

KCC



Next Steps

Welcome to the Winter Edition of our new look newsletter for those of you aged 16+.

We want to make this newsletter full of lots of useful information to help you think about the choices you have to make as you get older.

This edition has a focus on health and fitness (have you made any healthy New Year Resolutions?!). We are also looking at education, training and employment options.



We also want to hear about you and what you are up to!

VSK PARTICIPATION TEAM

Email us:

VSK_Participation@kent.gov.uk

Included in this Issue:

- Staff Update
- YAC and their Fundraiser
- MOMO
- Post 16 Options
- Interview Tips
- Care Leavers Charter
- Recruit Crew
- Health and Fitness

We would also like to introduce our new Corporate Director— Matt Dunkley CBE



“This is my first message to you as the new Corporate Director for Children, Young People and Education Services. I am really pleased that we have now brought together all services for children and young people in one department. As Director, it means that I have a legal responsibility to ensure safeguarding is everyone’s priority and to make sure that Kent County Council is the best parent we can be for all of the children in our care and for our care leavers.

I will want to meet as many of you as possible and to hear whether we are doing the best we can for you. You will always be my highest priority in this job.

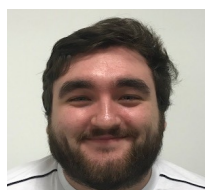
I have over 33 years experience in Education and Children’s Services and this includes working in East Sussex, United States of America, Australia and most recently Norfolk. I am a father to three children and grandfather to one. When I was growing up my parents were foster carers to other children so I have some knowledge of what life was like for children in care from that time.

I really do look forward to getting out and about this term to meet with as many young people as possible – I want you to help me make Kent the best place of children and young people to grow up, learn, develop and achieve.”

Staff Updates

Our Participation Team is growing which means we have more time and opportunities to get out and meet you, which is really the best part of our job! Our team is led by Jo, Sophia and Chloe work in East and South Kent, and Reece and Chelsea work in North and West Kent. We are happy to welcome new staff members, Tom, Andrea and Sarah. Keep reading to find out a bit more about them as well as celebrate some of our existing team's achievements!

Hi, I'm Andrea Wood and I have recently joined the VSK team as a Participation Support Officer. I have recently qualified with a BA Honours in Early Childhood Studies. In previous employment, I specialised in working within the learning disabilities, mental health and severe challenging behaviour sector. I am very excited about my new role and looking forward to meeting everyone .



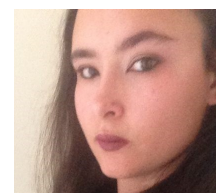
Hi, I'm Tom, I'm 20 years old. I'm a care leaver and have started at VSK as an Apprentice Participation worker. My interests range from gaming to history. I can't wait to meet and help support everyone.

Hi, I'm Sarah Newman and I joined the Virtual School Kent team in January as a Participation Support Officer. I have spent most of the last ten years working as a primary school teacher in Medway and Gravesend but I also supported families with children who are home educated for a short time. I am very much looking forward to my new role and excited to get started. I look forward to meeting everyone!



We are happy to announce that Reece will be continuing with the Virtual School after successfully completing his level 2 Apprenticeship. He is now working towards a level 3 qualification, well done Reece!

We are very proud of Chloe and her achievements over the past year and a half, Chloe has recently completed her GCSE Maths and won the Apprentice Of The Year award at the 16+ awards ceremony. Keep up the good work Chloe !



Contact Us:

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chloe-elizabeth.mutton@kent.gov.uk

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Andrea Wood - andrea.wood@kent.gov.uk
Sarah Newman - sarah.newman@kent.gov.uk

We love hearing from you!

YAC

The Young Adult Council (YAC) is a forum for young people in care and care leavers aged 16+. We discuss the current issues around the care system and come up with ways to make things better for everyone.

The YAC meet up on the first Thursday of each month in Maidstone. We always have food and we will pay your travel costs to get to the meetings too.

We do lots of fun activities too... we have:

- Had a BBQ.
- Gone bowling.
- Enjoyed a Christmas meal
- Taken a trip to Thorpe park.
- Even been gliding!



