



our voices

Newsletter for Children in Care

Welcome to the

Autumn Edition of our Newsletter

In this issue, find out about all the fun things we have been up to over the Summer. We also want to tell you about the Kent Pledge, which is about what Kent promises to you as a child in care and tells you what you are entitled to.

We love to hear your ideas about what you would like us to include in this newsletter, what you like and what we could be doing better.

Hope you all had a lovely summer break!

Email us:

VSK_Participation@kent.gov.uk

or send your pictures, news and info to:

Chloe-Elizabeth Mutton - Virtual School
Kent Brook House

Reeves Way, Whitstable Kent CT5 3SS



Included in this Issue:

- ◆ **What's New**
- ◆ **Children in Care Council Updates**
- ◆ **Kent Pledge**
- ◆ **Participation Activity Days**
- ◆ **Competitions!**



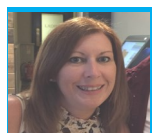
VSK PARTICIPATION TEAM



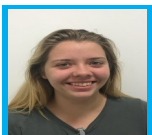
SOPHIA



CHLOE



Jo



Chelsea



REECE

~ 2 New Apprentices are starting work with us very soon!



WHAT'S NEW



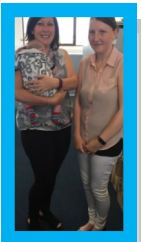
New Apprentice Update!!

Since our last newsletter we have had a new apprentice join our team! Meet Chelsea Goodwin, she will be working the West and North Kent area, and will be working alongside Reece. We hope she enjoys her time with us, and we wish her all the best! Chelsea has a few words for you.

Hey! My name is Chelsea and I have joined the VSK Participation Team working as an Apprentice Participation Worker. I see myself as an understanding, bubbly and down to earth person, I love learning new skills and having new experiences, but while having fun.

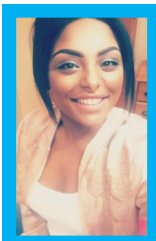
A big part of my life has been my passion for boxing; I have gained a lot of benefits from the sport, such as respect and I would recommend trying it. One of my dreams was to own my own gym, and to promote boxing to girls— it isn't just a male sport. Another one of my passions is motorsport (cars and motorbikes). I like improving the performance and the look, to make the vehicle standout.

I want to be able to do more for children in care and for them to gain new experiences and friends, also so they can gain social benefits. I want to be able to make their experience of care positive and for them to feel they are being heard. I have enjoyed meeting some of you on activity days and can't wait to meet more of you!



Heidi's Baby

Many of you may remember Heidi, one of our old Apprentices. Since leaving the team, she has recently become a Mother to a beautiful healthy baby boy called Hunter. Both are doing very well, and even came in for a surprise visit! Everyone on the team had cuddles, and are happy for Heidi. We wish her and baby Hunter all best for the future!



Promotion for Sophia

We want to proudly announce that our original apprentice Sophia, has become a fully fledged member of the team. Sophia started her apprenticeship with us in 2012. After completing her level 2 qualification in Business and Admin. She went on maternity leave and became a mum to a beautiful baby girl. Since returning, Sophia has completed a level 3 Apprenticeship. WELL DONE SOPH!! :)

CENTRE POINT RESEARCH LAUNCH

On the 17th July 2017, some of the Participation Team went to a Research Launch at Portcullis House in London. The Launch was run by a charity called From Care to Where? (who supports care leavers.) The research launch looked at the reasons why Care Leavers struggle to find their own homes when they leave the care system and how Local Authorities can help prevent this.



OCYPC

At the April OCYPC meeting, we had a discussion with members about the importance of Children in Care Councils, we discussed why they are an important way of making sure that children in care voices are heard and why they come along to the meetings. These are some of the children's comments responses:

Why is it important that Kent has a Children in Care Council?

'To stop children in care being treated differently.'

'To get things changed for children in care and for them to get their voice heard.'

'So that children in care get to have a say in decisions made about them.'

