



Welcome to the Summer Edition of our newsletter!

In this issue, find out about the fun days out we have had and what our Children in Care Councils have been up to. Also, find out how you can win our latest competition!

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

Enjoy the Summer Holidays!

Email us:

VSK_Participation@kent.gov.uk

or send your pictures, news and info to: Reece Graves

Virtual School Kent, Worrall House,
30 Kings Hill Avenue, West Malling,
ME19 4AE

VSK PARTICIPATION TEAM



From Left to Right: Chelsea, Sarah, Jo, Chloe, Reece, Sophia, Tom, Andrea.

Included in this issue:

- OCYPC
- Kent Pledge
- Activity Days
- Talent Showcase
- Other News
- Lifelong Links
- MOMO
- Competition

OCYPC stands for 'Our Children and Young People's Council.'

Kent's Children in Care Council for young people aged 11 to 16. OCYPC have been involved in important projects. OCYPC also get the opportunity to meet with Members and Senior Officers in Kent County Council to voice their views and opinions.

All meetings are designed to be fun and relaxed and of course there is always food and drink provided! Being part of one of the Councils is extremely beneficial as it gives you a unique opportunity to have your voice heard at the highest levels. Your views and opinions help shape the service that you and other young people in care receive so that it is as good as it possibly can be.

If you are interested in joining or want more information, contact Reece or Sophia via Reece.Graves@kent.gov.uk or Sophia.Dunstan@kent.gov.uk

During Easter, OCYPC have had lots of new members joining. We took our Children in Care Council bowling as a getting to know each other exercise which everyone enjoyed. There were a couple of people who definitely had their competitive heads screwed on!

But that's not all! We have set up a new group, 'OCYPC Extra' in East Kent, which is based in Margate. This means we get to hear the voices and opinions of even more young people in Kent.

At a recent meeting, the group was asked to respond to the Fostering Review carried out for central government. They discussed what being in foster care really means and what makes a good foster carer. Their ideas were sent directly to the Children's Rights Team in the Department of Education. They have also met with the Looked After Children Nurses to discuss their role and how they could make health assessments better for Children in Care.

Some of the things the members suggested include:

- More choice in venue
- Keep the meeting private—not in school
- More toys in clinics



Our next Children in Care Council meeting will be our Countywide event, which will be held on the 1st August. We look forward in seeing you there!

Your Voice Matters



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

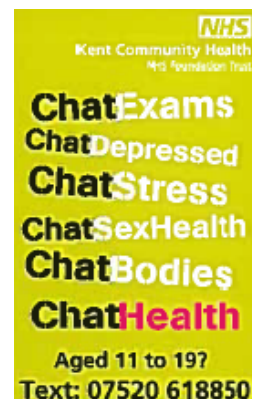
We have made the 6 promises into a set of cards that are given to you by your Social Worker. They have been designed with the help of young people in care and are clear and easy to understand. There are 2 versions, one pack for you if you are over 11 and another pack if you are under 11.

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



Chat Health is a trustworthy text service for young people aged 11 to 19 years old. Young People can text about a range of issues such as exams and health related topics.

The service is available Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm. All you have to do is contact 07520 618850.



VSK ACTIVITY DAYS

During Easter half term, we held two performing arts activity days. One was held at Aylesford and the other was held in Whitstable. We had almost 100 young people attend these events and everyone seemed to love them. On our roster of activities, we had a Circus Skills Workshop. Plate spinning and juggling seemed to be the most popular activities. Although there were lots of plates and beanbags dropped to begin with, everyone started to get the hang of it and soon enough there were spinning plates and beanbags flying through the air.



There was also a drama instructor, dance instructor and a singing instructor. The lyrics from the Greatest Showman are still rattling around in our heads, much to the annoyance of everyone in our office! We saw some real talent emerge during the days, from amazing singers to hilarious acting and some real Britain's Got Talent level dance moves.



Everyone had a lot of fun, and learnt new skills. We have never seen so many amazing talented young people. We wish we were that talented!

So watch out Simon Cowell—We are coming to give you a run for your money!

Get in touch to find out more about what other fun days out and activities we have planned for the summer and the rest of the year.