At our first meeting of the year, current YAC members discussed what they enjoy about attending YAC meetings. Here's what they had to say about why they attend the council...

"Friendly"

"Fun"

"The people"

"Helpful for

finding out about
being in care"

"Trips like
bowling"

"Making a
difference"

Come along to Young Adult Council (YAC) to have your say on things that affect children in care and care leavers to help make positive changes.

Contact the VSK Participation Team for more information

Email: VSK_Participation@kent.gov.uk
Or contact Reece: 07795 951459



YAC Charity Fundraiser

On the 26th October the Young Adult Council, the Participation team and some of the Corporate Parents embarked on the challenge to Run, Cycle and Row the distance from Maidstone to Calais (228.5 KM) and back again. After just over 6 hours of hard work and lots of determination, we finished the challenge. We raised £810.47 for the Umbrella Centre. The Umbrella Centre is a charity Community Centre that is open to everybody and particularly provides support to people with mental health problems. It is located in Canterbury.

Thank you to everyone who took part, made a donation and bought or made cakes!



Sophia was our champion rower on the day!



Sarah Hammond, Interim Director for Specialist Children's Services, joined in the fun.

MOMO

What is Mind Of My Own (MOMO)?

Mind Of My Own (MOMO) is an app that makes it easier for children and young people to express their views and for workers to respond to them.



Sometimes it can be pretty hard to express how you are feeling to your care workers. Whether you're worried about something, not happy about how things are going or even just want to share some good news. The MOMO app can help with this, allowing you to express feelings that can be hard to do face to face. Have you got a meeting of some sort coming up or want to share some news? Just go onto the MOMO app, select the appropriate options and it'll bring up a list of short, simple questions about how you're feeling. It will have a variety of answers and emotions to choose from or if the pre-set ones don't quite get the message across you can add your own! Your feelings and opinions get sent straight to the appropriate workers so you can have peace of mind.

Great! How do I sign up?

There are a few ways to sign up; you can download the app for free through the Apple App Store, Google Play Store or use the online web app on the actual MOMO site; <http://mindofmyown.org.uk>, clicking on the "Young People" tab Scrolling down and clicking the "USE ONLINE WEB APP" tab for MOMO One. From there it's a standard sign up requiring some minor personal details.

When asked to select a county make sure that you choose Kent

From young people:



"It's an amazing app for young people in care like me"

James, young person.

"MOMO makes it easier for people to listen to you and understand how you're feeling. Don't be afraid to be honest about what you want."

Your first and last name *

Young Person ✓

Your date of birth *

For example, 20 3 2007

1

1

2000 ✓

What part of the world do you live in?*

England ▼

◀ BACK

CONTINUE ▶

National Citizen Service (NCS)



The summer is your friend. The summer never told you to sit up straight... wash your plate.... finish your coursework...answer questions A and B in the space provided.

The summer says chill... take your time. It says dream big. Do what you want. Forget the head; follow the heart. Do something that could change your life.

For the lessons you can't learn in class, NCS is a 2-4 week programme which takes place outside of term time, in the spring, summer and autumn holidays. NCS is proven to have a massive impact on young children's lives.

The scheme is run by the Government for 15-17 year olds and provides teenagers with the chance to develop skills in areas that employers increasingly value: confidence, leadership and independence

The programme involves several stages including an outdoor adventure at one of the residential centres. Then it's the discovery phase which is activities based in a uni-style setting. Finally, the social action phase where you get the chance to give something back to the community.

To find out more please contact:

If you live in Kent:
Catherine.Burton@kent.gov.uk or call
07795 036695

If you live in Medway:
Samantha.Sharkey@kent.gov.uk or call
07795 834466

University

Are you interested in University, or finding out more?

If so, there is a Summer School for Children in Care and Care Leavers run by the University of Greenwich on 3rd-5th July at the Medway Campus, for those in academic years 11, 12 and 13:

Enjoy three days on campus at our non-residential summer school. Learn about university life, experience a range of workshops, take part in debates and develop personal and practical skills, as well as having fun. Refreshments, lunch and transport will be provided.