'So we can talk about our feelings.'



Why is the OCYPC important to you?

'The OCYPC is important because people in care tell you what they feel like and you can try and help them.'

'So we can socialise with other people who are in care.'

'It's important to me because it gives me a chance to change things that affect me and other children in care and I get to meet others who are in care.'



What would you tell other children in care about the Super Council?

'You do lots of activities and get food.'

'You make lots of friends.'

'We're all the same, no-one is different i.e. we are all in care!'

'We do lots of activities and it is very, very fun and we make lots of new friends!'



OUR
CHILDREN
&
YOUNG
PEOPLE'S
COUNCIL

OCYPC



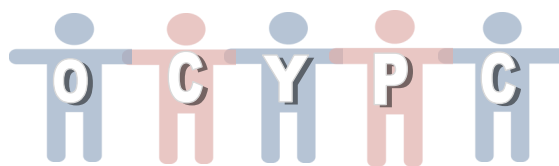
In May the OCYPC and Super Council members got together at Kingswood Adventure Centre, Ashford. The day consisted of several challenging and team building activities, the young people had to work together in order to overcome challenges.

The activities they had a go at were – the aerial runway, team challenge, outdoor lazar and the 3G Swing. The 3G swing proved to be the hardest and everyone was a bit out of their comfort zone — It went really high! However everyone had a go, and some even amazed themselves at how well they did. Everyone was supporting each other, and even got some of the apprentices on the 3G swing!!

The purpose of this day was for the OCYPC and the Super Council members to get to know each other. It was great to get the two councils together as some of the Super Council members will hopefully be moving up to the OCYPC soon.

Overall it was a fun but challenging day and everyone felt satisfied that they achieved something whether it was fear of heights, making new friends or even working together as a team.

Well done everyone we are proud of every one of you!!!



If you would like to come along to the OCYPC, please contact:

Chelsea.Goodwin@kent.gov.uk for more details

Looking forward in seeing you.

COUNTYWIDE CELEBRATION

The Countywide Children in Care Celebration was held on Monday 31st July 2017. The event was attended by our Children in Care Council Members from all three Council groups, also by some who wanted to see what the Councils were about before joining. Staff and Members of the Corporate Parenting Panel also attended the event as they wanted to meet the young people.

We started the day off with making keyrings with lanyards the colours of our teams and playing games such as twister and limbo.

We welcomed everyone and spoke about what the Councils have been up to throughout the past year. A young person from each Council assisted with presenting, and spoke about each Council's achievements and what they enjoy about their own Council. Group. After we presented rewards and certificates to our council members thanking them for all their hard work and commitment.

We then had a discussion in groups about why some people feel they are not able to join one of the councils. Some really great ideas were discussed and the Participation Team will be looking at these to help make sure that Kent's Children in Care Councils are available to all of you if you wish to join.

Then we had a break to enjoy chocolate brownies, lemon cake and scones with jam and cream, while having some free time to play some games.

To finish off the day we got in our teams for the countywide sports day. The races included: the three legged race, the skipping race, the bean bag team toss, the sack race and the team inflatable obstacle race; what ended up to be lots of laughs and giggles. Once everyone had completed their races they had time to have some free play on the inflatable obstacle course and nibbling on personalised Children in Care Council cakes.



REGIONAL CHILDREN IN CARE COUNCIL MEETING

Chelsea and Reece attended the South East Regional Children in Care Council meeting in Oxford.

We were presented with videos about stigma about Children in Care and how it can affect a young person and how we can tackle the issue as a young person

We got to hear the voices of young people and what the stigma of being in care felt and meant to them. We also compared our Pledges with other Councils in an open discussion and we learnt that Kent County Council was the only council there with three Children in Care Councils for different age groups.

The young people also got to question the Corporate Parents about their rights as Children in Care and Care Leavers.

Chelsea and Reece also got to meet and speak to
Anne Longfield - The Children's Commissioner.



