

Update on Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Board recommendation on Engagement and participation of children and young people and their families

Recommendation:

To review the current arrangements for engaging with children, young people and their families and how we ensure that their voices are heard strategically and operationally.

1. Update relating to children and young people attending their reviews

The Liquid Logic Children's Management system will allow us to collate data on children who both attend but also chair their own reviews. This data set is not yet available as other priorities for developing the data reports have to be prioritised. In the meantime, IRO's continue to speak to children either ahead of their review or as part of the review in order to obtain their views and experiences.

Children and Young People over 8 years are referred to the commissioned Advocacy service for support around their review – data shows that within Q1 2021 131 referrals were made. Work is underway with the advocacy service to develop a data return that shows the outcomes of these referrals. This will be in place in the next quarter.

Updated and revised consultation forms have been co-developed between SARS and the Children's Trust with input from children to ensure the review forms are fit for purpose. The new consultation forms are now in use and will support children and young people to share their views in a child friendly and age-appropriate format. We are also working with the restorative practice lead to explore a move towards these being offered via a digital app as well as paper based format to ensure accessible completion.

Working with the restorative practice lead, SARS have revised the invitation letter for children and young people to attend their review to ensure that the language used is child focused, engaging and inviting so that it encourages children to attend or participate in their reviews.

2. Update relating to feedback from service users as part of the audit process.

There is an ongoing audit plan in place in children social care this has not, to date, included the views of parents and other professionals. The purpose of gaining feedback from children and their parents/carers will enable us to learn from their experiences of being supported by our social workers and partner agencies which is essential to improving practice. We need to ensure we hear the voice of the child and their family / carer which gives us an opportunity to reflect on practice and further develop our interventions with them.

Encouraging children's and parents comments will ensure that they feel heard and can influence change, it will demonstrate that we want to support families collaboratively and will start to build strong relationships with families within our community. It also provides the opportunity to further embed our restorative and relational practice model.

Listening to our partners and working collaboratively with them is equally important in effective safeguarding and supporting families.

To understand the views of children, their families and partner agencies Torbay has introducing a process to seek feedback from children and their families during the audit process. This commenced with a pilot, subsequent changes to the process have been made and are being implemented. The feedback will be included in our audit reports and findings used to inform practice.

3. Update relating to work around participation of cared for children, plus feedback on 'work of services' / the Circle.

Bright Spots:

Torbay have recently worked together with Coram BAAF to roll out participation surveys with cared for and care experienced young people about their care experiences; we have now received the final reports. The plan will now be to move into a further consultation and participation period with the following timeline:

- 27th August 2021: participation PowerPoints and care experienced prompt are sent to social workers, Personal Advisors and fostering families, to undertake direct consultation work with children and young people about what we think the survey tells us, what we are going to do about it and whether they think these are the right actions to take, as well as gather any ideas they may have about how to address the areas of development.
- 27th September 2021: consultation period ends. BT to create a PowerPoint based on the surveys and the results of the consultation. To be completed by 30th September 2021.
- From the 30th September 2021: presentations to be undertaken to: all staff; partners ; fostering families at the Fostering Forum; the Corporate Parenting Board. A schedule is being put together which will include Team events and webinars.

- From the 18th October 2021: review of the Corporate Parenting Interim Strategy based on the outcome of the surveys and the consultations work. Consider building this into a Corporate Parenting Charter, a commitment between us as corporate parents, the cared for/care experienced services and the children and young people.

The Circle, Cared For Community and the Pledge:

The Pledge for Cared and Care experienced young people has been signed off by the Local Authority having been taken to the Operational Scrutiny Board and then a member of The Circle and a care experienced student who delivered this to the Council.

The Launch of the Pledge took place on the 1st June 2021, and involved a radio recording using the Boom Bus from Sound Communities, with invited guests from the Corporate Parenting Board.

The Circle took part in a Language that Cares half term project where they were interviewed about their thoughts about certain language used in their care journey; this will inform their own film later in the summer. This film has now been shared with the Corporate Parenting Board, social workers, Team Managers and fostering families [<https://youtu.be/orMW-sUrygw>]. The feedback has been thought-provoking:

Dear Film-Makers,

Thank you very much for all the time and care and BRILLIANCE you put into making this video.

We found it really made us think about the words we use when speaking to or about a young person.

It was a really good idea to use lots of different voices; that kept us interested.

We also liked the way you put the words on the screen; being able to read and listen helped the messages to stick, and using the different fonts helped to keep us concentrating.

I hope that you will feel that people speak to you more thoughtfully and respectfully as a result of this film. Most of all I hope that people will treat you as individuals because what came across in your film is that everyone is different and should be able to choose the way people speak about them.

It would be great if you could act as a consultancy team so that if I don't know the right language to use in a certain situation or say someone is writing a letter or creating a form and would like your input, we could ask for advice.

Thank you again and I look forward to hearing more from you so that we can do our job better.

(From two in-house foster carers)

Collaboration with Devon partners to produce a film with the young people they are working with: <https://youtu.be/orMW-sUrygw> this will be launched shortly.

The Circle also took part in a session with the Director of Children's Services reviewing their Language that Cares work and adding more detail to the Project.

This work has been directly fed into a review of the Restorative Language Framework, which is in place across Children's Services, and focuses in on our young peoples views, as made in their film, that children should have a say in respect of the language being used to talk to and about them. In addition, the Cared for Community is involved in current participation work in relation to Cared For review paperwork, with the Independent Reviewing Officers.

Head of Service Participation

The Head of Service meets with two cared for children on a monthly basis, to discuss with them their views, and their perspective on being a cared for children, and a child with involvement from social care. These meetings are then fed into an ongoing participation feedback loop, with the notes and learning shared across Children's Services, with specific actions arising from each meeting.

Participation Officer

The Participation Officer job description has been written in collaboration with the Head of Service Regulated Services and aligned to the Corporate Parenting Strategy. The job description has been to our internal Job Evaluation Panel (JE) and required some changes, these changes have been made and the job description has been returned to JE panel. Once the job description has been evaluated, we will go out to advert as soon as possible. It has been agreed the Participation Officer will sit in The Learning Academy line managed by our Restorative Practice Lead.