



**the children in care council**

## **ANNUAL REPORT**

**EAST SUSSEX COUNTY COUNCIL  
CHILDREN'S SERVICES**

**1<sup>st</sup> April 2020 – 28<sup>th</sup> February 2021**



**ESCC Children in Care Council has been well established since 2008. The fifth CICC commenced on 29<sup>th</sup> June 2019. They will serve for 3 years until summer 2022**

## **Introduction**

The CICC has operated creatively throughout the pandemic and credit must be given to the CICC members for their ongoing commitment and dedication to ensuring other young people's voices have been heard, and that looked after children's views, wishes and feelings are considered in all that we do in Children's Services. The CICC work undertaken on the My Voice Matters project and close working with other agencies; from the office of the Children's Commissioner to our very own youth cabinet, has seen the work of the CICC prominent and as important as ever.

The CICC composition has been reviewed and in 2021 all efforts are being made to ensure that membership of the CICC is as inclusive as possible and of course reflects the diverse society we all live in. Promoting the inclusion of young people with disabilities and ensuring representation from black and minority ethnic groups has never been so important, and the CICC coordinator is working across social work teams to promote membership to this end.

The pandemic has highlighted the digital world in so many aspects of young people's lives, and the CICC membership has been able to provide valuable insights into both the positive and negative aspects surrounding young people's increased use of technology. Going forward the CICC is keen to work on various digital safety and safeguarding projects and will no doubt provide insight for Children's Services as we chart our way through this rapidly changing digital world.

This has been a most challenging year for the CICC. The membership has shown significant resilience and forged ahead stoically, working safely and adhering to national guidance on restrictions. The following summary report outlines the areas of work the CICC have covered this year and my thanks go to the CICC membership and CICC coordinator for all their dedicated work.

Scott Lipa  
Practice Manager  
Fostering/CICC



## Membership

CICC Membership currently comprises **12** young people (6 male and 6 female) who are of white British and white mixed ethnicity and are aged 13 – 18.

In addition, we have two members who live out of county and are soon to participate virtually.

## Summary of CICC activity

April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2020 – February 28<sup>th</sup>, 2021

### Covid 19 and Participation

The CICC activity this year has presented many challenges and whilst there has been disruption compared to previous years, the CICC participation has continued, using online and virtual communication, as well as also meeting in person for consultation in a Covid-safe manner between various lockdowns. CICC members have participated in **53** opportunities to promote their work both locally and nationally, to get the views of looked after children heard and promoted.

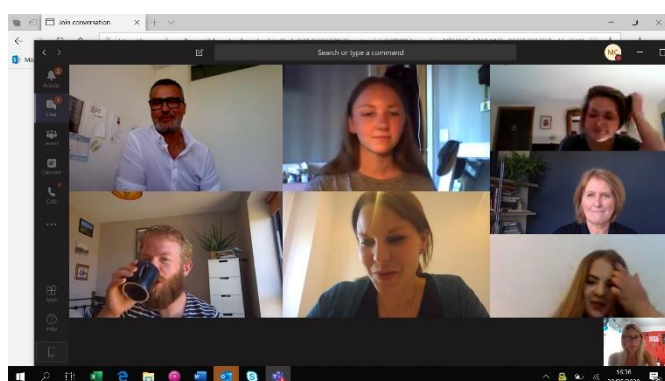




## Work with the Children's Commissioner's office

The CICC continue to be held in high regard by the Children's Commissioner's office. Two members were invited to take part in a consultation/zoom call with Anne Longfield

the Children's Commissioner for England. This discussed how members and the children they represent have been affected by the national restrictions and lockdown generally. They discussed mental health, education, and what support they were receiving. This was very helpful not only for the office of the Children's Commissioner but also for East Sussex Children's services overall, as it highlighted and recognised the ongoing support provide by Children's Services staff to looked after children during the national restrictions and allowed further assessment of where to improve services for children.



## SUSS it (Speak up Sessions)

Due to Covid 19, CICC members have been unable to attend any of the holiday activities this year as numbers were reduced to adhere to Government guidance on groups of people meeting together. The CICC Co-ordinator attended some of the **18** activities giving **53** young people the opportunity to speak out and speak up if they wanted too.