VSK ACTIVITY DAYS

We have had a very busy Summer! We have been out and about around the county and have been very lucky to meet lots of you. This is some of the things we have been up to:

Disabled Children Activity Day

On the 25th July the VSK apprentices supported an activity day for disabled children that was organised by the disability team and it was held at Bredgar and Wormshill Railway. Over 120 people attended and had lots of fun. On the day we had lots of activities on offer such as a bouncy castle, looking around a fire engine, a children's entertainer and most importantly getting to ride on the little railway. Everyone had a great day!



Bewl Water

On 27th July, a group of young people went to Bewl Water in Lamberhurst. The group had the chance to go Canoeing and Mountain Biking. They did one activity in the morning and the second activity in the afternoon. Each group had lots of fun, and got to try something new. The weather didn't spoil things, even if it did rain in the afternoon!! The young people had lots of fun, and we hope to do this again in the future.



Hever Castle

On the 2nd August, 22 young people visited Hever Castle in Edenbridge. The group took part in many activities throughout the day these include getting lost in the mazes, having a look round the castle and gardens, playing in the adventure playground and learning how to be a Princess or Knight!!

Despite the weather being drizzly (again), we all had lots of fun, and learnt that King Henry the Eighth had not only one but six Wives!!!!

VSK ACTIVITY DAYS

Thorpe Park

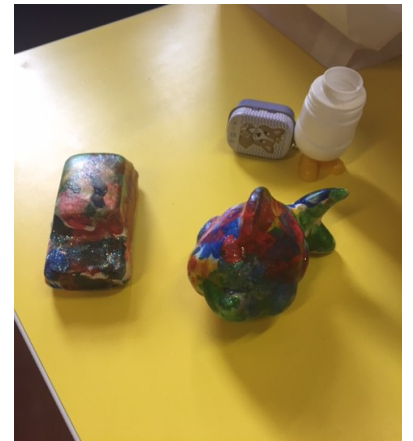
On the 3rd August the Apprentices took a group of 16+ young people to Thorpe Park. We got to go on all the rides and have a look around. Everyone had an amazing day (even if they did get stuck on rides and waited in queues sometimes!) and some young people went on a roller coaster for the first time.

Canoeing, Climbing Wall & Archery

On the 9th August, 28 young people had an Activity Day at Barton's Point on the Isle of Sheppey. The young people took part in three activities which were: Climbing on the Climbing Wall, Kayaking and Archery. Each group did an activity then swapped around throughout the day. Everyone played games during each activity for example those who were Kayaking played stuck in the mud, this meant that if people got stuck by the "stickers" they had to put their paddle up in the air to become unstuck by someone else. Unfortunately the weather wasn't on our side, and everyone got soaking wet, so in the end we all went inside to warm up and dry off. Despite the very bad weather, everyone enjoyed themselves.

Little Potters

On the 11th August, we took 5 little ones aged 2 – 6 to Little Potters in Sittingbourne. They played on the soft play area, before painting 2 small ornaments and finished by having a party style lunch and going back on the soft play area. The little ones enjoyed themselves, and were pleased to take home their ornaments they painted.



Marlowe Theatre

On the 17th August, 22 young people went to the Marlowe Theatre in Canterbury. They had the opportunity to watch the Rail Way Children. The show was really good, and the Children really did enjoy the performance. The children also liked the set design and the costumes. This was the last activity day for the summer, and it ended in Jazz Hands and smiles.



WRITER'S SECTION

WE SPOKE TO THE DIRECTOR OF SPECIALIST CHILDREN'S SERVICES ABOUT OFSTED:

For this newsletter we interviewed Phillip Segurola, who is currently the Director of Specialist Children's Services. We asked Phillip about the OFSTED Inspection that took place earlier in the year, and what it meant for Children in Care.

Chloe: Can you tell us what Ofsted is?

Philip: Ofsted is the regulatory body for Education and Social Care. It means that they are Inspectors from across the country who from time to time go out and inspect these places to make sure that the quality is good. On the Social Care side we had our inspection in March.

