

SOCIAL & HEALTH CARE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting	15 th November 2018
Report Subject	Bright Spots Programme
Portfolio Holder	Cabinet Member for Social Services.
Report Author	Chief Officer Social Services
Type of Report	Scrutiny Report

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In February – March 2018 all children in care in Flintshire were asked to participate in a survey about their well-being. The survey ‘Your Life: Your Care’ was developed by Coram Voice and University of Bristol as part of the Bright Spots programme. The survey asked children in care about their life, based on the things that are important to them. The local authority will use the key findings to inform service development and support arrangements for children in care.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	Committee review the findings and perspectives of looked after children from the <u>“Your Life, Your Care Flintshire full report”</u> (22.05.2018).
2	Committee endorse the development of a co-produced action plan with our looked after children, which sets out a local authority response to the key recommendations identified in the Bright Spots full report.

REPORT DETAILS

1.00	BACKGROUND
1.01	Bright Spots is a survey designed to measure the subjective well-being of children in care and how they feel about their care. The Children's Commissioner for Wales, and the Welsh Government, offered to fund the survey in six local authorities to establish the value of the Bright Spots programme. Flintshire was successful in our 'expression of interest' to use the survey to establish the experiential views of children and young people who are in the care of Flintshire Care Services.
1.02	<p>The survey was based on three on-line or paper surveys to capture the views of children / young people aged</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Younger children aged 4-7 years (16 questions) • Children aged 8-11 years (31 questions) • Young People of secondary school age 11-18 years (46 questions)
1.03	<p>The conduct of the survey followed a set format:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Surveys were conducted in Welsh and English • Paper or electronic copies were available • At the time of the survey 171 children / young people were eligible to complete (36% returned) • Children and young people completed the survey anonymously • If any identifying information was shared in the survey, these were removed by researchers
1.04	<p>The survey had the primary objective of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying where children appear to be flourishing • Where things could be improved • Providing an evidence based analysis of children's experiences and well-being • To inform service improvements
1.05	<p>The survey published three documents (See Appendix A,B&C)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Your Life, Your Care, full report Final • Your Life, Your Care Flintshire CYP Summaries Final (22.05.2018) (produced for the children / young people) • Your Life, Your Care staff summary Final <p>These provide the level of detail according to the audience produced for and enables an age appropriate understanding into the key-lines and outcomes identified. It is imperative to stress these highlighted the experiences of children ranging across their care experience, education, health, emotional well-being, contact with close/extended family, play, leisure, fun,</p>

	entertainment and access to pets and associated animals.
1.06	Under the respective age categories, the findings were divided according to the age range and the respective findings under the headings 'What was good' and "What was bad". These highlighted the summary experiences of the children and young people and provided the key sources of the local Authority's "We will" response.
1.07	The following sections provide a high level overview of the key findings arising from the survey. Work will be undertaken through our consultation and engagement forum for looked after children, and with foster carers, to develop an informed action plan to learn, and where appropriate extend good practice as well enhancing support in areas for development.
1.08	The survey has identified the following areas that are working particularly well in Flintshire:
1.09	✓ The majority of the youngest children and young people felt safe and settled in their placements.
1.10	✓ The majority of children and young people trusted their carers and 97% thought that their carers were interested in their education.
1.11	✓ Carers are providing sensitive parenting to young people (11-18yrs) – 92% felt their carers noticed how they were feeling, which is unusually high.
1.12	✓ More looked after children and young people were living in a household with a pet in comparison with children living in Wales and compared to other children in care.
1.13	✓ More young people (96%) in Flintshire felt they were being taught life skills compared to young people (86%) in other local authorities.
1.14	✓ School is working well for the youngest children (4-7yrs) –all reported enjoying school.
1.15	Key areas for development/recommendations identified in the report were:
1.16	<p>➤ Explore why children in Flintshire aged 8-11yrs gave more negative responses compared to the other age groups and compared to similarly aged children in other local authorities.</p> <p>As this is a small, defined cohort of children, we will be able to review and develop our understanding of why they have reported low well-being and</p>

	<p>explore with them how we can help improve their feelings and experiences.</p>
1.17	<p>➤ Make sure that reviews of contact arrangements consider the views of all children.</p> <p>The reasons for decisions are explained to children but we need to do more to ensure that they understand the information and that they are given the chance to ask questions about contact.</p>
1.18	<p>➤ When making plans with children and young people, include unstructured opportunities to explore the outdoors such as walking the dog or playing in a park as well as organised activities.</p> <p>We will talk to children, staff and carers about how we can increase these opportunities.</p>
	<p>➤ Ensure that all social workers introduce themselves to children and explain their roles in a child-friendly way.</p> <p>We have examples of information leaflets that have been produced for children that explains the role of a social worker and provides the name and contact number of their social worker. We will be asking children if this information will help support introductions and what else would assist.</p>
1.20	<p>➤ Explain to children what has led to them coming into care and provide opportunities for them to ask questions.</p> <p>The survey highlights the importance of us working with the youngest children (4-7yrs) to help them understand why they were in care. This includes time to help children understand what has happened, and that they are not to blame. We will review our approach to ensuring that this work is an effective partnership between social services, carers, and where appropriate parents and schools.</p>
1.21	<p>➤ Provide opportunities for young people (11-18yrs) to build self-esteem and positive self-image.</p> <p>26% of young people were unhappy with the way they looked which is a larger proportion than young people (10%) in the general population. This is an area that we will need to work with in partnership with health, schools and youth services to identify realistic action that can be taken to support our young people.</p>
1.22	<p>➤ Consider how young people might be reassured about the support they can expect to receive in the future.</p>

	Through consultation with young people we will establish the type of support and reassurance they are seeking and how we could work to provide this, including communication channels.
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2.00 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS	
2.01	The local Authority is required to address the experiences of our children and young people by looking at our current services and have the need to shape and adjust our models of care and support.
2.02	That a range of foster carers need to be recruited and approved to offer a diversity of care arrangements.
2.03	The key findings in relation to the learning experiences of children looked after have been shared with education colleagues.
2.04	General welfare and emotional support services are made aware of the findings.

3.00 CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED / CARRIED OUT	
3.01	The following have been attended and received the survey outcome finding; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children and young people in Care Groups • The Children's Commissioner for Wales • Children Services Forum (including education and health) • Key members of third party / sector groups • All staff groups within Social Services teams • Care Standards Inspectorate (Wales) • Foster Care Support Groups • Team, Service and Senior Management Groups • Scrutiny Committee (15/11/2018)
3.02	We would welcome any opportunity to promote the key findings to all groups with an investment in the welfare and well-being of children looked after.

4.00 RISK MANAGEMENT	
4.01	There is an imperative that the local Authority has a duty to enact the key-lines of inquiries and their application into the every-day lives of children and young people in care.
4.02	Failure to deliver will also receive due scrutiny by the Children's Commissioner, Welsh Government, relevant investigatory bodies and necessary localised scrutiny arrangements.

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5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	Your life, your care; full report
5.02	Your life, your care; presentation
5.03	Your life, your care; summary

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
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7.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
7.01	Contact Officer: Peter Robson Telephone: 01352 701028 E-mail: Peter.Robson@flintshire.gov.uk