

**CHANGE: YOUNG PEOPLE IN CARE CHANGING LIVES**

**REPORT OF THE 'CHANGE' COUNCIL**

**LINK TO WORK PROGRAMME : Corporate Parenting**

**1 Purpose of report**

- 1.1 This report is presented to the Board to inform members of the progress made so far in setting up and developing Sunderland's Children in Care Council

**2 Background**

- 2.1 'Care Matters: Time for Change' contained guidance for local authorities to set up 'Children in Care Councils' to make sure that young people in care could put their views and experiences of being in care to Directors of Children's Services and Lead Members.
- 2.2 There has been a group for young people in care in Sunderland since 1999, called 4UM.

**3 Progress so far**

- 3.1 In early 2008, 4UM were asked to develop ideas to set up a Children in Care Council. We decided we needed to get more members, and that we needed a different image from 4UM if we were going to succeed in setting up a new council. One of the first things we did was to discuss what it would be called. People kept referring to Children in Care Councils as "CICC", sounding like 'Sick' or 'Kick', so we wanted a name which people would not be able to turn into an insulting sounding word.
- 3.2 We decided on "Change: Young people in Care Changing Lives", although it is often now referred to as the "Change Council"
- 3.3 With help from Fostering and residential staff, Leaving Care, the Young People's Officer, Sunderland Youth Parliament and other staff we organised a "Change" fun-day for children and young people and their carers to let people know about the Council, and to get feedback from young people about what was important to them. This event was held at the Seaburn Centre in the summer holidays.
- 3.4 The first meeting of Change was in September 2008 and we have met every month since then, as well as having other sessions for particular tasks.

**4 What we have done**

- 4.1 As well as attending the Corporate Parenting Board and the Change meetings, members of Change have been involved in:
- Developing a policy for involving young people in Recruitment and Selection of Staff
  - Staff interviews
  - Representing Sunderland at the first regional meeting in Hartlepool for people involved in Children in Care Councils

- Representing young people on the Advocacy Monitoring Group
- Staff Training in the 'Total Respect' training programme
- We have an additional meeting before each Corporate Parenting Board meeting
- Eight of us attended the State of the City Debate for young people
- Some of us gave a presentation to Judges and Lawyers at the Family Justice Council
- Prepared and delivered training sessions for Councillors about Corporate Parenting.
- Taking part in the Youth Service Needs Assessment Meetings

**5 In our monthly meetings we have discussed a lot of things;**

- How to make sure young people know about 'Change'.
- We have also worked out a set of rules for 'Change', and met with Jane Hedley from Legal Services, who helped us develop the constitution. A copy of this is at the end of this report.
- We had a lot of discussion about how many young people need to be on Change. About 18 is really the most we can have, although other young people get the chance to be involved in some of the projects and working groups.
- We have invited each children's home to send a representative from their homes meetings to 'Change' so we get the views of young people in residential care as well as care leavers and young people in foster care.
- We met with staff to advise how to make the Children's Services report easier to understand
- We discussed the 'Pledge' and gave our opinions.
- We invited Helen Fay to our Change Council Meeting to discuss some of the issues coming from the Children's Homes
- We invited Mike Foster to talk with us about the 'Virtual School' and three Change Council members agreed to assist with a 'Virtual School Council' when one is set up.

**6 We have plenty of things still to do.**

- We have not done a Magazine yet as there were some problems about the design, but we think that is sorted now, and we hope to have this done soon so we can let other young people know what is going on.
- We expect to be involved in more training for Independent Advocates
- We hope that enough funding will be available for us to run another 'Change Fun-Day' later in the year, as this will be a good way of getting views of young people and recruiting new people into the work for next year.
- We are also involved in discussions about setting up a regional group and hope to be part of planning for a regional young people's event

**7 Our Constitution and Ground Rules are attached.**

# Change: Young People in care Changing Lives Rules 2009

## 1. Title

- 1.1 The Children in Care Council shall be called 'Change: Young people in care changing lives'.

## 2. Objectives of 'Change'

To gather and represent the interests and views of children and young people who are looked after by Sunderland City Council.

To represent the views of young people to the Director of Children's Services and to the Lead Member for children's services.

## 3. Membership

Those eligible for membership of Change are:

- Any child or young person between the age of 10 and 19 years who is in the care of the City of Sunderland
- Any young person over the age of 18 years who has been looked after who remains eligible for the provision of services as a 'Care Leaver' (up to the age of 24yrs)
- The Council may at its discretion accept the continuation of membership of a young person who is no longer looked after, where it is in the interests of the young person and 'Change' for membership to continue.
- One person (+ Deputy) from each home and young people from foster care, until they leave the home/carer.
- Five or more young people must be at meeting for it to go ahead.

## 4. Officers

- 4.1 For 2009 the officers of the group shall be as follows:

- Chairperson - Natalie Carroll
- Vice Chairperson - Tina Rutherford
  - Deputy - Peter Wright

## 5. Election of Officers

5.1 The Chair and Vice Chair will be elected by members of the Council for a period of one year, but may be re-elected the following year

## 6. Power of 'Change'

To recruit additional members from time to time as necessary

To set up smaller groups from time to time to run specific projects

To pay reasonable expenses to members attending meetings, as agreed.

To co-operate with any other body, person, organisation or authority to promote the objectives of Change.

Membership of Change or may be suspended or withdrawn in respect of any individual whose behaviour compromises the objectives of the group or the safety of the membership or disrupts its work.

Rules: These may changed as required, they are part of a separate document

- Help Other People
- Respect Others
- Listen to One Another; 1 person talking at a time
- Communicate with each other
- Treat others the way you want to be treated
- Trust each other
- Turn up on time or ring to let Aly or the Chairperson know you will be late
- No bullying
- Keep noise levels down
- Clean up after yourself
- Sign Change Council book when signing in and signing out of the office
- Dress smartly at Council Meetings and training events
- Be fair to each other
- Share with each other
- No swearing - respect!
- Don't go 'Over the Top'
- Phones during meetings should be off or on silent.

## 7. Attendance

Young people should regularly attend meetings and should not miss more than two meetings in a row, without good reason.

Attendance at Change meetings is a commitment the young people make. Carers are to be advised that refusal of permission to attend may not be used as a sanction in relation to any discipline policy or practice.

If members are unable to attend any meeting they will ensure that the Young People's Officer or the Chairperson is informed in advance.

The Change Council will agree with the City Council the level of compensation payment or reward for members and other young people who undertake additional duties on behalf of Change or of the City Council or of any services of the City Council.

Depending on circumstances payment may be in cash, by voucher, by 'LetsGo' card top up and in some circumstances may be paid via carers.

## **8. General Meetings**

The Council will hold an annual event, subject to funding being available from the City Council, to invite young people and their carers.

The business of the Annual General Meeting shall be to:

- Recruit members of Change
- Gather the views of young people and keep them and their carers informed of the work of 'Change'.
- If necessary, amend any elements of this Change Constitution.

# 'CHANGE' - YOUNG PEOPLE IN CARE CHANGING LIVES

## GROUND RULES

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