For more information please contact Will Calver: w.calver@gre.ac.uk or 0208 331 9282.

If you would like more information on applying for university have a look on: <https://www.ucas.com/what-are-my-options>

The UCAS logo consists of the letters "UCAS" in a bold, black, sans-serif font. The letter "A" is stylized with a red triangle pointing upwards, forming the top of the letter.

Here you will find the different options to help you decide on your future and can also help with your future career plan. UCAS can help you research the possibilities and prepare you for the next step, including writing your CV, and extracurricular activities that could help with your university application.

Post 16

It is never too late to think about what you may wish to do in September 2018 for your post 16 plans. Did you know that there is a wide range of options available to you to support your education, training or employment plans?

There are many options open to you which include:

- College
- Sixth Form
- Apprenticeships
- Training Providers
- Volunteering
- Employment



All colleges and some providers offer open days/evenings where you can go along to meet the tutors and find out more about the courses they offer. In some areas, there are also careers events held to showcase the variety of employment and training provider opportunities available.

If you are attending a Sixth Form, College or a Training Provider on an accredited course you will be entitled to a bursary to help with educational related costs—this can be used to fund travel, food and any kit and equipment you may need for your course. Speak to your provider for more information.

If you are currently in academic Year 11

Do you know who your Key Stage 4 Progression Advisor is? They are a key point of contact for you to signpost and guide you through the transition process.

North Kent: Samantha Armstrong-Mills - 03000 422071, samantha.armstrong-mills@kent.gov.uk

West Kent: Tyler Johnson - 03000 416726, tyler.johnson@kent.gov.uk

South Kent: Paula Howe - 03000 411741, paula.howe@kent.gov.uk

Thanet: Leigh Knell - 03000 416883, leigh.knell@kent.gov.uk

Canterbury and Swale: Karen Wood - 03000 417572, karen.wood@kent.gov.uk

If you are in academic Years 12 and 13

If you are not sure what to do in September, or wish to see what is available to you now, please speak to one of the Support Officers from the Post 16 Team for guidance.

Contact Jane Charlton - 03000 410846, jane.charlton2@kent.gov.uk for information.

If you are 18 years old

Please speak to your Personal Adviser or Rob Sparks who is the 18+ Education, Training and Employment Support Officer for help with your options (rob.sparks@kent.gov.uk).



Top 5 Interview Tips

Interviews aren't always an enjoyable experience but they are a necessary part of life. However, with the correct preparation you can be much more confident, whether you are interviewing for a weekend job or a full time job, these tips will help.

1) Be ready with a short self-summary:

Some people call this the "elevator pitch." Many interviews start by asking for a short summary of yourself. Prepare a short description of your key qualities and suitability for the post, and any positive work experience you have had in the past or courses you have studied. You can expand on these later, so a summary will do initially.

2) Research the organisation:

Most interviews will include a few questions about the organisation so make sure you've done your homework. Make sure you have a look at their website and look at the 'about us' page. Understanding the company will also help you explain why you want to work there.

3) Prepare your answers:

Write down on a piece of paper what you think some of the likely questions they will ask will be. From here you can prepare a few bullet points of how you will answer the questions. When you are answering, try to add examples of how any past work experience you have had relates to the job you are applying for.

4) Take your time:

When you have been asked a question, don't feel like you have to rush and say the first thing that comes to mind. Take a second to think through your answer. If you are unsure, you can ask the interviewer to repeat the question again to give you some more time to think.

5) Be prepared to ask questions:

At the end of the interview, you'll most likely be asked whether you have any questions. Make sure you are prepared for this by asking questions that concentrate on issues that are important to you and combine an interest in the company with an interest in the job.

Useful Websites

<https://www.readytoworkkent.co.uk>

This website is a directory of training providers for young people in Kent.

<https://nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk>

This provides information, advice and guidance to help young people make decisions about learning, training and work.

<https://www.princes-trust.org.uk/>

The Prince's Trust is a youth charity that helps young people aged 11 to 30 get into jobs, education and training.

