

Corporate Parenting Board Meeting

Thursday, 26 January 2017

Dear Councillor

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD - THURSDAY, 26TH JANUARY, 2017

I am now able to enclose, for consideration at the Thursday, 26th January 2017 meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board, the following report that was unavailable when the agenda was published.

Agenda No	Item
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9	<u>Mind Of My Own Application</u> (Pages 3 - 8)
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Alice Vickers, Virtual School Head for Looked After Children

If you have any queries about this meeting, please contact the democratic support team:

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Corporate Parenting Board

26 January 2016

Report title	Mind of My Own Application
Cabinet member with lead responsibility	Councillor Val Gibson Children and Families
Wards affected	All
Accountable director	Linda Sanders, Children and Young People
Originating service	Looked after Children
Accountable employee(s)	Alice Vickers Virtual School Head for LAC 01902 553005 alice.vickers@wolverhampton.gov.uk
Report to be/has been considered by	Transforming Children Services Board, January 2017

Recommendation(s) for action or decision:

The Corporate Parenting Board is recommended to:

1. Consider the Briefing Note regarding the Mind of My Own Application, attached as an Appendix.

1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 To inform and update the Board of the progress the implementation of the Mind Of My Own Application to support participation for Children and Young People.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 As per the Briefing Note attached as an Appendix.

3.0 Financial implications

- 3.1 The Cost of the application for the three year contract is £15,500 which will be funded from the Corporate ICT Software budget.
- 3.2 There is an additional cost of £1,000 associated with training this will be funded from within the Looked after Children's Service. [NM/17012017/L]

4.0 Legal implications

- 4.1 The implementation process of purchasing the application included a Privacy Impact Assessment, this assessment looked at the legal requirements of the application and the safeguarding of information. There are no further legal implications. [RB/18012017/F]

5.0 Equalities implications

- 5.1 An equalities analysis will be undertaken if required, in partnership with the Equalities and Diversities Team.

6.0 Environmental implications

- 6.1 There are no environmental implications.

7.0 Human resources implications

- 7.1 There are no human resources.

8.0 Corporate landlord implications

- 8.1 There are no corporate landlord implications.

9.0 Schedule of background papers

There are no background papers.

Briefing Note

Title: Mind of My Own Application

Prepared by: Alice Vickers **Date:** January 2017

Intended audience: Internal Partner organisations Public Confidential

Purpose or recommendation

To inform and update the Transforming Children Services Board of the progress the implementation of the Mind Of My Own Application to support participation for Children and Young People

Overview

All local authorities have a statutory duty to ensure children and young people who are looked after participate in their Looked After Children Reviews. There are currently 626 young people who are looked after by the City of Wolverhampton (CoW), it is a statutory requirement that all children and young people have statutory Looked After Child(LAC) reviews. In addition there are 218 young people who are subject to a child protection plan, 168 Carer Leavers supported by authority requiring Pathway Plans. These plans are also reviewed regularly All of these young people are encouraged to take part meaningfully in their reviews.

Background and context

The responsibilities of the Local Authority in gaining the views/voice of the child are set out in the Children Act 1989:

- The responsible authority has a statutory duty to review the case of a Looked after Child or a child who is subject to a child protection plan, and to ensure every care leaver has a pathway plan. They must ensure that the system provides for full participation of children and young people in the decision making processes around these events where possible and appropriate.
- The responsible authority should obtain and take account of the wishes and feelings of the child/young person about their plan and progress since the last review.
- Matters of consideration at reviews and conferences include the child's wishes and feelings about the care, pathway or child protection plan, particularly in relation to any changes or proposed changes to the plan.

In 1991 the UK Government ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). The Convention includes two specific rights related to the voice of the child:

- Article 12: You have the right to say what you think should happen when adults are making decisions that affect you, and to have your opinions taken into account.
- Article 13: You have the right to get, and to share, information, so long as the information is not damaging to yourself or others.

Impact on City of Wolverhampton Council

Mind of My Own (MOMO) is a multi-platform app that modernises the processes and systems used to involve children and young people in their care and protection. It enables young people to create a structured statement of their views in relation to events and situations they encounter while in care or receiving support from Childrens' social care services.