Chloe: Can you tell us how we (Kent) did in the inspection?

Philip: We did reasonably well; the conclusion was that Kent delivers good services to children and families. Our overall grading was good. There are a number of sub-gradings, our grading for Corporate Parenting was good, Adoption was good and our Leaving Care Service was good. They say we are required to make some improvements for our children who need help and protection.

Chloe: Can you tell us the impact of the Virtual School Kent Participation Team has on the Ofsted inspection?

Philip: The VSK apprentices are vital to gathering the views and opinions from our Children in Care in Kent. You have got 3 well established Children in Care Councils, who met with Ofsted. This shows that Children's views regularly inform the Corporate Parenting Panel, service development and commissioning activity, through a range of engaging Participation Events.

Thank you to those of you who met with the Ofsted Inspectors and shared some of the things you get up with them,

Philip is leaving Kent county council very soon, we would like to wish him well for the future. We would also like to thank him very much for everything he has done for us to help us work and support you!

- ◆ WOULD YOU LIKE TO INTERVIEW SOMEONE?
- ◆ WOULD YOU LIKE TO WRITE A STORY OR AN ARTICLE THAT WE COULD PUBLISH HERE?
- ◆ IT COULD BE ABOUT SOMETHING GOOD YOU HAVE DONE, YOUR VIEWS ABOUT THE CARE SYSTEM, OR SOMEWHERE YOU HAVE BEEN.
- ◆ GET IN TOUCH AND TELL US WHAT YOU HAVE BEEN UP TO!!

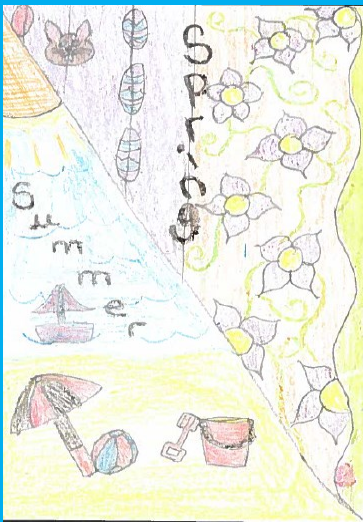


COMPETITION RESULTS

We would like to say a massive thank you to all of our wonderful entries for the bookmark competition. The entries were so amazing, we could not pick 1 winner as your entries were so good! A massive well done to

OUR WINNERS!!!!

Charlotte, Grace, Mollie, Riley



KENT PLEDGE

Have you received your copy of the Kent Pledge cards?



The Kent Pledge is 6 promises that Kent County Council make to you as a child in the care of Kent. They are:

- **To give you a sense of belonging**
- **Make sure you have an adult who is always there for you**
- **Make sure you have a good education**
- **Help you make good memories for the future**
- **Help you get ready for being an adult**
- **To support your interests and needs**

We have made the 6 promises into a set of cards that are given to you by your Social Worker. They have been designed with the help of young people in care and are clear and easy to understand. There are 2 versions, one pack for you if you are over 11 and another pack if you are under 11.

If you don't have a pack, just ask your Social Worker for them



CHRISTMAS CARD COMPETITION



Each year we hold a Christmas Card Competition
and this year is no different!

You have until the deadline of **30th November 2017** to get your designs into us. Every year we receive mind blowing designs and have always struggled to choose a winner. So get your glitter at the ready, step up the game and grab that mistletoe as inspiration because we can't wait to see the results this year!

Watch out for our Winter Newsletter, where the winners will be announced

Entry rules

- Must be no bigger than A4
- Must be Christmas themed
- Must be designed by YOU!
- Write your name and age on the back
- Must reach us by the deadline (30th Nov 2017)
 - Send your entries to:

Sophia Dunstan: VSK Brook House, Reeves Way, Whitstable, CT5 3SS
or Chelsea Goodwin: VSK Worrall House, 30 Kings Hill Avenue, West Malling,
ME19 4AE