



**Open Report on behalf of Heather Sandy,
Executive Director - Children's Services**

Report to:	Corporate Parenting Panel
Date:	11 March 2021
Subject:	Voices for Choices (V4C) Update Report

Summary:

This report gives a summary and overview of:

- Activities with regard to V4C between October 2020 – January 2021;
- Future V4C planning and progress, including consulting with children and young people within our residential settings; and
- soundLINCS V4C music sessions for children and young people.

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 Children in Care 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.

Actions Required:

The Corporate Parenting Panel is invited to provide comment and steer regarding:

1. V4C activities and meetings undertaken within the reporting period.
2. Future planning and delivery of V4C meetings and activities.

1. Background

V4C delivery October 2020 – January 2021

During this reporting period, due to the on-going restrictions and unavailability of physical activities and meetings, V4C and engagement activities have continued to be delivered, and attempted to be delivered, remotely via the Zoom platform.

The details below provide a summary of virtual V4C sessions and attendances by locality:

Lincoln and West Lindsey

Date of meeting	Venue	Number of young people attended
3 October 2020	Zoom meeting	3
12 October 2020	Northolme Children's Home	6
29 October 2020	Holiday activities	4
5 November 2020	Zoom meeting	2
3 December 2020	Zoom meeting	1
3 December 2020	Zoom meeting	1
3 December 2020	Phone call 1-2-1	1

During this period, V4C delivery staff visited Northolme Children's Residential Home in Gainsborough to speak with and engage directly with the children and young people, with the result being that four of the residents participated in V4C activities in October and fed back that they enjoyed the sessions. However, due to Coronavirus infections among staff within the home after this, it was not possible for the meetings to continue after November and this has since been on hold, with planning now taking place to hopefully resume. Meetings in January have proved difficult to gain engagement with four young people feeding back they have moved onto college and have other commitments. Feedback from children at Northolme has been that they would like to return to physical activity based meetings.

October Holiday Activity:

A V4C activity session was held at Wild Pines Park in Market Rasen. Numbers able to attend were limited due to Covid-19 restrictions but four young people participated in and enjoyed undertaking archery and a rope course: <https://www.wildpinespark.com/>

Boston and South Holland

Attendances within the Boston and South Holland locality are below, with regular weekly meetings and some good levels of attendance and engagement:

Date of meeting	Venue	Number YP Attended
7 October 2020	Zoom	8
14 October 2020	Zoom	8
28 October 2020	Zoom	8
4 November 2020	Zoom	7
11 November 2020	Zoom	8
18 November 2020	Zoom	8
25 November 2020	Zoom	8
2 December 2020	Zoom	8
9 December 2020	Zoom	10
16 December 2020	Zoom	9
13 January 2021	Zoom	6
20 January 2021	Zoom	7
27 January 2021	Zoom	8

The young people are still enjoying their weekly V4C sessions and would like it to continue running weekly. There is a consistent group of young people who attend every week and the number of young people is similar each week.

The sessions are taking place over Zoom and consist of crafts, quizzes, sport and bingo activities. The young people receive packs which contain the resources for that month along with a programme of what activities will occur and when. The programme also tells the young people what is included in their packs and what resources they will need from home.

In October, the young people created Halloween themed crafts including pony bead pumpkins and Halloween stain glass. They also participated in bingo and had a night playing the Name that Emoji game.

In November there was a Remembrance Day craft where they created a poppy cross stitch and other activities included bingo and quiz night which the young people always enjoy. During the Remembrance Day session on 11 November, staff facilitated a conversation about Remembrance Day. Staff shared a video called The Poppy Story which is a book animation. The young people had seen the video previously and recited the In Flanders Fields poem alongside the video. Two young people knew this Poem from Scouts and saluted during the recital which was a lovely moment. The last craft of the month was Christmas themed and the young people created an advent calendar to be used throughout December.



December consisted of lots more Christmas activities including a Christmas quiz, Christmas tree decorations and Christmas wreaths. On the final session of the year, the young people had a Christmas party which included Christmas bingo, quiz and Christmas songs. They also received a little extra in their packs including Christmas chocolates and notebook as well as Christmas dress up items (Elf hat and masks!).



Andrew Garbutt from the Participation Team joined the group for some consultation on the Tell Us Survey. The young people gave their views on whether the questions made sense, the language was understandable and if there were any

other questions which should be asked. That session was followed by 30 minutes of physical activity to keep the young people on their toes! The rest of the month's activities consisted of bingo and quiz.

On 3 February 2021, the South Holland and Boston V4C group delivered an additional session alongside the Lincolnshire Youth Commission regarding a Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) consultation that is on-going. Two young people from V4C attended this session – one male, 17 years old and one female, just turned 18 years old. Claudia James, Project Coordinator for the Lincolnshire Youth Commission, facilitated the session supported by three young people from the Lincolnshire Youth Commission. The discussion surrounded night-time safety and relationships with the Police and they gained detailed responses from the two V4C young people. The Co-ordinator fed back that they were very impressed with the contribution of the young people and also their confidence, which has grown through V4C involvement. This is a great example of partnership working and young people participating and giving their views to inform change.

North and South Kesteven

Date of meeting	Venue	Number of Young People Attended
8 October 2020	Zoom	1:1
8 October 2020	Zoom	1:1
20 October 2020	Zoom	1:1
21 October 2020	Telephone	1:1
26 October 2020	Activity Venue	1:1
17 November 2020	Zoom	1:1
17 November 2020	Zoom	1:1
18 December 2020	Zoom	1:1
19 January 2021	Zoom	2:1
20 January 2021	Zoom	1:1

Young people in the North and South Kesteven quadrant requested that they had 1:1 meetings on zoom rather than group meetings. Meetings were scheduled on either a weekly or fortnightly basis, using the meetings to check in with young people and ensure they were ok. Discussions have focussed on how young people are coping with the changes in local lockdown situations and schooling, alongside looking at the Kooth (counselling support) website and updating young people on the changes and progress of the Language that Care's and Lincolnshire Caring Promise work.

