

Children and Young Person's Council Summary Report 2020

What is the CYPC?

The idea of the group is to raise awareness of issues that might be, or have, affected young people in our care. We want to help them find their voice, have their say and ultimately, give them the opportunity to influence others and work together as a team in a positive environment. The CYPC invites children from the ages of 12 to 18 to become Members of the Council.

We encourage the children and young person's to engage with projects that we might like to undertake and their input and opinions are invaluable in this process.

Urs Biemann as our CEO is usually present to introduce himself and welcome the attendance of each young person to the Council and encourage their input. The Council is also attended by Udi Aymer, our Regional Head in the North West.

We have a Council Co-ordinator, Rhiannon, who was introduced to the Council in April 2020. She is a Care Leaver. Her role is to engage, as a care leaver, with the children on a younger, "I've been there" level. Rhiannon's contribution is invaluable as she has the ability to connect with children who are in care and draw them out of themselves to a platform where they feel safe and can talk openly.

How Often Do We Meet?

We hold meetings on a quarterly basis and in January and April 2020, these took place in person; children attended each regional office and then by video conference, the other regional offices were linked in. We aim to make these sessions fun and order in pizzas & pop for the children, this contributes to a relaxed atmosphere. We aim to have two to three children representing each Region, this includes the North East. We have also extended the invite to include some of the birth children of our carers. It's a really positive way to involve them with their foster sibling, which at times, gives them an understanding of what it is like for children in care.



During 2020 we held meetings in January, April and November. Bearing in mind this was a new initiative, we have had a good turnout of children and certainly, by the November meeting, which took place over zoom, the children were starting to open up and become more engaged. We discussed various projects we'd like the Members to be responsible for and this is moving forward.

Rhiannon connects and talks to the children, ensuring the projects are gaining momentum, but more than that, she is on hand to answer any question or anxieties the other children might have. We have one young lady who is about to become a care leaver. She had a lot of questions in November so we are encouraging her and Rhiannon to engage and talk regularly.

Projects Generated by the CYPC

Currently, we are working on:-

Project 1: Developing an information leaflet about UK Fostering for young people: The Council has agreed to start work on an information leaflet for children and young people coming into UK Fostering that tells young people what UK Fostering does.



Project 2: Goodie bags for CYPC/new children coming into UK Fostering: The Council want to put a Goodie bag together of essential items that will be given to children and young people coming into UK Fostering for the first time. They have also proposed that samples of these bags are given to Council members joining the council as a welcome pack.

There were some excellent suggestions as to what could be included in these Goodie bags.

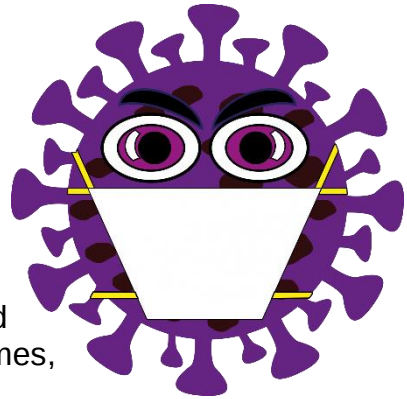
Project 3: BLM development: Council Members discussed their views about Black Lives Matter movement. One of our young persons explained they had done a presentation on the subject at school and would send us a copy. We would like to be able to give this to new children in care with UK Fostering, so they can see how we address the movement and involve our young persons in such topics. Other Council Members discussed their awareness and had a good understanding of the BLM movement.

Member Rewards

We pay each of the Members for their attendance, time and contribution by way of voucher, which is £20. There is no doubt this helps motivate Members.

How have the CYPC Members coped with COVID?

In the April meeting, we were still in the early stages of COVID and learning how it might affect us in the coming months and how to live with it. We made sure we brought the subject up in our November meeting, due to concern for our young people. For a variety of reasons, this was a great topic as it covered boredom, school work, missing friends, missing family and mental health. Plus, the bond between the young person and their carer during these times, certainly put placements to the test.



Responses during the meeting were refreshing. It's surprising at times, how resilient children are and how they adapt. The clear message here was that carers had supported the children on their journey during 2020 and they were all doing well. We didn't detect any major concerns or worries about the children, the carers or their placement stability.

Generally, it was accepted as a matter of fact that children are schooled from home, contact is done via the phone and video and so are friendship groups. Social Media plays a huge part in children being able to stay in contact with friends and family. There was naturally uncertainty about the future but the Members also understood, their carers, family, friends, teachers, adults were all experiencing the same turmoil's and just trying to adjust accordingly.

We look forward to working with our Members during 2021, bringing current projects to completion and starting new ones. This is a valuable platform for children in care to be part of, enabling them to find their voices and realise how much they matter!

Comments and Learning for UK Fostering from the Member's work of 2020

1. The Council Members have met regularly in 2020. Udi made this possible and persevered to encourage people to come along on the 'journey'. Thanks Udi!
2. Continue to have meetings regularly. Every 2 - 3 months is good. Announce the next meeting dates and remind Members what's coming up. To have someone from UK Fostering (Sandra) to keep this on track is great.
3. Great to have Rhiannon as a Care Leaver on board. Make sure we can keep her.
4. Work with some more speed on the projects that are mentioned in this report. Get them finished and move on to the next ones.



5. UK Fostering needs to help Members between meetings to stay on track with things they are working on. Sandra and Rhiannon can help with that.
6. Pay the £20 quickly after each meeting.
7. Continue to be creative, encouraging, and make sure UK Fostering listens to what Members have to say.