Email: VSK_Participation@kent.gov.uk



VSK ACTIVITY DAYS

During May half term, we held two fun action packed activities! We took over 60 young people to Arethusa in Rochester and Revolutions in Broadstairs.

At Arethusa, we had lots of fun learning how to use a bow and arrow. We all ended up getting a little competitive when it was time to play the pizza game. (This is where each colour on the target is matched with a part of a pizza, yellow for cheese, red for tomato sauce, etc. Whoever makes the most pizza wins!).



At Revolutions, the young people had the chance to push themselves and overcome their fear of heights on the climbing wall. There were definitely some spider monkeys in the group!

Once they were all tired from being spider monkeys, they then had the chance to test their skills on the scooters. We saw some amazing tricks and even the apprentices had a go! Some of the young people tried to teach the apprentices some basic tricks—but they weren't as good as the young people!

Overall, we had a good two days and it was lovely to see so many new faces! We really can't wait to spend our summer with more amazing young people! It's full to the brim with action packed, amazing activities!



If you have any suggestions for activity days, please email us at VSK_Participation@kent.gov.uk

TALENT SHOWCASE

On Friday the 1st June 2018, we held our very first Virtual School Kent Talent Showcase at the Lecture Theatre in County Hall Maidstone. The aim of the Talent Showcase was to dispel some of the myths and stigma around children and young people in care. Young people have told us that the way being 'In Care' is shown in the media isn't always very positive and is often outright wrong! To prove these perceptions to be the myths that they are, we had some of you guys show off some of your amazing talents.

We also made a film about the stigma of being in care and included lots of information in it that Kent Children in Care and Care Leavers have told us. We showed the film at the Talent Showcase and it will now be used to help Social Workers and other people who work with Children in Care understand what it is like.

As well as performers on the day we also collected lots of footage of the other amazing hobbies, skills and talents out there. We had some wonderful films showing trampolining, ballet, scooter skills, incredible art work and much more.

On the day, we had some truly fantastic singing, amazing dancing, thoughtful poetry and some joyful songs played on a keyboard. We expected the performers to be good, but we just didn't know how good they would all be! They blew everyone's minds!

The performers were all so amazing and brave standing in front of everyone like that. They all performed their hearts out and despite all the work on our end organising it, it wouldn't have been possible without all of the amazingly talented young people.

So, from everyone in the VSK team, to our performers,

thank you!



OTHER NEWS

THE RECRUIT CREW



During the May half term, a group of young people aged between 14 and 21 met in Whitstable for Recruit Crew Training. This training is designed to help young people prepare for interviewing Social Workers, Senior Managers, Directors and other staff who regularly work with children and young people.

It also gives them a LASER accredited qualification in 'Interviewing Skills for Service Users' which can be added to their CV.

During the day, the young people learnt about why Kent County Council thinks young people's involvement in the recruitment process is so important, what laws about equality and diversity mean for interviewing and employing new staff and the different kind of activities used to recruit staff. They also thought about the skills new staff would need, planned interview questions and took the role of interviewers in a mock interview. The young people even gave feedback to the interviewees!

The young people demonstrated excellent skills and knowledge of their role in the interview process and are now looking forward to taking their place on interview panels in the near future!



If you are interested in attending Recruit Crew Training, sitting on an interview or Skills to Foster Panel or just want to find out more, please contact Chelsea.Goodwin@kent.gov.uk

Lifelong Links

“Building lasting relationships for Children in Care”



What is Lifelong Links?

Lifelong Links is a new and exciting project for children and young people in care who are under 16 years of age.

Lifelong Links helps to find and bring together people who care about you. This can be people you know well, people you have not seen in a while (like a former neighbour or carer) and even relatives who you may have not met yet or have not seen for a long time.

Who else is involved?

Your Social Worker and carer can help you if you want them to. A Lifelong Links Coordinator will also meet with you to get to know you. They will find the people you are happy to have in your life and bring them together.

How can Lifelong Links help me?

