

## BARNESLEY METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

This matter is not a Key Decision within the Council's definition and has not been included in the relevant Forward Plan

### REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES TO CABINET ON 22 SEPTEMBER 2021

#### ANNUAL REPORT OF THE CARE4US COUNCIL (2020/21)

#### 1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To present to Cabinet, the latest Annual Report of the Care4Us Council.

#### 2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 **That Cabinet notes the contribution of the Care4Us Council in enabling the voice of children in care and care leavers to be heard and acted upon during the planning and commissioning of services aimed at meeting their needs, as noted in the Annual Report.**

#### 3. INTRODUCTION

##### 3.1 Background

The Care4Us Council comprises of children and young people in the care of the Council who meet regularly to share their ideas and experiences and to provide a voice for all children and young people in care; those who have previously experienced care and care leavers in the Borough.

- 3.2 Barnsley Care4Us Council members meet with their Corporate Parents, key decision makers and service providers on a regular basis to discuss any issues and concerns that they may have as well as using the platform to voice their opinions and help shape local, regional and national service design and delivery. The Care4Us Council works closely with other youth voice forums in the Borough such as Barnsley Youth Council and the SEND Youth Forum.
- 3.3 Staff from the Council's Targeted Youth Support Service coordinate and support the group and their peers and help facilitate opportunities for the members of the group to be able to work with their Corporate Parents and other key decision makers to influence services that they receive.
- 3.4 This report was originally presented to the Corporate Parenting Panel in June and updated the Panel on the Care 4 Us Council's activity during 2020/21.
- 3.5 The Appendix provides a summary of the Care4Us Council's Annual Report for 2020/21. The document sets out some of its achievements in helping such children and young people to tackle issues of most concern to them, in order to keep them

safe, improve their wellbeing and to make a successful transition into adulthood and in achieving their potential.

- 3.6 The report, also, sets out some of the priorities and objectives of the Care4Us Council as part of its development plans during 2021/22.

#### **4. PROPOSAL AND JUSTIFICATION**

- 4.1 The Annual Report provides Cabinet with an insight into the matters of importance which affect the lives of children and young people in care, together with those leaving care and on how they, themselves, have helped make a difference in tackling these challenges both in the Borough and in the Region, with the support of the Council. A brief video accompanying the Annual Report is to be presented at today's meeting.

#### **5. CONSIDERATION OF ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES**

- 5.1 The sole purpose of this report is to present the Annual Report of the Care4Us Council

#### **6. IMPLICATIONS FOR LOCAL PEOPLE/SERVICE USERS**

- 6.1 There are no implications for local people or service users emerging through the Annual Report. The Care4Us Council provides an important forum for all children in care to be able to help shape services through articulating their experiences in order to improve their safety and wellbeing; enable them to achieve their potential and make a valued contribution to civic life, including the future economic and social prosperity of the Borough.

#### **7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 There have been no financial implications emerging through compilation of this report..

#### **8. EMPLOYEE IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 There are no workforce implications, resulting through consideration of this report.

#### **9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 There are no legal implications which have emerged through consideration of this report.

#### **10. CUSTOMER AND DIGITAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1 No adverse implications will arise for the public in accessing the range of Council's services or for digital transactions through consideration of the report.

#### **11. COMMUNICATIONS IMPLICATIONS**

- 11.1 The experiences of children in care and care leavers, as noted in the Annual Report of the Care4Us Council, will be communicated to the Council's partner agencies as

part of continually improving services and fulfilling our current 'Pledge' and future 'Expectations' for children in care, together with our Care Leavers' Covenant and wider Local 'Offer' to these vulnerable groups of young people.

