

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

Report to:	<b>Corporate Parenting Panel</b>
Date:	<b>22 July 2021</b>
Subject:	<b>Voices for Choices (V4C) Update Report</b>

**Summary:**

This report gives a summary and overview of:

- Activities with regard to V4C between February 2021 – June 2021.
- Future V4C planning and progress, including consulting with children and young people within our residential settings.
- 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 February – June 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. However, towards the

end of this reporting period physical face to face meetings have begun to be reintroduced and established.

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

Lincoln and West Lindsey

<b>Date of meeting</b>	<b>Venue</b>	<b>Attendance</b>
February	No meeting due to Co-vid staffing issues	0
3 <sup>rd</sup> March	Northolme Children’s Home, Gainsborough	6
12 <sup>th</sup> May	North Hykeham Youth Centre	3
28 <sup>th</sup> May	Let's Get Quizzical Virtual but held from Northolme	5
2 <sup>nd</sup> June	Holiday Activity North Hykeham Youth Centre	4
4 <sup>th</sup> June	Holiday Activity Wild Pines Market Rasen	4

During this period, V4C delivery staff have continued to visit and work with Northolme Children's Residential Home in Gainsborough to speak with and engage directly with the children and young people.

Meetings have now re-started face to face and are going well once per month with young people also joining in the Virtual Let's Get Quizzical activity each month.

Following a Covid risk assessment then group has been meeting at North Hykeham Youth Centre. Young people like the more focused meetings with the Participation Officers setting monthly topics, and the young people attending are engaging well. The V4C group is involved in re-designing and refreshing Children's Services Coming into Care Kit. In addition, in July the intention is to join up the V4C group with young people from the Young Inspectors project to potentially offer them the opportunity to be involved with some future inspection work.

Young people also took part in the June Holiday activities. A request has been made by Northolme to support a young person doing work experience.

The Senior Youth and Community Development Worker is visiting Northolme on a monthly basis to engage with the young people who don't attend the wider sessions and to build relationships with the staff and all young people. This is working well with hosted the 'Let's get Quizzical' virtual quiz being delivered from the home. Young people, staff and a visiting social worker all joined in.

## 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:

<b>Date of meeting</b>	<b>Venue</b>	<b>Attendance</b>
10 <sup>th</sup> Feb	Virtual	7
3 <sup>rd</sup> Feb	Virtual	7
10 <sup>th</sup> Feb	Virtual	7
17 <sup>th</sup> Feb	Virtual	7
24 <sup>th</sup> Feb	Virtual	7
31 <sup>st</sup> Feb	Virtual	8
10 <sup>th</sup> March	Virtual Mother's Day craft	8
21 <sup>st</sup> March	Virtual	5
17 <sup>th</sup> March	Virtual Bingo	6
28 <sup>th</sup> March	Virtual Easter Chicks Creative writing	7
15 <sup>th</sup> April	Virtual	5
28 <sup>th</sup> April	Virtual Changes to V4C plus quiz	7
12 <sup>th</sup> May	Face to face Introduce new face to face structure get to know you ice breaker Big question	7
9 <sup>th</sup> June	Face to face	3

Session topics have included over this period:

- Easter Activities
- Mother's Day Craft
- Bingo Night
- Creative Writing Competition
- Langue that Cares
- Home office group
- Big Ask
- Coming into Care Kit

Young people have been joining in with the monthly Virtual 'Let's get Quizzical' quiz.

V4C staff have experienced that in the virtual meetings it is more difficult to undertake the V4C topic work as not all the young people are invested or old enough to join in some of

the topics. However, all the information has been passed on to the young people. Younger children are focused on enjoying the arts and crafts activities. The first face to face session went ahead on 12 May with 3 young people being very keen on the more topical side of the meeting.

A Participation Officer led a discussion about how the Coming into Care pack could be updated. Overall, feedback from the older young people said they prefer the more focused session with some time allowed for socialising. Younger children prefer the more the arts / craft type of activity.

#### North and South Kesteven

<b>Date of meeting</b>	<b>Venue</b>	<b>Attendance</b>
23/2/21	Zoom	2
2/3/21	zoom	1
9/3/21	Phone	1
25/3/21	Zoom	1
06/04/21 – 15/04/21 Over 4 days	Holiday Activities	2 members (4 non V4C members)
29/04/21	Beacon Children's Home (at local park for COVID reasons)	2

Work carried out has included discussing mental health services. In addition, a young person was given the opportunity to be involved in the selection process for a Social Work Team Manager, and that young person has informed me they are continuing to engage in the Young Inspectors programme, which offered the opportunity, and really enjoyed being part of the interviews.

Some young people in care attend holiday activities; although not all were members of V4C, we were able to discuss with them the group and what it is for. They have shown an interest in attending face to face sessions starting in June.

In order to continue to raise awareness of V4C the Beacon Children's Home in Grantham has been recently visited with 2 young people possibly joining V4C as a result. Further contact with Eastgate Children's Home in Sleaford has been made with a further visit arranged to discuss V4C with the children and young people.

#### 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, but group Zoom sessions, when attempted, have not resulted in engagement.

