



The Blueprint Forum

Progress Report: July to December

VOICES FROM CARE

45 The Parade, Cardiff, CF5 3AD
Authored by: Christopher Dunn

A summary of activities from Voices From Care's Blueprint Forum participation project with RCT Local Authority.

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The primary focus of the Blueprint Forum is to provide looked after young people and care leavers in RCT the opportunities to have their voice heard and to promote their lived experiences at a strategic, policy and legislative level both locally, regionally and nationally.

Participation Group Details

Number of Young People engaging with Blueprint;	12
Age range:	14-22
Foster Care:	4
Residential Care:	1
After Care:	7
Young People from RCT Linking in with VFC National Projects	17

Headline Achievements

- A 2 day **digital story project** developing a series of life story videos that can be used in raise awareness of the experiences of looked after children and care leavers from RCT.
- Members of the group represented Wales at a **5 Nations looked after children's residential in Northern Ireland**. The young people participated in a series of workshop with their peers from Scotland, Northern Ireland and Republic of Ireland, focusing on care identity. The young people were also involved in the strategic development of a 5 Nation 'Care Day' taking place in February 2017, which aims to celebrate positive messages and aspirations for looked after children.
- Consultation response to the **Welsh Government's** strategy '*raising the ambitions and educational attainment of looked after children*'.

Summary of Blueprint Meetings and Activities within RCT.

The young people completed the first Blueprint Newsletter, which has been sent out to looked after young people in RCT.

The young people worked with Promo Cymru, a digital media company, to develop a series of digital stories. The stories covered, The challenges young people face growing up in care and leaving care, and services that could support them. 'It was just a photo', is a simple story around the impact on 'sexting' on the lives of young people. These digital stories aim to be shared on media platforms aimed at young people and professionals. The young people would like to explore the possibility of these videos being uploaded onto the Two Sides website.

The development and creation of these Digital Stories took place over 2 days with the young people. The young people discussed potential themes for their digital stories. They developed storyboards on the content of the video. The video content was designed and developed by the young people with assistance from Promo Cymru. The young people received 'Creating a Video Production Level 1' YMCA Wales Community College accreditation for taking part in the project.

A session aiming to provide the young people an opportunity to meet and take part in an informal bilateral Q&A with service leaders and to showcase the above digital stories had to be rearranged due to unforeseen circumstances.

The group took part in a research focus group session with Leeds Beckett University. The research, commissioned by Voices From Care and the Who Cares? Trust based in London, seeks to discover the groups views and experiences of any stigma young people feel because they are looked after.

Voices From Care were commissioned by the Welsh Government to develop a 'one year on' summery, with the blueprint forum responding in November. The aim of the session was to provide the young people with the opportunity to feed into the Welsh Governments 1 year review of *'raising the ambitions and educational attainment of looked after children'*. The session focused on key themes identified by the consultation document *'Education...what it means to me'* developed by in 2015.

The blueprint summer trip to Oakwood took place, this provided an opportunity for new members of the group to build bonds with existing members of the group.

Summary interactions with National Projects

Below provides a snapshot of some of the Blueprint Forums' interactions with Voices From Care's National Membership Programme.

- Many of the group attended Voices From Care's 'Listen Up' Summer and Autumn Regional Participation Groups, Alongside young people from Cardiff, Vale of Glamorgan and Merthyr. The Regional Groups provided young people with an opportunity to influence policy, practice and guidance on a national level.

For the Summers session ,the young people worked with Children In Wales who are developing health information resources for children looked after and care leavers.

The Autumn/Winter 'listen up' session, focused on developing a series of digital stories on young people's experiences in foster care. These will inform the National Fostering Framework (Recommendation 6), a work stream from the Improving Outcomes for Children Ministerial Advisory Group.

- Young People supported to take part in a 3 day summer school at the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama. This opportunity allowed young people to be taught by those in the arts industry, to develop and discover their creative skills and experience what it would be like as a student at the RWCMD. Workshop sessions included exploring care identity and promoting positive aspirations. The aim of the summer school was to inspire young people through the arts and promote aspirations of higher education. In December young people from RCT attended an evening workshop; co developed and delivered by VFC and RWCMD, that focused on confidence building and exploring some of the key themes in the Shakespearian play 'the Two Gentlemen of Verona'. The young people then went to see the play afterwards at the RWCMD.
- Members of the group attended the Cardiff University 'Confident Futures' initiative. This 2 day residential run in conjunction with First Campus was designed to inspire looked after young people who have an interest in attending University.
- Several Members of the group attended a 2 day 'Research Methods' training session with CASCADE. The sessions discussed what research is and how it can be used, along with the differing methods and ethics behind research. The young

people then developed and delivered their own simple research project to put their knowledge into practice.

- A member of the group also co-produced and co-delivered a presentation at a Public Health Wales conference.
- Many of the group attended Voices From Care's AGM, with a member of Blueprint being elected on the VFC's Board of Trustees.

Initiatives for the Next 6 Months

- To build relationships with those who have Corporate Parenting responsibilities in RCT; particularly with departments and bodies that sit outside of social services. The aim of this is to offer insight, advice and guidance on how to support looked after children and care leavers.
- To continue to build the relationship between the Corporate Parenting Panel and The Blueprint Forum. With the aim of scoping a 'critical friend' affiliation between the panel and young people.
- Working with RCT's 16+ team to scope the development of a 'drop in service' for care leavers.
- The group will be publishing their second newsletter, with assistance from RCT's press and promotions team. Additionally the group are keen on improving the engagement of young people in the newsletters content.
- To draft a 'work plan' for Blueprint forum for the year 2017/18.
- The group will continue to work with RCT on the development of the two sides website.
- Continuing to build link to teams, project and schemes within RCT.
- To engage with more young people, particularly those aged 14-16.

Open Invitations to VFC Events.

- **Question Time**, The Senedd Cardiff Bay, 26th January 2017, 5:15pm-7:45pm

The Question Time event provides a platform for young people looked after & care leavers to engage and hear from a panel of key decision makers in Wales. VFC are running workshops with young people looked after & care leavers from across Wales, where young people will develop a set of questions based on their life-experiences. During the event they will raise these questions directly with the panel.

- **Blueprint Question Time preparation session**, Pontypridd , 18th January 2017, 5:30pm-7:30pm

The young people will be preparing their questions for the above event. We believe this will provide a fantastic opportunity to discuss various aspect of being looked after with the group, including the young people's ideas moving forward.

- **The National Fostering Framework: Corporate Parenting** regional event, Cardiff, 2nd February, 11.00am -14.30pm

The regional events will discuss the exciting local pro-active initiatives and responses which have been developed to promote Corporate Parenting throughout Wales. The regional events will encourage young people and professionals together to explore a number of themes including those of education, employment schemes, health, leisure and wellbeing, participation and engagement, housing and fostering in order to identify those initiatives that are working well for young people and care leavers, and make suggestions for further development and shaping corporate parenting examples of good practice.

- **Proud To Be Me**, Cardiff City Stadium, 24th February 2017, 11am – 3:30pm

A conference bringing looked after children, care leavers and professionals together to explore what it means to be looked after. Through a series of interactive workshops, speakers and exhibitions, Proud To Be Me will provide opportunities for discussion, provide young people with the opportunity to proactively engage with decision makers and to promote positive messages and aspirations for looked after children.

For more information on this report or VFC events please contact Chris on 02920 451431 or email christopher@vfcc.org.uk