

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Report

Committee/Panel:	Children and Families Advisory Panel
Date:	27 May 2014
Title:	Feedback from the Care Ambassadors 'Better Outcomes' Conference
Reference:	5842
Report From:	Director of Children's Services

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1. Summary

- 1.1 The Better Outcomes Conference for Children in Care was held at the University of Winchester on Thursday 9 January 2014. The theme this year focussed on aspirations and was hosted and delivered by Hampshire County Council's Children's Services Care Ambassadors
- 1.2 The conference was attended by over 140 delegates from a range of professions, including social care, youth offending, education, health and a number of third sector organisations
- 1.3 The conference was opened by John Coughlan, Deputy Chief Executive & Director of Hampshire Children's Services and Stephen Hall, Programme Leader for Drama at the University of Winchester, was invited as a guest speaker with a particular focus on motivation
- 1.4 Workshops were planned and delivered by the Care Ambassadors and focussed on different elements of aspiration either in a presentation or interactive workshop format;
 - Workshop One: **Reach For the Stars**

Participants found out more about inspirational individuals who have experienced the care system and why children and young people should 'reach for the stars'.
 - Workshop Two: **The Journey From Start To Finish**

Participants were taken on a young person’s journey through the care system and were asked to respond to scenarios based on their experience or role and how they could improve the presented situations.

- Workshop Three: **From Lost To Great Expectations**

It was emphasised to participants that aspiring for children and young people is key, regardless of the individual’s circumstances. Through different case studies, attendee’s were asked how they would react when faced with a young person who needs that push, that encouragement, that ‘extra mile’.

- Workshop Four: **Essential Elements For Education**

Participants were given a clear message that children and young people in care and care leavers deserve the opportunity to be supported to achieve their full potential. The presentation highlighted that education is key, whether academic or vocational and should be central to all considerations when supporting individuals to achieve their goals.

2. Contextual information

- 2.1 Care Ambassador’s individual feedback from the conference can be found after section four of this report
- 2.2 Throughout the day Care Ambassadors captured the key themes of the day based on the responses to points raised, discussions and question asked in their workshops.
- 2.3 The key themes arising from the conference have helped form an action plan for the Care Ambassadors to focus on over the coming year.

Theme	Action
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication with/between social workers and foster carers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Care Ambassadors were invited to attend the Hampshire Fostering Network (HFN) and subsequently will attend meetings on a quarterly basis as well as sending information on upcoming events and projects. • Where identified, stronger collaborative working opportunities will be established i.e. HFN’s September 2015 conference will now involve the Care

	<p>Ambassadors.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key messages collated through a number of methods of participation activity will be published and disseminated across social work teams as well as highlighted on the 'SPARK' website.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educational experiences of children in care and care leavers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Care Ambassadors have been asked to work with the Virtual School to produce a DVD resource that will contain the thoughts, feelings and experiences of children in care and care leavers. The DVD will highlight what has helped, what are the barriers and how staff in and out of the school could support young people to achieve and aspire.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better access to information for young people in care 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The children in care and care leavers website 'SPARK' will be an information hub for all young people in care, it will be part interactive ensuring the creation of a 'virtual care council' that will include participation from individuals placed inside and outside of Hampshire's borders. The Care Ambassadors will have an integral role in managing, updating and promoting the website and content as well as offering online peer mentoring opportunities.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive messages of the care system in Hampshire 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Care Ambassadors, individually and as a group, are looking at initiating a number of different projects, with the support of senior managers, that will highlight the positive aspects and impact that Hampshire's care system has on children

	<p>and young people. These include a 'Positive/Good Awards' event that showcases not only children and young people's achievements, but that of foster carers, social workers, senior managers and anyone else who gets nominated. Also, a 'Curry Club' that will invite anyone from across the field of social care to come and enjoy a few hours with young people aged 16 + to breakdown barriers, share stories, ideas all over a curry! The projects are still in their infancy, but the Care Ambassadors will be pursuing these and more over the coming year.</p>
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3. Future direction

- 3.1. It has been suggested as a way to maximise attendance that the next conference reverts back to a September date, meaning that the next Better Outcomes Conference will be held in September 2015.