With the lifting of some restrictions, in May it was decided to attempt to re-introduce face to face meetings in East Lindsey. Significant work has been undertaken to contact previous members of the East Lindsey group, support workers, social work team managers, the Virtual School, Barnardo's and social workers that we are aware of that have young people residing in East Lindsey.

Although there was not significant interest to hold a meeting in May, a successful face to face meeting was held on June 15<sup>th</sup> at Skegness Youth Centre with 5 attendees, with topics discussed including: A future Big Conversation; starting to review the Coming Into Care Kit; review of language used and information from the Lincolnshire Youth Commission.

Going forward Barnardo are intending to bring 2 of their young people to the next V4C meeting in East Lindsey.

**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.

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 have been held from the end of August through to the end of March 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. Following consultation with young people, the content of the sessions delivered, during evening sessions, has been:

- Rhyme and Beats
- Electronic Music Production

Latest attendances (2 sessions per date) are shown below with good engagement from the young people:

<b>Date of meeting</b>	<b>Venue</b>	<b>YP Attendance</b>
23 <sup>rd</sup> Feb Staff: VC & NS	Virtual Electronic Music	3 0
25 <sup>th</sup> Feb Staff: DB & NS	Virtual Rhyme Beats	3 1
1 <sup>st</sup> March Staff: DB & NS	Virtual Electronic Music	3 1
4 <sup>th</sup> March	Virtual Rhyme Beats	3

Date of meeting	Venue	YP Attendance
Staff: DB & NS		3
8 <sup>th</sup> March Staff: VC & NS	Virtual Electronic Music	1 0 - IT issues for 2 YP
11 <sup>th</sup> March Staff: DB & NS	Virtual Rhyme Beats	3 4
15 <sup>th</sup> March Staff: VC & NS	Virtual Electronic Music	2 1
18 <sup>th</sup> March Staff: DB & NS	Virtual Rhyme Beats	3 2
23 <sup>rd</sup> March Staff: VC & NS	Virtual Electronic Music	2 0 - IT issues 2 YP
25 <sup>th</sup> March Staff: DB & NS	Virtual Rhyme Beats	3 2
3 <sup>rd</sup> June Staff: DB	Face to face – Recording Studio session	Cancelled due to Covid positive in family

This has been a successful phase of sessions. The Rhymes and Beats sessions have produced two outstanding young people who have created some extremely poignant and moving words and beats. For one young person English is not their first language, however the facilitator was extremely good at supporting the young person to produce some outstanding music and words.

This was so successful another session face to face was arranged (as Covid rules have relaxed) so we could use the soundLINCS music studio to lay their voices onto the tracks. Unfortunately, this had to be postponed due to a family being Covid positive and at the time of this report a new date is yet to be finalised.

A further programme of sessions is being planned for the summer.

### **'Let's Get Quizzical' – Virtual V4C quiz**

'Let's Get Quizzical' is a new monthly virtual online quiz activity across all quadrant areas each month.

Date of meeting	Venue	YP Attendance
24 <sup>th</sup> February	Virtual Quiz	10
31 <sup>st</sup> March	Virtual Quiz	8
28 <sup>th</sup> April	Virtual Quiz	10
21 <sup>st</sup> May	Virtual hosted live from Northolme residential	12

The monthly quiz enables all young people in care across Lincolnshire to get involved. This is designed to be a good steppingstone to V4C. Young people are able to meet other young people in care. There are 5 main topics including one covering V4C, and this serves to provide information about V4C in a fun way.

In June the quiz was hosted from Northolme via a large screen TV. This provided the opportunity for staff and visiting social workers to join in and worked very well.

### **V4C Planning**

The following points summarise current V4C planning:

- Action planning has taken place that has progressed the return to face-to-face delivery and it is pleasing to report that successful face to face meetings and activities have taken place in this reporting period within the residential homes, youth centres and Wild Pines centre in Market Rasen. The move back to varied face to face sessions is intended to continue.
- V4C staff have also been visiting children and staff in the residential homes to raise awareness of V4C and consult on what they would like future V4C sessions and delivery to look like.
- The option of providing virtual V4C meetings in addition to physical meetings and activities when they resume will continue. This will help to offer V4C for young people who are unable or do not wish to attend physical meetings.
- Due to its continued popularity, there are further soundLINCS music sessions planned for the summer with 6 dates confirmed across July and August comprising 12 different sessions.
- The next Big Conversation: Big Conversation meetings bring together all of the V4C groups and the next meeting has been provisionally booked for October half term at Ancaster Leisure Centre, and this will include activities such as bowling and laser tag on the day.

## **2. Conclusions**

- A) Delivery of V4C meetings and sessions has taken place virtually via Zoom since the Co-vid pandemic. This report evidences good examples of virtual delivery, although it remains inconsistent in terms of successful engagement with children and young people in certain instances.
- B) There have been successful moves to reintroduce face to face meetings within this reporting period and this provides a good base from which to progress.
- C) Feedback from the soundLINCS music programme for V4C members remains consistently positive and more dates have been arranged. This is helping to keep children and young people engaged with V4C staff as part of a social activity, while recognising it is not a session which involves participation work.

- D) 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.

### **3. Consultation**

#### **a) Risks and Impact Analysis**

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

### **4. Background Papers**

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

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