## **12. CONSULTATIONS**

- 12.1 The experiences of children in care and care leavers, as noted in the Annual Report of the Care4Us Council, will be communicated to the Council's partner agencies as part of continually improving services and fulfilling our current Pledge, Care Leavers' Covenant and Local 'Offer'

## **13. THE COUNCIL PLAN AND THE COUNCIL'S PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK**

- 13.1 One of the priority actions within the Borough's Children and Young People's Plan (2019-22) is to promote inclusion and engagement particularly among disadvantaged groups of children and young people. The Care4Us Council fulfils a valuable role in placing the voice of children in care at the forefront of planning and commissioning services which can improve their wellbeing and potential.
- 13.2 Within the Council Plan and our *Be Even Better* Strategy our ambitions for such children and young people will continue to be that they are placed in arrangements which will ensure they receive the love and care which will enable them to be safe from harm and as a result, be in a better position, including through improved attendance at school, to thrive and achieve their potential both as participants in the employment market and as active citizens in their communities. As part of its inspection of local authority children's services in October 2018 Ofsted reported that:

*" Services for children in care and care leavers are good and children's outcomes improve because of the support they receive from (social) workers. Children in Barnsley benefit from a committed and pushy corporate parent with a determination to raise the aspirations of all children, families and the communities in which they live.*

- 13.3 In addition, Ofsted noted that:

*"There is an active and vocal children in care (Care4Us) Council which has worked hard to influence service development through its annual "takeover of the service" event and on such areas as the Pledge, peer mentoring, recruitment for foster carers', presenting to the Corporate Parenting Panel and developing documents for reviews".*

## **14. PROMOTING EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND SOCIAL INCLUSION**

- 14.1 The Barnsley Care4Us Council is enriched by the contribution of representatives from groups of children with protected characteristics. This helps ensure their unique perspective informs the planning and commissioning of services which can meet their specific needs as part of an inclusive approach which fosters equality and eliminates any inadvertent discrimination-

## **15. TACKLING THE IMPACT OF POVERTY**

- 15.1 The Care4Us Council ensures that the voice of children and young people in care and care leavers is heard and acted upon. As part of our commitment to these young people, the Council has, subsequently, taken vital steps to enable them to become more resilient to the potential impact of poverty and deprivation, by, for example, ring-fencing apprenticeship opportunities; offering exemptions from the payment of Council Tax to care leavers living in independent accommodation up to the age of 25, together with providing free broadband and Wi-Fi connectivity for learning and skills purposes. Providing this level of support has made a difference to many young lives and given young people the confidence to build on their strengths and gifts.

## **16. TACKLING HEALTH INEQUALITIES**

- 16.1 The Council and its NHS partners have ensured as far as possible that the health needs of children in care and care leavers, are regularly assessed and their needs met during the Covid-19 Pandemic and Lockdown.

## **17. REDUCTION OF CRIME AND DISORDER**

- 17.1 In considering the needs of children entering care, the Council ensures, so far as possible, that placements, such as kinship arrangements are made and where this is not deemed to be appropriate that the next step, as part of a graduated response, should be to provide loving, stable homes with Local Authority foster carers'. Placements in residential facilities are only considered where this is the most appropriate way of meeting complex needs and should be close to home, as part of a risk sensitive approach which places the protection of young people from harm as of primary importance.

## **18. RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES**

- 18.1 There are no risk management issues for consideration within this report.

## **19. HEALTH, SAFETY AND EMERGENCY RESILIENCE ISSUES**

- 19.1 During the Covid-19 Pandemic and the varying level of national restrictions, vulnerable children and young people have been monitored and tracked to ensure they attend school as part of exercising the full range of our statutory responsibilities towards children and young people in care together with care leavers whilst mindful of the need for social distancing and other restrictions. Services have responded to the challenge by adapting engagement and delivery models to ensure that young people remain safeguarded and supported and that their voices continue to make a difference.

## **20. COMPATIBILITY WITH THE EUROPEAN CONVENTION ON HUMAN RIGHTS**

- 20.1 The role of the Care4Us Council is compatible with the Articles and Protocols of the Convention

## 21. CONSERVATION OF BIODIVERSITY

21.1 There are no implications for the local environment, tackling climate change or the conservation of biodiversity, emerging through this report.

## 22. GLOSSARY

Not applicable.

## 23. LIST OF APPENDICES

23.1 Appendix 1: Annual Report Summary of the Care 4 Us Council (2020/21)

23.2 Link to The Care4Us Council Annual Report Video 2020/21

<https://youtu.be/6YW3UejEX7U>

## 24.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

24.1 If you would like to inspect background papers for this report, please email [governance@barnsley.gov.uk](mailto:governance@barnsley.gov.uk) so that appropriate arrangements can be made

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Financial Implications/Consultation



Joshua Amahwe (08/09/2021)

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(To be signed by senior Financial Services officer)