4. Recommendation

- 4.1 That the Children and Families Advisory Panel is invited to note that this year's conference was again a resounding success and a reflection of the skill and enthusiasm of Hampshire's Care Ambassadors. From this positive event further work has been identified which will directly, and positively, impact on the services children and young people receive through improvements and changes to practice.

Better Outcomes Conference – Care Ambassador Feedback

“After the conference I felt like I had managed to inspire people and what I noticed throughout the conference is that most people were interested and happy to listen. Things that came out were that lots of people didn’t realise who had achieved from care and they didn’t realise that they all had people to inspire them. Lots of people who commented said that they never realised or thought about individuals having such an influence on people’s lives and I was happy that many said that they left feeling ready to inspire others and help them achieve.”

“The conference conveyed the fact that aspirations are different for every child and young person. Therefore a subjective approach is needed to ensure that each child and young person is able to achieve their individual goals. It was thoroughly inspiring and it revealed the fact that many improvements regarding aspirations are required. One of these is that there needs to be a consensus between foster parents, children’s homes, social workers and educational establishments. This ensures that a child and young person receive the best assistance in achieving their ambitions. The conference also revealed the fact that we need a balance when encouraging the achievement of aspirations. Being too negative or overly positive will not achieve the designed effect. There is a need to remain encouraging whilst at the same time realistic.”

“I felt the conference was a success as what we had to say and all of the content of the workshops was well received. People seemed keen to hear what we had to say and shared our view that young people and professionals need to work together to get the best out of the Care System. The theme was aspirations and people were interested in hearing what we thought they needed to do to inspire young people in care. I think everyone took something away from the day including myself. It was very successful.”

“I learnt about relevant ways to help young people that are pregnant and need support. The staff that attended the conference showed ways to inspire young people for the future and in their education, but also thought of ways to help that individual person by not over looking their care if there may not be any need to resolve. Although some professionals showed no interest throughout my presentation, we found some staff showed a greater interest throughout scenarios giving positive ways to help children succeed.”

“The range of different professionals answering questions in very different ways was interesting. There were a lot of debates between foster carers and social workers when trying to put the best interest of the young people first. A few professionals did not seem engaged and as if they weren’t interested, but most

were. There were some really inspiring answers of how things can be changed for the better for young people in care.”

“The conference was a challenge that went brilliantly. I think people realised that everyone has aspirations in life and I think they will now introduce this into their social work practice with children and young people. I think professionals are more aware of their behaviour and wordings around children and young people and the impact they could have”

“A few people were rude, but most people took part and gave good input. We had a good leader, making sure everyone was alright with what they were doing. People’s views about the difference between young people in children’s homes and young people in care or foster care were interesting.”

“The conference had a great turn out and I feel the individual workshop I participated in had an amazing response, with a massive input from all the individuals that attended. I feel the day had a good atmosphere and both the professionals that attended and delivered the conference benefitted by taking away at least one thing. There appeared to be a break down between foster carers and social workers and this kept surfacing throughout the workshop. It was an eye opening and challenging day for everyone.”

“It was an overall good day with lots of positive input from all the professionals. I felt very proud of how inspired the professionals were, although some did seem a little defensive rather than seeing the message we were trying to deliver. I feel happy that I may have made a slight difference in the way social workers and young people communicate and I am glad that the professional’s eyes were opened to the gaps in social care.”

“For me the key messages and issues coming from the conference were to get all the audience involved in remembering why they came into this role. Just like any job, knockbacks can be quite deflating. I think when your dealing with ‘difficult’ children and young people, putting your all into it and not getting through it can make you lose your passion and motivation. Many social workers will never get to see the good they do when the children and young people they have helped set off into the world doing remarkable things because of them. They will quite often never get to see that and never know what good they have done and the recognition they deserve so they start to focus solely on the negatives. I think these conferences are great because it gives professionals a chance to focus on the positives and see what good they can and are doing and I personally felt quite a lot of them went away with that passion again and remembering why they came to do this job in the first place.”

