



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

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

Summary:

This report gives a summary and overview of:

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

V4C is Lincolnshire's Children in Care Council with the aim being to share experiences of being in care 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 June – October 2021

During this reporting period the delivery of V4C groups have been focused on a return to face-to-face meetings following the easing of Co-vid restrictions. Meetings within this period have been held in LCC youth centre buildings and other settings where there are established risk assessments in place.

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

Lincoln and West Lindsey

Date of meeting	Venue	Number of young people attended
4 th June	Wild Pines Activity Centre	4
12 th July	Northolme Children's Home, Gainsborough	6
21 st July	North Hykeham Youth Centre	4
3 rd August	Summer activity – Escape Rooms	3
5 th August	Summer activities - North Hykeham Youth Centre including rapping	3
12 th August	Summer activities - girls session	3
14 th September	Northolme Children's Home, Gainsborough	6

Regular face-to-face meetings have been held with young people who are attending enjoying the sessions.

Within the sessions the group have been looking at the work provided by the Participation Team and have completed and discussed the following:

- The Coming into Care kit review
- Should 16 years old vote
- Discussing the work of the Young Inspectors and a potential visit to the group

Over the summer a number of young people have taken part in various holiday activities with good feedback received.

A specific session for girls was held in August with one young person attending who lives in sheltered accommodation, and another from Northolme Children's Home. Both provided feedback that they found the sessions helpful and supportive and helped to look at ways they could cook their own meals and that it was good to have a 'girl space' for a while.

The young people have fed back that they have enjoyed the focused face to face meetings at the Youth Club. They like having space for the activity plus being able to go somewhere quite if they need to speak on a one-to-one basis. Comments of recent sessions have

included: 'It's more relaxed', 'can do more', 'love being able to play pool and cook our tea together'.

Boston and South Holland

Attendances within the Boston and South Holland locality are highlighted below, with regular monthly meetings now taking place and arranged to be face-to-face. The return to a face-to-face format has had challenges, mainly around transporting young people and timings for some of the younger participants, and this will be reviewed after each session to ensure needs are met. Over July and August specific V4C groups were not held as they were combined with holiday activities offered to all children and young people. Unfortunately, a number of young people were unable to attend meetings due to sickness.

Date of meeting	Venue	Number of young people attended
8 th September	Boston Youth Centre	4
13 th October	Boston Youth Centre	4
3 rd November	Albion Street Children's Home, Spalding	
10 th November	Boston Youth Centre	

During the September session topics discussed have included:

- Debate around voting and the relevance of politics in the lives of young people
- Climate change
- The Big Conversation meeting in October (a meeting that brings each of the 4 V4C groups together)

The October session included a debate about how young people can be marginalised in school for being in care and how this can be used as a means to bully, and they also talked about how gender can also be a target for bullying. One of the group members who is transitioning was very open to the group about their experiences.

The older young people have completed the PCC survey on mental health; however, this was only open to 14+ years, and it was feedback that younger children should also have been able to complete the survey.

Young people have said they are excited about attending the Big Conversation and this has been backed up with six young people agreeing to take part from Boston and South Holland. It has been requested that a future Big Conversation be held in and around Boston rather than frequently being Lincoln based, and this will be actioned.

Planning has taken place with Albion Street Children’s Home staff in Spalding and it has been agreed to deliver a session within the home once a month with a view of integrating these young people into the sessions at Boston. This delivery will start on 3rd November with hopefully six young people taking part.

North and South Kesteven

Attendances for the North and South Kesteven locality are summarised below:

Date of meeting	Venue	Number of young people attended
22 nd June	Earlsfield Youth Centre, Grantham	3
Summer Programme	Various	10
21 st September	Earlsfield Youth Centre, Grantham	3
12 th October	Eastgate Children's Home, Sleaford	5

Within North and South Kesteven there was good number of Children in Care that attended several sessions of the holiday provision, and some of those young people have started attending the core offer youth group and V4C in Grantham.

A further visit to Eastgate Children's Home in Sleaford has been undertaken to publicise V4C with the result being that some of the children and young people will hopefully be joining the group for future meetings.

East Lindsey

Virtual meetings have previously been difficult to progress in East Lindsey. However, with face-to-face meetings now re-established a group has been meeting and it is hoped that this will be a basis for attendance to grow further.

Date of meeting	Venue	Number of young people attended
15 th June	Skegness Youth Centre	4
20 th July	Skegness Youth Centre	3
August	Holiday activities held for all children and young people	
21 st September	Skegness Youth Centre	3

The main focus of the meetings has been reviewing and suggesting updates to the Children's Services Coming into Care kit.

The Participation Team have attended sessions and led a discussion about the Coming into Care kit. The young people have been supported to review what the content of the Coming into Care Kit should be (photos below). Young people with experience both of long-term care and from being newly in care offered suggestions and views which have been captured and will be taken forward into the wider review and hopefully discussed at the October Big Conversation event.



Discussion was held regarding the "Big Question". This is an opportunity for young people to discuss and feedback about a specific issue. In this instance the subject was voting rights with a consensus was that they felt 16-year-olds should be allowed to vote.

V4C Virtual soundLINCS Programme

The soundLINCS music project was a series of sessions held to enable young people from the V4C groups to take part in an activity to support their health and wellbeing. The groups will be reviewing future possible options for this activity next year.

'Let's Get Quizzical' – Virtual V4C quiz

'Let's Get Quizzical' has been a monthly virtual online quiz activity across all quadrant areas each month. 4 virtual sessions were held prior to the summer, and it is planned that further sessions will be held as a V4C opportunity for children and young people to attend. This is designed to be a steppingstone to attending the main V4C groups.

V4C Planning

The following points summarise current V4C planning:

- V4C meetings have been taking place across all 4 of the locality quadrants now on a face-to-face basis and this has been the focus of this reporting period. Further

discussions will take place with children and young people with a view to developing V4C further and building attendances.

- V4C staff have 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 is planned to continue. This will help to offer V4C for young people who are unable or do not wish to attend physical meetings.
- There has been positive feedback about the return to face-to-face meetings and the activities taking place within the meetings which will help inform future planning.

2. Conclusions

- A) There has been a successful reintroduction of face-to-face meetings within this reporting period and this provides a good base from which to progress.
- B) The groups have participated successfully in reviewing the Coming into Care Kit and making suggestions to its future content that will be collated at the Big Conversation meeting in October half term.
- C) Ongoing work will continue to publicise V4C and review meeting options, with an aim to gain children and young people's views to encourage attendance and engagement.

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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