



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

Report to:	Corporate Parenting Panel
Date:	10 March 2022
Subject:	Voices for Choices (V4C) Update Report

Summary:

This report gives a summary and overview of:

- Activities regarding V4C between October 2021 – February 2022
- 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 October 2021 – February 2022

During this reporting period the delivery of V4C groups have been continuing to focus on holding 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
20.10.21	North Hykeham Youth Centre	6
27.10.21	Big Conversation	2
28.10.21	North Hykeham, Holiday Provision	4
02.11.22	Northholme Children's Home, Gainsborough	7
10.11.21	Lincoln Youth Matters Centre	5
05.01.22	Northholme Children's Home, Gainsborough	7
12.01.22	Bowling and MacDonalds Xmas outing	6

Regular face-to-face meetings have been held with young people who are attending enjoying the sessions, with regular attendance by several young people from Northholme Children's Residential Home.

Overview of sessions: during this period there has been a range of sessions, with young people taking part in the following:

- Lincolnshire Youth Commission Survey on Mental Health: all the V4C members took part in this whilst at the session with some interesting conversations deriving from this work.
- 'Kooth' Online Counselling: this online resource is being shared with young people and has been discussed within the V4C sessions and young people are reporting more that they are now using Kooth.
- The 'Big Question': to generate discussion/new topics.

Question – Climate Change (This is linked to the Lincolnshire Youth Council's current activities including a presentation from the City of Lincoln Councils climate change team)

- What does climate change mean to you?
- Are you worried about climate change?

Young people want to use future V4C meetings to discuss climate change issues further.

The meetings also focused on updates regarding:

- Big Conversation 21 feedback
- Hospital Services Consultation
- V4C film planning
- Update - Lincolnshire's Caring Promise (formerly Care Pledge)
- Update - Language that Cares

New V4C project: Supporting homeless young people in Lincoln

One of the young people has asked if the group could do something to support homeless young people in Lincoln. This was discussed within the sessions with the outcome being the group are planning a project this year that will include:

- Putting together 'Goodie Bags' for young people (ideas are to include a present, personal, hygiene's items, torch, handwarmers, scarves etc)
- Writing to local business for support
- Putting on Christmas Lunch including music games and a pop-up clothing bank

Boston and South Holland

Attendances within the Boston and South Holland locality are below, with regular monthly meetings taking place face to face. Support is being provided where needed for transport for young people to attend when needed and this is reviewed regularly to ensure there are no barriers to attendance if possible. Unfortunately, due to staff absences and Covid-19 some sessions have been unable to take place.

Date of meeting	Venue	Number of young people attended
13.10.21	Carlton Road Youth Centre, Boston	4
03.11.21	Albion Street Children's Home, Spalding	5
10.11.21	Carlton Road Youth Centre, Boston	3
01.12.21	Albion Street Children's Home, Spalding	6
08.12.21	Carlton Road Youth Centre, Boston	Cancelled due to sickness
05.01.22	Albion Street Children's Home, Spalding	Cancelled due to staffing sickness
12.01.22	Carlton Road Youth Centre, Boston	Cancelled due to sickness

Overview of sessions:

- The 'Big Question' activity: this opened a debate with the young people about how sometimes young people feel marginalised in school. There was also discussion about how gender is also a target for bullying.
- The young people were excited about and enjoyed attending the Big Conversation at the end of October and feedback that they would like a future Big Conversation to be held closer to Spalding. This has been acted upon with the February Big Conversation planned to be held in Spalding.
- Following discussion with Albion Street children's home staff some sessions will take place within the home with a view of integrating these young people into the sessions at Boston in the future.
- The first session focused on building relationships with the young people gaining trust and asking questions around what they wanted from future meetings monthly. They indicated they wanted an activity session rather than the session being based around set discussion points
- All young people at the session also attended the Big Conversation so were aware of the process and what had been discussed. The young people said that they had enjoyed it and found the Young Inspectors programme of interest.

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
19 th October 2021	Skegness Youth Centre	3
16 th November 2021	Skegness Youth Centre	2
21 st December 2021	Skegness Youth Centre	Session not held
18 th January 2022	Skegness Youth Centre	2

Overview of sessions:

- The group have discussed the subject of the 'Big Question': Do schools do enough to prevent bullying? The consensus was that schools do not do enough to prevent bullying, but all felt that their schools did react positively when it had happened.
- V4C members have completed the Police Commissioners questionnaire on mental health needs of young people
- Discussion around climate change
- Feedback about the Big Conversation held in October and preparing for the Big Conversation in February. This involves thinking about what young people will

decide regarding the exercise of talking about what qualities they want from their support workers

- The group discussed a request for some feedback from the young people about the Children in Care and Care Leavers Strategy. Answers to questions about the care and support they have received, what worked well and what could be improved were discussed and this will be forwarded to be included within the new strategy.

North and South Kesteven

Attendances for the North and South Kesteven locality are summarised below

Date of meeting	Venue	Number of young people attended
12.10.21	Eastgate Children's Home, Sleaford	4
19.10.21	Earlsfield Youth Centre, Grantham	3
16.11.21	Earlsfield Youth Centre, Grantham	2
21.12.21	Earlsfield Youth Centre, Grantham	3
18.01.22	Earlsfield Youth Centre, Grantham	2

Overview of sessions: during this period the young people have discussed if schools do enough to help prevent bullying. This was expanded to look at who in schools they can turn to for issues, and what they feel schools could do more of. Discussions were also held looking at how people's perception of issues like climate change can differ depending on what actions people see others take. For this the group looked at the recent issues with Insulate Britain, and if their actions made them feel differently about climate change. Feedback was given to young people on the Big Conversation, and a Christmas celebration with food and games was held.

In the January session the group started to discuss examples when workers have really helped them, and when they could have been better. Young people highlighted that having set people at schools to talk to really helps them at times. The group also began discussing topics as part of the new Children's Services Children in Care Strategy and asking them for feedback on questions relating to those so that their views can inform the strategy.

Links have been made with the Young Carers group to offer attendees the option of attending V4C as well and there has been another visit to Eastgate Children's Home in Sleaford to encourage young people attend.

The Big Conversation

The most recent 'Big Conversation' as held in October 2021 and was attended by 16 children and young people. These meetings bring together representatives from each of the 4 V4C groups, along with senior offices and elected members. The meeting was successful with young people making significant contributions and sharing their work and views regarding topics including issues at school; reviewing the Coming into Care Kit; the

Caring Promise; the work of the Young Inspectors project and Barnardo's. The next Big Conversation is arranged in February and will be detailed in a future report.

V4C Planning

The following points summarise current V4C planning:

- V4C meetings continue to take place across all 4 of the locality quadrants now on a face-to-face basis and this again 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 continued to visit 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. This will help to offer V4C for young people who are unable or do not wish to attend physical meetings.
- There has been continued positive feedback about the return to face to face meetings and the activities taking place within the meetings which will help inform future discussion.

2. Conclusions

- A) There has been a generally successful re-embedding of face-to-face meetings within this reporting period, and this provides a good base from which to progress. Meetings are taking place across each of the four localities although attendance numbers continue to vary.
- B) The groups have participated successfully in providing feedback both related to Children's Services (for example updating the Children in Care Kit and the Children in Care Strategy) and increasingly about wider societal issues such as climate change and schooling. To a degree this is widening the original purpose of V4C from being about feedback about the council and the support children receive and is a positive development.
- 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.

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

This page is intentionally left blank