“I felt the conference was a great success, our workshop went really well and people seemed genuinely interested in what we had to say. At the start people were really keen to get involved asking plenty of questions and praising us. Towards the end in the 4th round of workshops people seemed to be flagging a little and it took a little more persuasion to get involved. All in all I feel our workshop went really well we all did a great job at delivering our different sections of our presentation and we all got a buzz out of getting through it without too many hiccups. I felt as a team we were well prepared and managed to express our thoughts and opinions on aspiring for children in appropriate and effective way. I feel as if people left our workshop feeling inspired to reflect on their own practice and consider ways in which they could inspire young people

The whole day was challenging and rewarding experience. It gave me a chance to express my own views and opinions on how important aspiring for children and young people in care is. I feel I personally achieved a great deal from the day by rounding up the conference as it was a very daunting experience.”

“I feel that we managed to deliver our key messages across very effectively; these messages were:

1. Professionals should aspire for children and young people in care the same way that they would their own children.
2. Positive aspirations can change a child/young person’s life for the better.
3. Every child/young person matters.
4. Anyone can inspire children and young people in care, regardless of what their profession or background is.

I feel that there were no major issues with the conference, although some of the professionals seemed to be more interested in the messages that we had to deliver than others, and some were unable to suggest what they would do to aspire for each fictional character based on their characteristics. However, on the whole it was felt by me and many of the other Care Ambassadors that I spoke to that it was a very positive and productive day.”

CORPORATE OR LEGAL INFORMATION:**Links to the Corporate Strategy**

Hampshire safer and more secure for all:	no
Corporate Improvement plan link number (if appropriate):	
Maximising well-being:	yes
Corporate Improvement plan link number (if appropriate):	
Enhancing our quality of place:	no
Corporate Improvement plan link number (if appropriate):	

Section 100 D - Local Government Act 1972 - background documents

The following documents discuss facts or matters on which this report, or an important part of it, is based and have been relied upon to a material extent in the preparation of this report. (NB: the list excludes published works and any documents which disclose exempt or confidential information as defined in the Act.)

DocumentLocation

None

IMPACT ASSESSMENTS:

1. Equalities Impact Assessment:

- 1.1. Children and young people in care have aspirations that are similar to their peers. These may be having a loving family, a good job/career with financial security and a nice home. As a local authority and as corporate parents how can we ensure that children and young people in care do not fall into a trap of self-perceived fatalism and a feeling of not being in control of their lives or future.
- 1.2. Children in Care and Care Leavers are not direct protected characteristics of the Equalities Act. However, Children's Service recognise that they are one of several vulnerable groups who whilst fall outside the key characteristics are still more likely than their peers not in care to face discrimination, loss of voice in life choices and the risk of becoming 'invisible' due to lack of awareness about their needs. This in turn can impact upon their ability to achieve and general life chances.
- 1.3. As a local authority Children's Services have a range of statutory duties and responsibilities to this particular group of children and young people. In order to be able to discharge our duties in a timely and most effective manner it is essential that children and young people in our care are involved in decisions that affect them directly but also are able to fully contribute to, and influence, wider service development.
- 1.4. Gathering the views of children and young people in our care is undertaken in a number of ways including team days, surveys, inspections and conference events. It is then just as important that their views are shared with staff at all levels to ensure the services being provided are legally compliant, appropriate, relevant and driving future practice.

2. Impact on Crime and Disorder:

- 2.1. It is clearly evidenced that young people from a care background are more likely to have negative outcomes, including increased chance of being involved in the criminal justice system. Being given both support and opportunities to achieve can have a significant impact on a young person's life chances. Hearing from young people about their experiences and their ideas about what would have made a difference to them is all part of the commitment by the local authority to enhance life chances for young people in care.

3. Climate Change:

- 3.1 How does what is being proposed impact on our carbon footprint / energy consumption?
- 3.2 How does what is being proposed consider the need to adapt to climate change, and be resilient to its longer term impacts?

No direct impact on climate change has been identified.