



the children in care council

ANNUAL REPORT

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

1st April 2021 – 31st March 2022

ESCC Children in Care Council has been well established since 2008. The fifth CICC commenced on 29th June 2019. Due to Covid, they will serve for an extended 12 months until summer 2023.

The following summary report outlines the areas of work the CICC have covered this year.

This has been another challenging year for the CICC members who have been juggling disrupted education, family life and general uncertainty. Throughout this they have shown significant resilience and stayed committed to their role. Solid friendships have been made and they have continued to support each other outside of the meetings.

It has been my privilege to attend two of the CICC's Meetings and hear about the amazing work they have completed up to now and their plans for the future. They gave an impressive presentation to showcase their work and my thanks go to the CICC members and CICC coordinator for their continued dedication to their role.

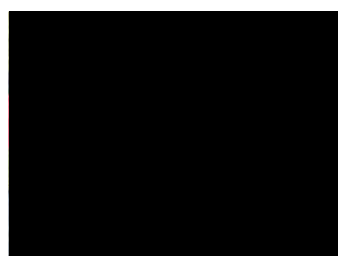
Tracey Millen
Practice Manager
Fostering/CICC



Introduction

The CICC has continued to meet regularly whilst adhering to national guidance on restrictions. CICC members have stayed focussed and committed to their role throughout the past year, ensuring other young peoples voices have been heard, and that cared for childrens views, wishes and feelings are considered. This helps us to keep the work of the CICC prominent and as important as ever.

The CICC composition was reviewed and in the past year, further recruitment has taken place ensuring membership continues to be inclusive. This will continue to take place, so that we can ensure proportionate representation from black and minority ethnic groups and the inclusion of young people with disabilities.



What is the Children in care council (CICC)?

The Children in care council is a group of cared for young people aged 13 – 18. They are a representative voice for all children and young people cared for by East Sussex County Council. CICC members hold a key role in raising issues affecting them.

The CICC is supported and managed by the Placement Support Service.

Membership

CICC Membership currently comprises of **12** young people (6 male and 6 female) aged 13 – 18.

In addition, we have one member at university who participates during holidays or virtually when possible.

Summary of CICC activity

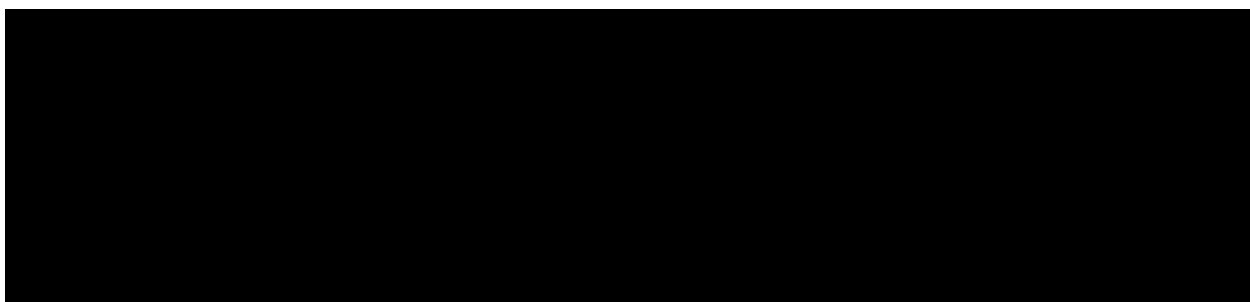
April 1st, 2021 – March 31st, 2022

Covid 19 and Participation

In line with Government guidelines, at the start of the year we began meeting again in smaller groups, as well as in larger outdoor sessions. Much of the focus in the first half of the year was on keeping CICC members connected with each other and maintaining their relationships, which took precedent over their official CICC work. This in turn enabled them to work flexibly in smaller groups both in person and virtually, as well as supporting each other outside of the meetings.

CICC staff deliver sessions and support with a nurturing approach, which enables the young people to feel valued and in turn encourages long term commitment and participation. Communication, although this can be done via technology, our members have expressed their preference for receiving correspondence by mail.

Despite the disruption over the year, CICC members have continued to demonstrate resilience to change and have participated in **26** opportunities to promote their work to gather the views of cared for children ensuring they are heard and promoted. (Appendix 1)



SUSS it (Speak up Sessions)

This year, due to reduced numbers of people meeting in groups, CICC members have been restricted in the amount of holiday activities they could visit.

The CICC Co-ordinator attended some of the **29** activities giving **59** young people the opportunity to speak out and speak up if they wanted too (Appendix 2)

Through this engagement **21** young people have asked for help with individual issues.

Interestingly for the first time, the number of young people asking for help with contact issues has declined. It is hoped conversations are becoming easier between social workers and young people in this area.

There has been an increase with issues involving technology and we expect this to grow, as the digital world continues to become more embedded in young people's lives. Managing screen time and taking digital responsibility is often challenging and this can have long term consequences if young people are not taught how to stay safe online.