Events and situations include:

- LAC Reviews
- PEP meetings
- Child In Need Reviews
- Child Protection Conferences
- Family Group Conferences
- Pathway Planning
- Requesting a change to care
- Raising a problem or complaint
- Making a disclosure

The app is free to use online, on android devices and on iPad and iPhones.

The responsibility for promoting the health and well-being of Looked after Children and Care Leavers, and keeping safe those subject to Child Protection plans spans many services. It is the expectation of commissioners, The Children's Act, OFSTED and the Government's Fostering Standards that children's views will be sought about their care, placement, education and home life.

Although difficult to quantify, research shows that if children and young people can't speak up or don't get engaged in decision making it can have a detrimental impact on their outcomes. This could impact on the amount of resources required to invest in care plan actions.

The proportion of LAC reviews where the child was present or contributed by other means since 1 April 2015 is 91%. Within this period there has been some decline in LAC participation in reviews. It is anticipated that this app will enable all children and young people to participate in their meetings and reviews.

Young people increasingly expect to be able to engage with services through digital as well as traditional means. All young people in care should have access to a computer and the internet (unless safeguarding concerns dictate otherwise). Many have access to mobile devices with web and app functionality.

While young people are comfortable communicating using digital means, Childrens' social care services do not have safe, accessible or consistent ways of doing this. This reduces young people's ability to communicate their views, wishes and feelings, and to report problems or personal safety concerns.

By making the app available to all young people it is envisaged that there will be:

- Increased engagement from children and young people in contact with children's social care services – e.g. care leavers, children in need, looked after children, children where there are safeguarding concerns
- Improvement in young people's ability to have a voice and feed their views into their plan
- An increase in social workers' focus on young people's lived experience
- An increase in the amount of time that social workers spend communicating directly with young people
- An increase in the flow of information from young people to their social worker thereby improving the quality of decision making
- An increase in placement stability and life chances for children and young people
- Greater compliancy with OFSTED, Fostering Standards and the Children Act 1989 around ensuring the views, wishes and feelings of children and young people are heard and considered.

MOMO also offers a subscription service for local authorities that helps them use the app with young people, increase its local usage and make it easier for young people to send their views to their worker. Local authorities also receive best practice support in implementing MOMO and a statistics package that enables them to monitor uptake and see the collective views and experiences of their young people.

This is a bespoke application, with a specific target group of young people. There are currently no other applications of this nature. We currently use a paper based booklet to support the process, but feedback from young people is that it is wordy and they feel uncomfortable in sharing how they feel about placements, as they fear the impact this may have on their relationships with care givers.

Children In Care Council (CiCC) have been consulted, and members of this council have also met with another local authority (LA) already using this app. Their feedback positively endorses the implementation of this application.

As part of the Corporate Parenting Strategy, the action plan incorporates the Areas Of Focus which the young people devised – “Ensure services understand us better”. The use of this application by other authorities has demonstrated an opportunity to improve this. The application provides services with collective data on the views of young people on their services and the provision, enabling strategy and procedures to be influenced by experiences of those service users.

Currently a stakeholder group is meeting monthly to work on the implementation of this application, focusing on the key elements of successful implementation which includes:

- Phased implementation
 - phase one cohort group from The LAC transitions Team
 - Cohort 2 will be from the LAC team
 - Cohort 3 will be CIN/CP
 - Cohort 4/5 will be early help and YOT
- Internal processes for implementation and practise standards - have already been agreed
- contracts and procurement

- information governance
- technical authority and security
- Communication
- Transferring the Project to Business As Usual

Following successful procurement procedures and due diligence checks, the package has been purchased. Training has been delivered to the 1st phase on 2nd Decemeber and a member of staff trained to deliever the package to other colleagues reducing on-going costs.

The first phase cohort is now live on the system and 48 colleagues from LAC Transitions and Independent Reviewing Officers have been trained to use the system. The app went live on 2nd Decemeber. Trainig has now been booked with the phase 2 cohort of Social Workers from the Lac Teams on 31st January.

Financial implications

The Cost of the application for 3 year contract will be £15500 (from ICT budget) and then training will be a further £1000 (Childen's Services).

Legal implications

We have not procured this application as yet as legal advise is being sort in terms of due diligence.

Equalities implications

An equalities analysis has been completed and the equalities duty has been explored through this process.

Environmental implications

There are no environmental implications

Human resources implications

There are no human resource implications.

Corporate landlord implications

The are no corporate landlord implications