Through this engagement **13** young people have asked for help with individual issues. We have heard increasing concerns about online and digital issues across several areas. Firstly, some young people had stricter restrictions around time spent online and which social media platforms they could access. Secondly, there was some frustration with Skype as young people reported poor connections and call quality issues at the start of lockdown restrictions. This improved with the use of Microsoft Teams and Zoom. Thirdly those young people who didn't have smart phones at times felt left out of group chats as they couldn't participate fully on some older phone models they were using. Fourthly young people felt that not being able to meet up face to face to discuss any friendship issues; and having to use technology to resolve any friendship issues presented difficulties as technology doesn't always allow younger people to relay their accurate thoughts and feelings, and for these to be fully understood. This is an area of relationship communication involving the use of technology which the CICC members are keen to work more on in 2021.



## **Family Contact**

The most common issue raised amongst children and young people was not having enough contact with birth families. This has been unavoidably made more difficult due to the pandemic, which has seen many contacts needing to be held virtually and some having to be rescheduled. The CICC members did appreciate the efforts of professionals to prioritise family contact digitally but this has been a frustration for

many young people and many young people are looking forward to when face to face contact returns.

## **Junior CLA**

Specific CICC members contacted junior children in care during the national lockdowns as a way of keeping in touch, as they were not attending structured holiday activities where they usually are able to spend time supported by staff to talk to younger children. This was arranged directly with carers and this took place over Facetime, Skype and on the phone. Although this was a small project, this was a significant piece of work and has since developed into an idea for an official looked after children buddy scheme. This scheme will provide support to children entering care from a buddy who is already in care and development work is currently under way on the ESCC buddy scheme.

## **University Masters Students**



CICC members facilitated a 2 hour face to face lecture at Brighton University with social workers undertaking their Master's degree. CICC members discussed their CICC role and their projects and delivered an interactive "separation and loss" exercise. The University feedback was that the lecture was an extremely powerful one and thought-provoking for all post graduate students.

## **CICC Partnership working**

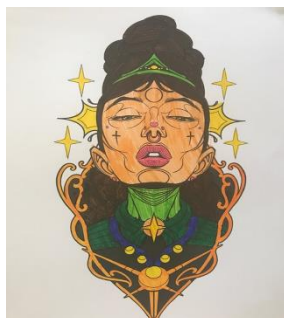
### **Through Care group**

The through care participation worker has started a group (currently virtually) for care leavers to discuss issues and topics relevant to them. A member of the CICC joined this group and feedback was that it was very useful to get support with matters such as independent living and finances. It is hoped the CICC will eventually act as a feeder group for the "through care group" going forward.



## Priority 1- 54

Priority 1-54 is a new project focussing on ART projects and the CICC worked with Priority 1-54 during lockdown on an art-based project providing art packs to some young people in care. Lockdown diaries were included in the packs as well as graffiti style colouring templates and colour pens. Young people were encouraged to write lockdown diaries sharing their feelings anonymously about their experiences of being locked down and the impact it has had on their mental health.



## Youth Cabinet & East Sussex Community Voice (ESCV)

Working alongside other youth voice groups is something CICC value. They have built good links with Youth Cabinet, ESCV and other youth groups within East Sussex.

Promoting positive mental health is also extremely important to CICC and they feel very strongly about services provided in schools and this has led to some exciting collaborative work.

A CICC member has been working with ESCV and members of other youth voice groups since June 2020 on the Mental Health in Schools Team project (MHST). This is a project looking at current mental health provision in schools and how it could be improved. The CICC member has joined virtual panels and scrutiny groups for this project's branding, as well as providing ideas on what young people want to see from a school counselling service. This project is still ongoing and links well with the YIAG project below.

### Youth Inspect & Advise Group (YIAG) project.

This project will see four East Sussex Schools undergo a young person led inspection-style mental health and emotional wellbeing assessment. This assessment will look at their mental health provision for young people in schools. The CICC coordinator and Practice Manager met with the Youth Cabinet with several CICC members and CICC members were asked if they would like to be school mental health inspectors and to be part of this project. Four members have been accepted and will take part as inspectors.



## Training, Accreditation and Volunteering

### Food Hygiene

We have **9** food hygiene courses left. These will be given to young people in care who are 14+. We hope these will increase young people's knowledge and skills for when they may be looking in the future at part time work opportunities and this will afford young people a good grounding in food hygiene. These will be advertised in the next CICC newsletter.

