

## Rotherham Looked After Children's Council (LACC) – Corporate Parenting Panel - Update Report APRIL to JUNE 2017

### Summary

Over this period our LAC Council volunteers have been busy as ever, actively and successfully meeting the core 3 aims of their Voice & Influence Project. Young people have engaged in meaningful consultations and co-production work that is helping to shape the services looked after and leaving care young people use. This body of work has included the group engaging in a Focus Group with Oxford University around Improving Matching and Placements in Foster Care, co-producing of LAC friendly Early Help literature, supporting the co-production of the Lifestyle Survey 2017, adapting the Right Care First Time Booklet for NHS CCG, providing LAC voices within the Rotherham Town Masterplan consultation and have provided LAC specific information to Virtual School to improve their understanding and improve services in future.

The LAC Council have; undertaken substantial work on their Destination Poland Project, learning more about hate crimes, the importance of love, peace and community cohesion by participating in Destination Poland engaging in the five day residential. Upon returning to Rotherham our young people held a presentation event to thank all funders and friends of Destination Poland.

The numerous experiences and opportunities offered to young people at the LAC Council are specifically designed to increase social capital, self-awareness and self-esteem, to foster resilience and support better outcomes for our vulnerable young people. Here are some of the things we would like to share with you:-

### LAC Council – Shaping Services in Rotherham & beyond

#### Lifestyle Survey 2017

The LAC Council have also contributed in the co-production of the Lifestyle Survey 2017, alongside officers from Commissioning, Performance & Quality. Young people considered how Looked After young people should be addressed within this survey to ensure wording was appropriate and young people could identify as being Looked After. This is the first time LAC will be identified within the Lifestyle Survey and is important to the LAC Council as it will allow for LAC voices to be captured and analysed as a distinct group. This feedback from LAC may help to develop services to best fit their needs in future.

#### Virtual School –Dr Kathryn Thorn & Dr Karen Davies

The aim of the session was to explore Looked After young peoples experiences of school focusing on the themes of friendship, feeling safe and secure and recognition of talents and hobbies. Young people really enjoyed participating in the activities and engaging in discussions, the group provided LAC specific information to Virtual School to improve their understanding of LAC experiences to enable them to improve services for Looked After young people in future.

## Improving Matching and Placement Process in Foster Care

The LAC Council welcomed Dr Ellie Ott, Research Fellow from the University of Oxford. Dr Ellie's research focusses upon trying to improve the matching and placement process for Looked After Young People and Foster Families. The LAC Council held a focus group to capture Rotherham young people's experiences, perceptions and voices around matching and placement to contribute to the national research which they are hoping may improve future experiences for Looked After young people within the care systems not only in Rotherham but across the country. This was a fun and informal focus group who actively engaged in the topic and generously shared their experiences both good and bad and put forward ideas around improving the matching process. Young people also asked some challenging questions of Dr Ellie too, with a couple of young people asking her:



**Why has it taken so long for someone to start asking us these questions?**  
(LACC member aged 17)

This question was asked as it seemed obvious to young people that the process was not satisfactory for them most of the time telling Dr Ott that usually:

**You get what you're given!** (LACC member aged 13)

Overall the Rotherham LAC Council agreed that an ideal model for matching and placement process would ensure that young people have a say throughout the process from start to finish. Here is the basic outline:

1. Young people should have the option to see pictures and a video of potential Foster Carers, their house, their biological children, any pets and their potential bedroom so young people may choose which ones they prefer.
2. Young people should be invited to visit their preferred choice of Foster Families and stay with them each for a week to see how they all get on living together
3. After these trial weeks the young person should be allowed to decide who they want to live with.

Doctor Ott will collate and analyse her findings and write a report during July which will include Rotherham LACC's contributions towards this Academic body of work for the University of Oxford's Research in Fostering and Education. The LAC Council intend to work further on their ideal model of Matching and Placement Process in Rotherham.