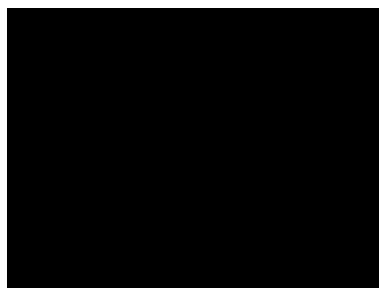
It is recognised that for the majority, online meetings should not be a replacement for face-to-face contact post pandemic.

There has also been an increase in worries around education, mainly with regards to exams. For those not sitting exams this can cause anxiety, wondering how coursework only with no exam results, may impact on their future choices.

It should be noted that this year for the first time all issues raised with social workers have been acknowledged and addressed.

Digital Ambassadors

All of the CICC have been involved in the digital care project being run by East Sussex County Council to train, update and promote resources for keeping cared for children safe and resilient online. Some CICC members will progress next year to become Digital Ambassadors and will be involved in the training of staff and adults who work with cared for children. This project will run throughout 2022.



Buddy Scheme

Four CICC members attended four weeks training, to become buddies for the buddy scheme that we have piloted this year. The scheme provides support to children entering care from a buddy who is already care experienced. One buddy is actively supporting another young person and this support will continue and grow.

University Masters Students

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

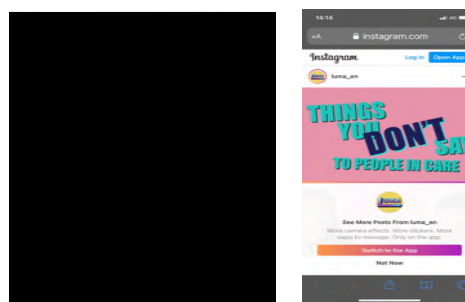
CICC Partnership working

Luma

Working in partnership with Ramshackle productions and Eggtooth, two community-based art companies, CICC Members were involved in creating a youth led social media channel for young people's positive online content. They spent time designing, creating, directing, and filming their own content during the spring and summer months.

The CICC made a film entitled '10 things you don't say to people in care'. This was professionally filmed, edited, and posted on Luma's Instagram channel.

Care Leavers and former CICC members were part of the cast which was a great opportunity to keep connections between current and former members with the younger ones asking questions about independence, university, and the support that they receive as care leavers.

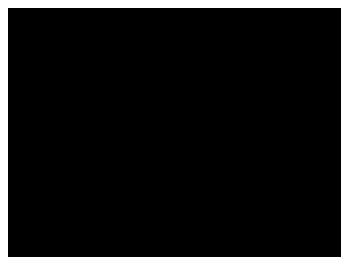


Youth Cabinet

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

The CICC and the youth cabinet joint together for a team day at Bushy wood. They worked together consulting on various campaigns and services within East Sussex.

They also had the opportunity to meet Cllr Bowdler who was the newly appointed lead member for children and families. Making and maintaining links with other youth voice groups has always been extremely important to CICC as this not only leads to exciting collaborative work, but also builds confidence with skills such as positive communication and negotiation.



Youth Inspect & Advise Group (YIAG) project.

Four CICC members were accepted by ESCV (East Sussex Community Voice) along with other young people from across the county, to form the Youth Inspect & Advise Group. Their role was to Inspect the mental health and emotional wellbeing services being provided in four East Sussex secondary schools. They then worked with the school staff to help discuss how the school could improve the mental health support they give their students.

This project was totally youth-led, making it a unique and exciting project for both the young people and the schools involved.

Training, Accreditation and Volunteering

Volunteering

All CICC members have received framed certificates for the volunteering hours they have completed this year for their CICC role and work in their local communities. In total, as a group they have completed **964** volunteering hours over the past 12 months.

Funding

CICC have secured an extra **£1288.30** in extra funding this year from the HAF and COMF Government scheme. This has been used for two, enriching team building activities – Ice Skating at Christmas and Ninja Warrior in February half term. Both activities were thoroughly enjoyed by everyone involved.

Further funding applications will be submitted during the year to buy in more training and qualifications for cared for young people to enhance their CV's.

CICC Participation

DETAILED BREAKDOWN OF ACTIVITY

8 x Full Meetings
 3 x Smaller Group Meetings
 1 x Celebration trip to Thorpe Park
 18 x Individual Support
 9 x Junior Suss it
 9 x Senior Suss it
 9 x Inter Suss it
 3 x New members
 8 x YAIG Meetings
 7 x Social Media Meetings
 4 x Peer Mentoring Training
 1 x Matched Buddy
 1 x Digital passport consultation Internet Matters
 1 x Jamie's Farm Visit
 1 x Virtual School Conference
 2 x Lansdowne Secure unit interviews
 4 x NQSW interviews
 2 x ESCC Interviews
 1 x joint meeting with Youth Cabinet
 1 x library consultation
 3 x Food Hygiene training
 1 x 3 Month Summer Placement
 1 x ANV National Survey
 2 x Meetings with Cllr Bowdler Lead Member for Children & Families
 1 x Meeting with Ade Sewell Operations Manager
 2 x Meetings with Tracey Millen Practice Manager
 2 x Visits to Silver Birches residential home
 1 x IRO consult
 1 x University lecture
 2 x Meetings with principle Social Worker
 1 x Input to staff digital seminar
 5 x Digital Ambassador Consultation
 1 x LAC nurse / health assessment consultation

