

Game Changer 2017

A short report from the
Children in Care Council Workers Network
North West

“Joining together to make change happen”



From Youthfocus NW:

Youthfocus NW is an organisation with strong youth work roots. We work with organisations and young people to have a voice where it counts across the North West and beyond. We work in partnership with young people and the workforce to develop opportunities for collaboration and coproduction. It is with pleasure that we support the Children in Care Council Workers Network (CiCCWN). The CiCCWN is an informal collective that brings staff and young people together. CiCCWN aims to create space for dialogue and opportunities to instigate change. If you would like to find out more about both Youthfocus NW and the CiCCWN please contact us via the details at the back.

In 2017 we embarked on a journey to find out what young people in care thought about their care experiences:

- **We brought youth representatives from the Children in Care Councils together twice**
- **We created an online consultation tool (Having our say and doing something about it) and**
- **We delivered Game Changer 2017**

In total we reached up to 400 young people that were under the care of the local authority. This report compiles the data from both the online consultation tool and Game Changer 2017. Our model for delivery for 2017 was sequential and young people were involved at every stage, each activity providing a base layer for the next.

Having our say and doing something about it – (On line consultation tool)

In total we received 124 responses from children in care/care leavers from 14 Local Authorities:

62% of the respondents were female and 38% male

13% were aged 11 years or under

47% aged 12 – 15 years

29% aged 16 – 18 years

The remaining 11% were aged 19 years and over

The respondents were asked a series of 10 questions and were given a number of options under each question. A number of the questions were repetitive. This was to ensure that the choices could be confidently categorised by CiCCWN. Each of the categories became a standalone theme for the facilitated workshops at Game Changer 2017 and are issues that could be confidently explored with young people and solutions sought.

Two additional themes emerged to be passed on to the NW Local Authorities as raw data (It was agreed by CiCCWN that these additional themes were too complex to explore at Game Changer 2017)

Themes:

- Contact with birth family and siblings
- Being trusted by the adults we live with
- Feeling safe and free from bullying
- Having a key trusted adult/worker in my life

Additional themes to pass onto NW Local Authorities

- Staying at the same place where you currently live in care
- Keeping the same social worker as long as possible



Game Changer 2017

On Saturday 4 November 2017, 180 young people and 24 adults converged on Blackpool Pleasure Beach. Alicia from Blackpool Children in Care Council was the host of the event along with internet rap sensation Afghan Dan. The aim of the event was to provide a space where young people were able to meet other young people from different areas, share similar experiences and come together to explore commonalities. A series of active workshops were delivered to address the four themes extrapolated from the online consultation. The workshops consisted of group discussions, a lyrical master class and slang attack which investigated social care jargon. It culminated with a visit to the rides at Blackpool Pleasure Beach.

Pictorial minutes were taken and are presented at various stages of this report

Contact with birth family and siblings:

“It is important for this to be consistent”

Contact helps a young person’s mental health, wellbeing, and gives a sense of belonging which develops identity. To improve this, contact needs to be frequent and longer. Social workers and foster carers need to buy into the idea of contact and the use of technology needs to be considered, especially if people don’t live near each other.

Being trusted by the adults we live with:

“Privacy is important, it helps us to feel respected, trusted and valued”

To improve this, we want to build and consistently maintain positive relationships. Importantly we want to be given the opportunity to be allowed to take risks and make mistakes.

Feeling safe and free from bullying

“It is important for us to have a voice and be listened to”

This will help us feel comfortable, confident and help us feel like we belong. It will help with our mental health and wellbeing if we are not seen as being different. We need people to notice the signs and we need someone to talk to that listens to us. We want to be educated about bullying and online safety and we want to know where to go if we need advice.

Having a key trusted adult/worker in my life

“It is important for us to be able to discuss sensitive and personal issues and feel comfortable enough to trust that person so much that we open up”

This needs to be consistent and we mustn’t be judged all the time. Trusted adults can help us resolve problems and speak up for us through advocacy. We need to be involved so that we can find the right worker for us and we need time to build a relationship. Try to change the worker as little as possible but if there is a change make sure there is a smooth transition.

Overall recommendations

1. Corporate parents should discuss the top 4 themes in each Local Authority
2. A Pledge should be created to address the 4 themes
3. Local, regional and national response (CiCCWN members feed into training with social workers and foster carers and cascade to teams locally)
4. A follow up conference in November 2018 to look at what action has been taken

Decision makers in attendance agreed to:

(Youthfocus NW will contact the pledge makers in May 2018 to ask them about progress and to see how the NW CiCCWN can take the work forward)

"I will take the survey & messages from today to all the different audiences I can, starting with the Directors of Children's services in the North West."

"I will send the report to Greater Manchester Mayor Andy Burnham and Liverpool Metro Mayor Steve Rotherham, also to Jon Rouse, Chief Officer GM Health & Social Care"

Elizabeth Harding – CEO Youth Focus NW

"I will work with all NW LAs to campaign and lobby government to fund Children's Services properly and to support care leavers with better options and financial support"

"I will influence Ofsted to put children first, not process"

Maureen Bateson MBE

Executive Member for the Children's Services portfolio Blackburn with Darwen

"I will support children's charities to see young people in care as individuals not as statistics"

"I will campaign for more money for LAs to be good corporate parents"

Chloe England

Policy and Campaigns Manager
Children England

"I will feedback to Ofsted not to use the phrase LAC and feedback the survey results and game changer report to Ofsted"

Alison Cameron Brandwood

Her Majesty's Inspector
Further Education and Skills, Ofsted

"I will feedback your survey with the Youth Policy Team"

Jenny Noble, Policy Adviser
Youth Policy Team, DCMS

"Raise awareness & celebrate today with the regional DCS group"

Diane Booth, Director
Children's Services, Blackpool

Three of the many short raps created on the day (by unknown)

*"I came into care and became a LAC, not knowing if I'd ever go back.
Put me on a section 20, made me feel so empty.
Assessments, meetings, contacts and reviews.
They wanna try and walk a mile in my shoes"*

*"My behaviour changed, thought I was no good.
But it wasn't me, nobody understood.
Passed me from a social worker to a personal advisor,
expecting me to act grown up and wiser.
They keep my best interests at heart, help give me the best start.
Independence, tenancies and benefits. Let's make it big like Afghan Dan – Innit"*

*"Key worker want to make the decision. They take your life and make the incision.
They say that they want my participation, but it's not my fault I'm in this situation.
Sat in a room, just another consultation.
Taken from my home with no hesitation.
Contact with my family and in the corner there's a lurker,
Unaware it was arranged by my lovely social worker.
Care leaver, the end of my journey. I hope I can make a decent attorney"*

Youthfocus NW and CiCCNW would like to thank:

- **All the staff that work tirelessly with and for young people**
 - **All the Local Authorities involved for offering staff time and resources and**
 - **Most importantly, the young people for continuously representing their peers and their local areas with passion and pride**
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[A report from Game Changer - young people in care conference](#)

Reflections on a great youth participation event from Children England's Policy and Campaigns Manager

For information about Youth Focus North West:

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