## Right Care First Time Booklet

Young People from the LAC Council have helped the NHS Rotherham Clinical Commissioning Group by co-producing the Right Care First Time Booklet. The LAC Council worked to ensure the booklet was young person friendly and adapted it to meet young people's needs. The booklet provides contact details for Advice Information and Support for young people around physical & mental health issues and specialist group details within local healthcare services. These booklets are to be distributed widely to young people's groups and practitioners, the School Nurses have found them very beneficial to support young people they work with.

## Rotherham Town Masterplan LACC Consultation

The LAC Council engaged in a consultation with Andrew Clarke and Mike Shires regarding the Rotherham Town Masterplan. This was an exciting evening where young people had the opportunity to see existing plans and have a voice about what they thought their Town Masterplan should contain. Andrew fed back:

*'I was impressed by the feedback and the interest the group took in the project. They really grasped what we are trying to do and what the masterplan could do for the town centre. I found their ideas and input inspiring. The young people are a credit to themselves and to your organisation. Please do pass on mine and Mike's thanks to the LAC Council for their contribution'*



## COMMUNITY, CULTURAL & SEASONAL EVENTS

### Fixers – 'Rotherham Proud' DVD Development

As part of the LAC council's ongoing commitment to promoting Rotherham in a positive way and challenging negative stereotypes of their town, they have been working collaboratively with other young people as part of the Youth Voice Group and the charity 'Fixers' to develop their ideas to create a Rotherham Proud DVD. The LAC Council worked alongside the Youth Cabinet to create scripts, identify locations for filming and rehearse their delivery to camera. Filming for the day at various locations around Rotherham, including the Town Centre, Wentworth, Clifton Park, the Mosque and Minster young people delivered their scripts to camera. It was an exciting and exhausting day. The film has now been edited by the Fixers Team and will be shared at the Young Peoples Event on July 27<sup>th</sup> at Carlton Park Hotel. You can access the film on: <http://www.fixers.org.uk/news/15815-11208/rotherham-diversity.php>

### Armed Forces Day

The LAC Council were invited to the Armed Forces Day by Madam Mayor Eve Rose Keenan. Young people enjoyed refreshments at the Town Hall, engaged in the parade down to All Saints Square and watching the soldiers on parade, had fun spending time in the town centre talking to the Police, Fire Service and Army before going on to the barracks and having lunch with the Armed Forces men and women.

### Town Hall



Here is what some Young People had to say about their experiences at Armed Forces Day:

'The Mayor kissed me and Africa!!!!'

'The Mayor remembered my name!'

'Just enjoyed the whole day I liked everything about it'

'I liked it that there was a lot more stuff (than last year) like Fire Cadets, the Fire Motorbike and the stalls and the Armed Police who let us look at their guns'

'It was really interesting, I liked spending time with Tilly, Africa and Kiran 😊'

## WIDENING LAC VOICE

### Recruitment Drive for LAC Council

The LAC Council at present have 9 members who attend the group on a weekly basis. Membership reduces over time as older young people go off to work/university or move out of authority. So recruitment of new young people is vital to keep the group fresh and evolving to have a voice and help shape services for looked after and leaving care young people. Therefore, we are engaging in a recruitment drive to widen participation of the Looked After Children's Council. Young people have created leaflets and a poster to promote their group, saying who they are, what they do and contact details if any young person is interested in joining them. This promotional literature has been widely distributed through Early Help Managers, Social Care Managers, VAR Newsletter, through virtual School and hand delivered to all LAC Designated Teachers and Heads of each school year in all Rotherham Secondary Schools. We are exploring all avenues to give other Looked After young people opportunities to engage and have a voice and make a positive difference to things for young people in care.