East Lindsey

Virtual meetings have been difficult to progress in East Lindsey. Feedback from young people has been that they prefer telephone check-ins, and these have been happening. There are five young people and two older young people from Barnardo's Leaving Care Service who are having individual contacts with the worker delivering V4C but group Zoom sessions, when attempted, have not resulted in engagement.

V4C Virtual soundLINCS Programme

The soundLINCS music project was established to enable young people from the V4C groups to take part in an activity to support their health and wellbeing during the summer.

The project consisted of three different sessions, over a number of dates, delivered by soundLINCS and/or Participation and Youth Work staff:

- Rhymes and Beats
- Learning to play the Ukulele
- Electronic Music Production

Each session had a maximum number of four young people to ensure each person had quality time and got the most out of the activity. Sessions were held from the end of August to early October with 38 children and young people attending, with details given in the previous V4C Corporate Parenting Panel Report.

Feedback from the sessions has been very positive, with young people requesting further sessions.

As a result a second phase of soundLincs V4C workshops has been developed and has operated since October 2020 through to January 2021. Following consultation with young people, the content of the sessions delivered, during evening sessions, has been:

- Rhyme and Beats
- Learn to Play the Ukulele
- Electronic Music Production

Attendances are shown below with good engagement from the young people:

Date of meeting	Venue	Number of young people attended
06.10.20 session 1	Zoom	2
06.10.20 session 2	Zoom	1
03.12.20 session 1	Zoom	5
03.12.20 session 2	Zoom	3
10.12.20 session 1	Zoom	5
10.12.20 session 2	Zoom	1
07.01.20 session 1	Zoom	4
07.01.20 session 2	Zoom	2
17.01.21 session 1	Zoom	3
17.01.21 session 2	Zoom	2
14.01.21 session 2	Zoom	4
14.01.21 session 2	Zoom	1
21.01.21 session 1	Zoom	4
21.01.21 session 2	Zoom	2

Further communication regarding more sessions (see Appendix A for an example of information sent out) are in place for February and March and have been filled, with 20 sessions overall (two on each date below):

Electronic Music Production	Mon 22 February	Mon 1 March	Mon 8 March	Mon 15 March	Mon 22 March
Beats & Rhymes	Thurs 25 February	Thurs 4 March	Thurs 11 March	Thurs 18 March	Thurs 25 March

V4C Planning

Action planning has taken place that seeks to establish the return to face to face delivery dependent on potential different levels of restrictions and what can be safely achieved in working towards face to face delivery. This includes making considerations and planning regarding:

- potential venues where V4C could be delivered
- options of activities that could be delivered or externally commissioned
- delivery of bespoke sessions for children in residential settings including potential delivery within homes settings

The following actions are taking place to develop and encourage engagement and participation from children and young people:

- Participation Team staff visiting children and staff in the residential homes to consult on what they would like future V4C sessions and delivery to look like, with a possible option to deliver sessions within the homes.
- Questionnaires are being circulated to get feedback from young people on the content and delivery of future V4C sessions.
- Planning to continue with the option of providing virtual V4C meetings in addition to physical meetings and activities when they resume. This will help to offer V4C for young people who are unable or do not wish to attend physical meetings.
- Home addresses of the children and young people have been analysed so there is an understanding of where best to focus future locations of possible meetings to be most easily accessed for transport.
- Developing a new plan of participation activities for children and young people to feedback on within meetings.
- On-going communication via V4C and foster carers newsletters, Facebook and communications to teams.
- Planning is being undertaken to arrange a film of V4C young people to talk about language and their views which will be shared with staff to raise awareness.

The aim is to re-establish face to face V4C meetings in risk assessed formats and delivery locations when possible. Further discussions directly with children and young people will take place to help understand and ensure V4C sessions are engaging and address any barriers to engagement.

2. Conclusions

A) Delivery of V4C meetings and sessions has taken place virtually via Zoom since the spring time. This report evidences that virtual delivery remains inconsistent in terms of successful engagement with children and young people. The Youth Development Workers in the Boston and South Holland quadrant (Charli Morley and Amy Davies) continue to deliver innovative and fun activities on a very regular basis which has achieved excellent engagement and feedback. The Lincoln and West Lindsey quadrant has also maintained engagement and staff have linked with Northolme Children's Residential Home. Although attendances have declined in January it is hoped this picks up into February.

However, the North and South Kesteven and East Lindsey quadrants report repeated difficulties in obtaining children and young people's willingness to engage in the virtual meetings. These on-going difficulties will be explored further to understand reasons why engagement is limited through discussions with young people and staff from the Eastgate Residential Home.

B) Feedback from the soundLINCS music programme for V4C members provides a further example that virtual delivery of activities can be successful and engaging. As a result, extended sessions have been arranged with soundLINCS as feedback has shown young people would be interested in further music based activities.

C) As stated in the previous report to the Panel, virtual V4C meetings have been popular among certain young people. They offer a different mechanism for them to communicate, engage and give their views. Some young people prefer this method to physical meetings. It also enables participation where young people are unable to travel to certain locations. It is therefore recommended that these options of meetings continue in some form when physical meetings resume.

D) Planning will now continue to establish a format for face to face V4C meetings to resume.

3. Consultation

a) Risks and Impact Analysis

Risk assessments are carried out via the Senior Youth and Community Development Workers.

4. Appendices

These are listed below and attached at the back of the report	
Appendix A	V4C Music Flyer

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 at ben.lilley@lincolnshire.gov.uk