All CICC members have received certificates for the volunteering hours they complete for their CICC work and in their local communities.

### Arts Award

During this year we have continued to support some limited delivery of Arts Awards specifically to junior children during lockdown and over the summer. This has enabled workers to offer arts based Skype activities whilst restrictions have been in place, as well as children gaining a qualification.

### Funding

CICC have secured an extra **£740** in extra funding this year from Community Matters Waitrose. This is to be used for a celebration activity; hopefully Thorpe Park, or a trip to London when it is possible and safe to do so. We will continue to apply for further funding from other sources to offer opportunities for CLA to gain accreditation and qualifications to enhance Young people's CV's.

We received a donation of £1000.00 from the Chairman's Fund via Councillor David Elkin and this has gone to the rucksack project. This project continues to support children coming into care and each rucksack contains a variety of items, making this transition as welcoming and as comfortable as possible for each young person. The rucksacks were reviewed by children and a decision was to make these unisex in design, and since the start of lockdown 35 rucksacks have been given to children and stocks are replenished on a regular basis across children's services offices and teams.





## CICC Participation

### DETAILED BREAKDOWN OF ACTIVITY

2 x Inside Full Meetings  
 4 x Outside park meetings  
 4 x SUSS IT – Junior Sessions  
 7x SUSS IT – Senior Sessions  
 4 x SUSS IT - Intermediate Sessions  
 17 x CICC Individual Support  
 3 x CV Writing  
 2 x MVM consult  
 1 x University lecture  
 1 x priority 1-54 lockdown arts project – 'Pour your art out'  
 1 x National Children's Commissioners office zoom call  
 1 x National Children's Commissioners office phone call  
 3 x Meetings with principle Social Worker  
 1 x long term Mental Health collaboration project with youth cabinet  
 1 x Input to staff digital seminar  
 1 x Internet matters national webinar

### SUSS IT

No of issues raised with CICC 13

#### Subjects

Social Worker	1
Contact	4
Placement / Respite	1
Other	1
Education / Employment	2
Digital	2
MVM	2
Social workers not responding	1



You Said	We Did
<i>CICC or other CLA</i>	<i>CICC or teams within ESCC</i>
Total Respect training was successful, and you felt that this should continue as it was important	CGL have agreed to support CICC deliver this again in 2021
You said you felt it was important that young people have an involvement in training adults who work with you	CICC have facilitated a lecture at Brighton University with Students doing their social work Master's degree. You have consulted with Nicola McGeown with ideas for a film with key messages for social workers
You were concerned that there was not a good enough link between CICC and the Though care team.	The Throughcare team have now started a virtual group for care leavers of which some of you are part
You feel it is important to have professional looking CV's to ensure the best chance possible when applying for part time work	During lockdown CICC Coordinator helped create professional style CVs for some young people
You feel that Young person friendly information is needed to help encourage Looked after children to attend their MVM (my voice matters) meetings	You met with Fiona Lewis safeguarding operations manager to develop a leaflet explaining the new MVM process in a young person friendly way.
You still feel that many LAC do not have CV's that they are confident about and this can affect getting part time work	We still have 9 online Food Hygiene training courses to give out in 2021
Rucksack feedback was given suggesting unisex ones would be more practical as Social Workers do not always know if the YP are male or female.	All backpacks are now made up containing items that are unisex
You found some of the changes to the MVM meeting process were not clear enough and you felt did not currently give enough opportunity to answer how you would like	Your comments were forwarded to Operations Manager Fiona Lewis who has taken these comments on board and has since met with some of you to discuss this further.
You said you liked receiving letters by post rather than email as it helps you still feel connected and is more personal	Co ordinator writes letters on a regular basis, keeping in touch and updating members about current CICC work.
You want to continue the rucksack project and were keen that it continues for another 12 months	We still have funding to ensure this will continue throughout 2021
You were keen to continue the reach out work you did with other LAC during the first lockdown	You talked to Nicola McGeown about Reach Out and she was keen to take this further and develop on a larger scale in 2021
You want to ensure LAC from all over East Sussex know about CICC & can contact you if needed & to reinforce positive messages & shared experiences, especially during the current situation.	A newsletter has been started and will be posted to all CLA age 8+ including those who are placed out of county and in agency placements.