<https://www.skillspluskent.co.uk/>

Information about taking English, Maths, IT and ESOL courses. It is part of the Adult Education service.

Do you know your rights and entitlements as a care leaver?

The **Kent Care Leaver's Charter** sets out Kent County Council's promises to care leavers. It details the support you should receive and explains our commitment to you - you should have access to the best possible chances in life when making the transition from being in care to independence. Contact your PA if you would like a copy of this leaflet.

As you are a Kent Care Leaver we specifically promise to:

- If you are eligible, make sure you are able to get a passport, and arrange for your National Insurance number to be issued
- Help and support your progress in education, both in further education and at university
- Find you somewhere safe to live and provide the necessary support you need to live independently. Up until you are 21, help you with council tax and make sure you don't lose out on housing benefit if you are in education, training or low-paid employment
- If you are at Uni we will support you with a financial package that includes the government bursary
- If you have a disability, make sure that you have your own 'communication passport' that tells others how you communicate and how they can communicate with you
- If you need to move to Adult Services, make sure the move is as smooth as possible

You can obtain a list of what you are entitled to from your social worker or Personal Advisor

Help us to celebrate your achievements by keeping in touch, and tell us when you need help, sooner, rather than later.



Things not going right?

What should you do if don't think these promises are being met:

You can always speak to your Social Worker or Personal Adviser

You can ask for an advocate (this is a person who is independent of Kent County Council who can speak on your behalf and help make sure your voice is heard)

You Can Contact:

YLF Telephone: **01622 683815**
Email: advocacy@yjf.org.uk
Website: yjf.org.uk

The Young Adult Council (YAC) is a group for young people in care or leaving care aged 16-21 who meet regularly around the county. The meetings give you the chance to meet others and have your say on how improvements could be made to help you and others. This links with the Children in Care Council (OCYPC) for younger children.

To find out more: Telephone **03000 412777**
Email: VSK_participation@kent.gov.uk or speak to your Personal Advisor.



The Kent Care Leavers' Charter



Leaving care can be a difficult time

Kent, as your 'Corporate Parent' can be there to guide and support you through it.

This Charter is Kent County Council's promise to you to help support you when you leave care. It follows on from the Kent Pledge made to Children and Young People in the Care of Kent. We are committed to ensuring that you, as a Care Leaver have access to the best possible chances in life when making the transition from being in care to independence.

Some of you will be going through immigration process, we will ensure you are supported with this. You will also be able to contact us after the service to you closes for any advice and support you may need.



Let us support you to achieve your ambitions and aspirations in education, training and employment.

Here is Kent's charter to you as you leave care. We promise to listen, support and guide you to grow into healthy, happy and successful young adults. We can do this by working together.

- We will respect you and honour your identity as an individual, taking into consideration your own values, beliefs and personal needs
- We will make sure we ask you about important decisions that need to be made
- We will value and support where appropriate, relationships that are important to you
- We will believe in you. We will support your potential goals and help you to achieve them
- We will keep you safe and well by making sure where you live is safe and the right place for you, we will give you the right guidance to live a healthy life
- We will listen and work alongside you with a care plan to ensure your readiness for independent living
- We will make sure you keep in touch with family and friends as much as possible whilst considering your safety and well-being. We will help you manage changing relationships or come to terms with loss, trauma or other important life events
- We will give you support throughout your education, training and employment to give you the chance to succeed
- We will try to minimise any changes to placements or workers
- We want to help you to be where you want to be. We will make sure we give you the information that you need at every stage in your move to adulthood
- We will work with other services for any changes in the law that affect the lives of young people
- If we don't agree with you, we will fully explain why, and we will be honest with you
- We will point you in the right direction and help you move along at your own pace
- We will take the time to listen to you and do our best to give the right advice if things aren't going well for you

We will continue to be there for you, so get in touch with us if you need to

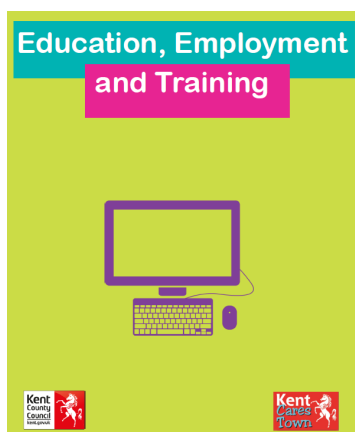
Have you seen the KCC Education, Employment and Training Transition workbook?