## DESTINATION POLAND

**Fundraising** - After 9 months of numerous fundraising events by the LAC Council and our partners to raise £9,000 to send 14 Looked After and Leaving care young people from the LAC Council to Poland for an educational residential we finally achieved our goal. Alongside our funders and friends of Destination Poland we have collectively and tirelessly pursued our fundraising target by engaging in sponsored walks, cycling, climbing, bake sales, raffles, sponsored events, rattling our buckets at Rotherham Show and a partnership Marathon at Herringthorpe Stadium etc. The LAC Council have promoted Destination Poland through Social Media, Local Press releases, have spoken on Radio Sheffield and engaged in a promotional film with Journalism Students from Sheffield University. Support for the project has been truly widespread across Rotherham and we have seen RMBC Cllrs give money from their Community Funds, seen present and past Foster Carers of our young people pledging money, RMBC Services and Voluntary & Community groups holding fundraising raffles, vulnerable groups of young people holding fundraising events, it has been heart-warming to see the Rotherham communities come together for a common goal. The young people of the LAC Council are very grateful for this overwhelming support.

## Destination Poland – The LAC Council on Tour! –

On 10<sup>th</sup> April, the 5 day Destination Poland Tour began at 6am, with 18 young people and supporting staff travelling from Rotherham to Krakow. Over the next few days young people experienced the culture of Poland through the food, language, architecture, images, artwork and museums. During the tour young people visited Wawel Castle, Krakow Old Town, engaged in a guided tour of Jewish quarter, synagogues, and the former Jewish ghetto. They also visited Schindler's Factory, and Wieliczka Salt Mine, the culmination of the educational residential was our visit to Auschwitz and Auschwitz-Birkenau memorial and museum. Here young people engaged in a study tour of both parts of the former concentration camp which included the gas chambers and exhibition of items found when the camps were liberated. This was an emotional and moving day which at times was overwhelming for some young people. The stark reality of the cruelty, torture, brutality, starvation and mass murder of over 6 million human beings by other human beings recorded in photographic images, displays and mountains of personal items such as shoes, hair, glasses etc was shocking.



As a mark of respect young people placed roses of remembrance at the wall of death, this was a reflective and sombre experience which young people said they would *'always remember'*.



During their visit the young people wrote their own personal journals recording their experiences, feelings, thoughts and learning.

This information together with a reflective workshop is currently being used to create a presentation to share their journey and thank 'Funders and Friends' of Destination Poland for helping them achieve their goal, this will be held on 11<sup>th</sup> May @ Myplace.

**I feel emotional but I feel like its something everyone should see and visit**

**I have learned that 23 countries lost people who were killed in Birkenau**

**I feel upset cos Jews carried the dead bodies (of their friends) from the gas chambers**

In Addition, the LAC Council will also deliver their presentation about their experiences and share their Voices at the Holocaust Memorial Day event at the Town Hall next January.

## Thank You - Fundraisers and Friends of Destination Poland

In May the LAC Council invited all the Fundraisers and Friends of Destination Poland to Myplace to thank them for all their support and efforts in fundraising to help the LACC realise their dream. Young people had created a presentation with the help of Photographic Student Beth Hopkinson to share their experiences of the whole Poland experience from fundraising through to their activities in Poland. Young people thanked the audience saying *'We could not have done it without you!'*



**LAC Council Guests** - Young people from the LAC Council would like to thank all of our guests, friends and supporters who have visited the LAC Council or invited us to visit them over the past few months. These are:-

Jan Walker – Head of Children in Care  
Sharon Kemp – Chief Executive RMBC  
Mayor Eve Rose Keenan  
Shokat Lal – Assistant Chief Executive  
Dr Kat Thorn – Educational Psychologist  
Dr Karen Davies – Educational Psychologist  
Bev Pepperdine – Commissioning, Performance & Quality  
Dr Ellie Ott – Research Fellow University of Oxford  
Beth Hopkinson – Photographic Student  
Andrew Clarke-Director Urban Design WYG  
Mike Shires – WYG Environment Planning & Transport

**Thank You All 😊**

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