SUSS IT (Appendix 1)

Nos of issues raised with CICC 21

Subjects

Social Worker	3
Contact	4
Placement / Respite	2
Other	3
Education / Employment	3
Digital	2
Mental Health	4

You Said <i>CICC or other CLA</i>	We Did <i>CICC or teams within ESCC</i>
<p>You wanted social workers to bare in mind your ideas and thoughts on key messages in their work with young people.</p>	<p>Nicola McGeown made a film with you, on these key messages which will be used for future training for social workers.</p>
<p>The waiting list for CICC was so long and you felt you would never get a chance to become a member.</p>	<p>We have decided to introduce taster days twice a year for some young people on the waiting list, so they can start to become more involved.</p>
<p>National Insurance numbers are still taking too long to arrive and are preventing you from starting work.</p>	<p>You raised this with Alison Jeffery Director for Children's Services, and we will follow this up with her.</p>
<p>It is important young people have an input into the training that adults who work with young people receive.</p>	<p>CICC facilitate a lecture at Brighton University with Students doing their social work master's degree on a yearly basis.</p> <p>CICC continue to regularly participate in interview panels for staff recruitment within ESCC</p>
<p>You raised concerns that the pandemic had prevented you from meeting with other CICC's and youth voice groups, to share ideas as you have done in previous years.</p>	<p>A full day joint visit was held with youth cabinet and CICC for both team building and campaign working opportunities.</p> <p>Membership for Sussex clubs for young people and A National Voice has been renewed to broaden opportunities for networking.</p>
<p>You wanted better links with young people living in residential care</p>	<p>Some of the CICC attended the official opening of Silver Birches residential home and were asked their views on the new building and what they would have liked if they were living there.</p> <p>The CICC are keen to set up regular meetings with the young people living here once it is open.</p>
<p>You were all concerned that there may be some lasting effects due to the trauma and anxiety that people have felt through the lockdown and that this may not be a short-term problem.</p>	<p>You raised this for consideration / discussion at RPPR and are awaiting feedback.</p>
<p>You made contact and asked to get involved in CICC type work, but you were over 16.</p>	<p>We contacted the leaving care participation worker and you have since become involved in their .work on behalf of care leavers</p>

You Said <i>CICC or other CLA</i>	We Did <i>CICC or teams within ESCC</i>
Mental health services need to be accessible throughout your care journey. Young People need to be listened to if they are saying that now is not the right time for them to access the services offered.	You raised this for consideration / discussion at RPPR and are awaiting feedback
You wanted a CV that would give you confidence in applying for part time work.	<p>You had a one-to-one support session in which a CV was written for you.</p> <p>You emailed and asked Clubs for Young People for CV writing training.</p> <p>We advertised Free Food Hygiene training in the 2021 newsletter.</p>
The information regarding MVM meetings needs to be young person friendly and more accessible In order for cared for children to attend.	<p>You met with Fiona Lewis safeguarding operations manager, to develop a leaflet explaining the new MVM process in a young person friendly way.</p> <p>This was raised again with the participation worker who will work alongside the CICC to develop this.</p>
It was disappointing that East Sussex were not holding an awards ceremony in person this year, especially as other counties were managing to do this.	You raised this with virtual school and SMT who have advised that they hope to do this next year.
The rucksack project should continue into 2022/2023	We still have funding to ensure this will continue throughout 2022/2023
You were keen to develop the buddy scheme but had some questions about expectations and commitment	4 members attended 12 hours of buddy training. We now have 2 active matched buddies
You were anxious about starting a new school in which you would have to board during the week	CICC members currently attending this school offered to meet with the young person to talk about any worries they had.
Too many young people were still reporting, meetings are being held in school time and that this was a broken pledge promise.	You raised this with the IRO team, SMT and the Virtual School. Designated teachers will be reminded about this and statistics are being reviewed.
You want to ensure all children cared for by East Sussex know about CICC and can contact us if needed. You are also keen to reinforce positive messages and share experiences.	A newsletter was produced in the summer and posted to all cared for young people age 8+ including those who are placed out of county and in agency placements.



It has been my pleasure to run this Children in care council. They are an amazing group of young people, and I am immensely proud watching them grow in confidence each year.

They give up their time completely voluntarily to help shape the service and make things better for those coming into care and for those currently being cared for.

They often work outside of the monthly meetings to carry out their role and juggle this with schoolwork, part time employment and social lives.

The CICC are committed to continue with their invaluable work next year and will enjoy taking forward collaborative work with other CICC's and youth voice groups both locally and nationally once again.

Some of our 'You said, We did' statements are still at the 'We will' stage and therefore this will be monitored and developed further.

We will also be actively recruiting new CICC members to replace those who are leaving us, whilst keeping the group as diverse as possible.

We wish all members of the CICC well and thank them for their valued service to all cared for children and young people in East Sussex.

Meshelle Carmody

CICC Coordinator

April 2022