This booklet gives you essential information covering all aspects of your post 16 options.

The document provides all the information you may need to help you make life changing decisions about your future. It looks at the advantages of the different options available to you and compares different routes such as an apprenticeship, work based training or volunteering. There is also a comprehensive guide to entry level requirements from foundation level one right up to level eight doctorate level, and how you can achieve these. If you're worried about how you will afford different options, there is a comprehensive guide to the financial support that is available to you as a young person in care or a care leaver.

The workbook also includes a handy pen picture profile to fill in with your PA or Social Worker to help you on your post 16 journey.

If you would like to know more about the Education, Employment and Training Transition Document or to obtain a copy, please speak to your PA or Social Worker.



Want to have your say on the people who work with children in care and care leavers *and* gain some important skills for the world of work?

Our '**Recruit Crew**' is made up of young people who help interview potential social workers, foster carers, personal advisers and senior Kent County Council staff members.

The next training session is being held on Thursday 15th February in Maidstone. It's an accredited course and a great addition to your skill set for future employment as you can put the course and the interview experience on your CV too!

The Participation Team will be holding training sessions throughout Kent in the upcoming months. If you would like more information about the Recruit Crew or want to book on to the course, please contact Chelsea Goodwin.

Contact Chelsea

Email: VSK_participation@kent.gov.uk
Phone: 03000 418328 / 07773 080864

Health and Fitness

Now that the cold weather is on its way out, its time to think about getting up and getting fit! Below are details of local gyms and their concessionary memberships.

Maidstone.

Maidstone Leisure Centre is offering a student rate membership at £16.95 a month. Contact www.maidstoneleisure.com/maidstone/mem_center for more details.

Canterbury- Herne Bay.

These leisure centres offer a 3* membership for students and people on certain benefits, available on a monthly or yearly term. This provides heavily discounted classes across all the centres. Contact www.activelifeltd.co.uk/membership for prices.

Thanet-Margate, Ramsgate, Dover and Deal.

The leisure centres in Thanet offers a yearly payment membership of £69 to students, unemployed and people with registered disabilities. This provides discounts on most classes and selected free swimming sessions. Contact www.yourleisure.uk.com/membership/ for more details.

Swale-Sittingbourne, Faversham and Sheppey.

The Swale Leisure Centres also offer a student/concession membership at £16.95 per month, which includes a free weekly swim plus discounted classes. Contact www.swaleleisure.com/swallows/mem_centre for more details.

Ashford.

The Stour Centre offers several discounted memberships at £25 per month for students (14-17) and concessions for people on a low income. This provides access to the gym and discounted swimming and racquet sports. Please contact www.ashfordleisuretrust.co.uk/memberships for more details.

Health and Fitness

GET FIT, STAY HEALTHY AND GO GREEN!

Another way to not only get fit and stay healthy, but also to look after your mental health, is to volunteer. The charity 'The Conservation Volunteers' is a scheme that is ultimately an outdoors conservation, green project but with the main emphasis on health and fitness. The project is Nationwide but there are local 'Green Gym' schemes in Kent, based in Ashford and Folkestone. This is a weekly organised session where you can take part in a range of activities depending on the local environment, such as creating ponds, sowing meadows or path clearing. If you are over 18 and would like to take part with volunteering or join 'The Green Gym', you can find details on The Conservation Volunteers Website at <https://www.tcv.org.uk/> Or email: green gym@tcv.org.uk

Mindfulness.

Another effective way of looking after your mental health is to practise mindfulness, being aware of ourselves and the world around us.

There are some great free apps available with some of the best being available on <https://www.mindful.org/>. Apps such as 'Insight Timer' and 'Stop, Breathe and Think' are just a selection of apps that provide guided meditation and calming programmes.

