided below with the full report embedded within the background papers

section. There were 38 responses in total and a summary of the report findings are provided below in line with general sections of the survey:

'Where You Live'

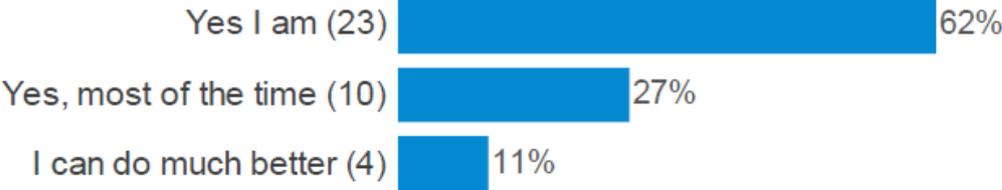
Children and young people were asked whether they were happy where they lived:



- No respondents stated they were unhappy and there were 100% positive responses regarding being encouraged to feel part of the family, being encouraged to learn, listening to concerns and being supported to make good choices
- 90% (34 respondents) stated they went on family holidays
- 81% (13 respondents) stated that they were happy with respite times with those feeding back (3 in total) they were unhappy citing lack of access to wi-fi and other activities
- 55% (21 respondents) stated they saw friends outside of school
- There was a very wide range of leisure interests that respondents are involved with in their spare time

'Your Education'

Children and young people were asked whether they thought they were doing as well as they can at school:



- A large majority of respondents stated they were getting the help and support they needed to help them meet school/college targets:



- The Participation Team have followed up the 2 respondents who stated they were not getting help with relevant social workers to support
- 79% (30 respondents) stated they were involved in writing their personal education plan

- 30% (11 respondents) stated they had not heard of the Virtual School and the support it can give

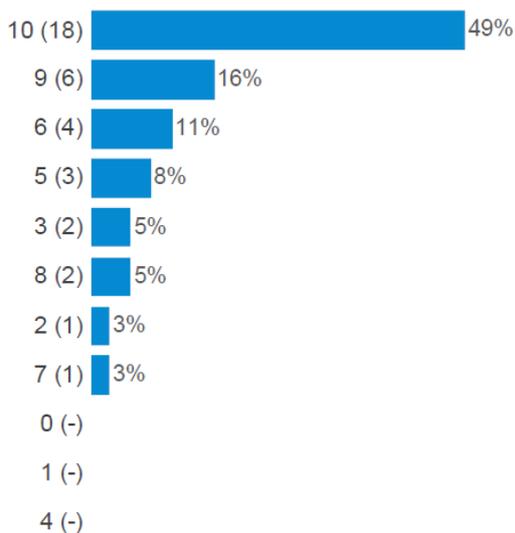
'Your Social Worker'

- 97% (35 respondents) stated their social worker was interested in them doing well
- 90% (34 respondents) stated their social worker explained things to them
- There were 5 responses that stated their social worker was not easy to contact and 8 responses stating their social worker does not do what they agree to
- On a scale of 0-10 76% (28 respondents) stated they were happy with their social worker, scoring 6+ on the scale with 49% (18 respondents) scoring a 10 on the scale:

0 – my social worker does nothing to help me

10 – my social worker is very supportive and acts in my best interest

(.)



- Qualitative feedback in the survey showed that most respondents were happy the support they were given. There were some comments that they would like their social worker to visit more often and help with specific issues such as sorting out a bus pass

'Your Independent Reviewing Officer'

- 87% (32 respondents) stated they have their say and contributed to their Care Plan. 11% (4 respondents) stated they did not know yet what a Care Plan was
- 100% go to reviews mostly or some times
- There was an overwhelming response that IRO's make it easy for children and young people to take part in reviews:



- There were a range of agreed ways IRO's keep in touch including by visits, phone calls and texts
- Most respondents were happy with their reviews overall but some individually suggested they could be better if everyone contributed, parents attended and if the timing allowed carers to attend

'Your Health and Well Being'

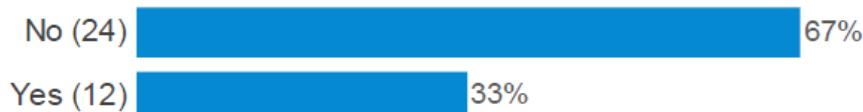
- The vast majority of children and young people stated they felt healthy both physically and emotionally:



- 82% (31 respondents) stated they do at least 1 hour of moderate to energetic activity every day
- 97% (37 respondents) stated they have someone to talk to if worried about something. 1 respondent who stated they did not and this has been passed on to the social worker to follow up and support
- 4 respondents stated they had experienced bullying and that this has not been resolved. The relevant social workers have been notified of this to follow up and ensure support is provided
- 97% (36 respondents) stated they felt they were well looked after

'Your Rights'

- 81% (29 respondents) stated they had heard of V4C and 50% (18 respondents) had attended a V4C session. 19% (7 respondents) stated they have not heard of V4C. Publicity information was sent out to all relevant children and young people in December 2020 during the time of the survey being completed
- A majority of respondents stated they had not heard of the Care Pledge:



- 27% (10 respondents) were not aware they can request an Advocate to help them. This will be highlighted in the planned Care Pledge refresh this year, which has now begun, and this refresh and review will enable awareness of the Care Pledge to be raised significantly
- 95% (36 respondents) knew how to complain if they felt they were not being listened to or treated fairly. 2 respondents stated they did not know and this information has been sent to the relevant workers to follow up

'Your Future'

- A significant majority stated they are doing more for themselves and helping their independence



- 81% (20 respondents) rated themselves as 7-10 in a scale of feeling positive about the future with 10 being the most positive as a score
- 83% (30 respondents) had not seen or been given the Skills For Adult Life Booklet

Suggested follow up and actions from the Tell Us Survey:

The following are suggestions for follow up and future actions:

1. The Lincolnshire Care Pledge:
Further awareness of the Care Pledge needs to take place. 2020 provides an excellent opportunity to do this as work has just begun at the Big Conversation in February on refreshing the content and visual appearance of the pledge, including the potential renaming of it as 'Lincolnshire's Caring Promise'
2. Skills for Adult Life Booklet:
Further consideration to be given to ensure practitioners/carers work with the young people in their care to assess and build skills for transitioning to adulthood, including reviewing the Skills for Adult Life booklet to provide assurance its content is useful
3. 45% stated they do not meet friends outside school. It is recommended further discussion to take place with children and young people to see how children in care can be supported to maintain friendships and how significant an issue this is
4. The Virtual School:
18% (7 respondents) stated they don't know what an ePEP is. 30% (11 respondents) stated they had not heard of the Virtual School and the support it can give. Based on this being a small sample these figures merit further investigation although those that need additional support may learn of the Virtual School at a date when appropriate?

5. Responses indicated 49% (17 respondents) do not have respite/time away and 29% (10 respondents) have had 5 or more respites in the last 12 months. Further investigation of this area is therefore recommended to look into the individual reasons around these specific responses to understand the situations of the children and young people

Big Conversation 20

The latest Big Conversation (number 20) was held at Louth Leisure Centre on 18th February 2020. 15 children and young people attended along with carers and a range of professionals including senior leaders and elected members.

Review of Language – 'Language That Cares'

Following on from the previous Big Conversation in October 2019, there has been further work and discussion undertaken in terms of specific language and terms that professionals use both to describe the status and circumstances applicable to children and young people receiving care and also certain procedures and experiences.

A clear consensus has developed among professionals, carers, children and young people that some of the language and terminology used within Children's Services needs to be reviewed and alternatives established, and this reflects similar work that is taking place nationally and across other local authorities.

In particular there was a strongly expressed desire to change terms such as 'Looked after Child', 'LAC' and 'respite', which have inspired wider discussion.

A working group of relevant professionals have been meeting to develop this alongside discussions between children and young people within V4C groups.

At the Big Conversation in February the Participation Team led a workshop to outline potential alternative language and also have further discussion. It was explained and understood that some words and terms are not easy to change as there is no other simple option to explain the same thing. Some terms are also not easy to change as they are nationally recognised and/or legal or professional terms. As result it was agreed that the following suggested changes could be explored further, with a view to move towards these new descriptions which are considered more accurate descriptively and easier to understand:

Current terminology	Agreed alternative
Birth parents	Parents
Care Plan	Future Plan
Contact	Family Time
Looked after Child	Child in Care
Pathway Plan	Future Plan
Placement	Home
Respite	Time Away
Review	Progress Meeting

Statutory Visit	Visit
Transition	Change

During discussions and feedback at the Big Conversation it was also suggested the term 'support lodging' be reviewed along with the job title 'Independent Reviewing Officer'.

Review of Language Next Steps

It was acknowledged that any changes to language will take time, with changes potentially to team names, job titles and records as examples. In addition, staff training will be needed to explain and being to embed changes, and as part of this there is a potential activity for a group of children and young people to produce a film explaining the changes in language and terminology and the reasons for this.

The Care Pledge

It is recognised that the Care Pledge is now due to be reviewed and refreshed and children and young people are being involved in this through the Big Conversation. Following on from a briefer discussion at the October Big Conversation and discussions within V4C groups over recent months a workshop at the February Big Convesation was held at which it was agreed that the Care Pledge should be renamed as the 'Caring Promise'.

Attendees were invited to read and comment on the suggested changes to the content of the Caring Promise under the new 6 headings of:

We promise to:

- Involve you
- Work with you
- Support your daily life
- Help you to be healthy and stay safe
- Support your education, employment and training
- Explain your rights and where else to go for help

Feedback from these discussions will lead to further, and final, amendments to the Caring Promise.

The workshop also presented attendees with a range of design ideas and these were rated and commented on. The Participation Team will now develop the most popular ideas further to be shared for wider comment in April.

An example of one of the design options that proved popular is below:



In addition, Barnardo's Care Leavers looked at a draft 'Guide to Leaving Care' and suggested changes that will be actioned by the Participation Team and brought back to the next Big Conversation in May 2020.

2. Conclusion

Overall, there has been significant engagement of children and young people with regard to the theme of changing certain language and terminology within Children's Services, and this has led to a consensus emerging around potential alternatives with the challenge now being for changes to be confirmed and embedded, which it is acknowledged could take time to realise.

The results from the Tell Us Survey are positive with the majority of responses indicating that children and young people are receiving good and significant levels of support and are therefore having positive experiences. The survey results also provide a steer to undertake further investigation and discussion about respite issues and holiday time, children and young people's access to meeting up with friends and further raising awareness activities around the Caring Promise and the Skills for Adult Life Booklet.

The Participation Team will look at potential ways to increase the number of survey completions for the Care Pledge including a greater volume of publicity and a longer period of time for the survey to be available for completion.

3. Consultation

a) Have Risks and Impact Analysis been carried out?

Not applicable

b) Risks and Impact Analysis

Not applicable

4. Appendices

These are listed below and attached at the back of the report	
Appendix A	Tell Us Survey Report – February 2020

5. Background Papers

No background papers within Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972 were used in the preparation of this report.

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

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