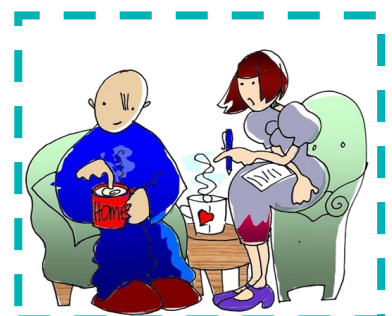
- You can learn more about your family history.
- By finding family and friends who you care about and who care about you.
- By getting people together who you are happy to have in your life, who you can turn to and help you in different ways as you grow.

How do I take part?

Just talk to your Social Worker or carer and ask them to contact Lifelong Links.

Do I have to take part?

No, it is your choice. Even if you say yes and then change your mind, that's fine. Just tell your Coordinator or Social Worker.



Feedback!

The feedback we got from the young people who have taken part in this project so far is that it was fun and good experience. They were glad they got the opportunity to take part in the Lifelong Links project. The young people also said the Lifelong Links Coordinators were supportive and did the work at the young person's pace, so the young people felt in control of the situation.

Our challenge to the Corporate Parents!

The Children in Care Councils agree that Lifelong Links was a good project, even if they wouldn't have done it for themselves. The Councils felt all Children and Young People in care should be given the opportunity to take part.

So, on the behalf of the councils the apprentices presented a challenge to the Corporate Parents at the Lifelong Links Launch. The challenge was ...



“Having heard about the need for children and young people in care to feel as ‘connected’ to their support network as others do in their families. How will you, as their Corporate Parents, give this opportunity to all Children in Care going forward?”

Matt Dunkley, the Corporate Director Children, Young People and Education, accepted our challenge and will be back soon with a response...



Members of the VSK Team before our big presentation at the Lifelong Links Launch Event

What is the Mind Of My Own app?

Telling people what you want and need can be difficult.

You told us you wanted a more up to date way to tell your worker when you're worried about something, not happy about how things are going or even just want to share some good news. We think we have found a way that you can do this!

The **MOMO app** will help you say what you want, when you want to say it. It helps you organise your thoughts and makes it easier to tell your worker what you think. Your worker will get a better insight into what's going on, from your point of view.

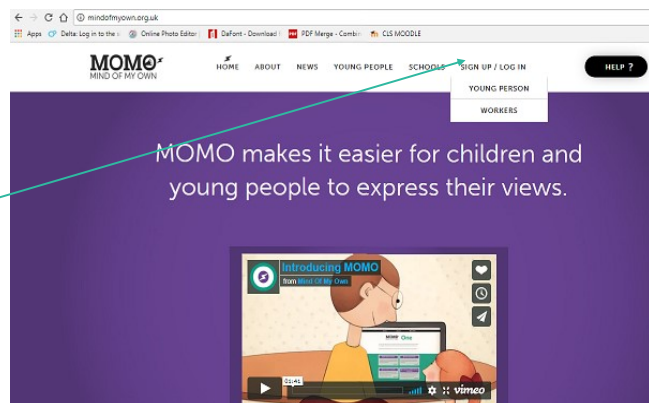
You can use a smart phone, laptop, desktop computer or any device with access to the internet

How to sign up and use

Step 1: Download the MOMO app for free. Don't worry if you can't though - you can access it online too <https://app.mindofmyown.org.uk>



Step 2: Open the MOMO website or open the app to begin your sign up process.



Step 3: Start by adding your name, date of birth and what country of the UK you live in.

Step 4: It is really important that you choose Kent as your local authority, even if you are placed out of county.

Step 5: Your next step is to add your email address, confirm it and decide on a safe but easily memorable password for your account.

"Log in any time on your device to use MOMO. It's ready to use whenever you want, whether that's after school or the middle of the night."

Your email *

Confirm your email *

Create a password *

I agree to the [terms of use and privacy policies.](#)*

[←BACK](#) [CONTINUE▶](#)

Step 6: It is completely optional whether you want to add your mobile phone number, but underneath you need to choose the best option that describes your current circumstances.

"You're nearly ready to start using MOMO, just these last bits of information to go. They help us make the app a bit more relevant to you."

Enter your mobile number (optional)
MOMO will occasionally text you to offer help in making a One Doc.

Your current situation

At College

Care Leaver

I don't want to say

At Home

None of these

My worker is visiting

Make talking to your worker easier by looking through a few topics to work out what you'd like to say. This should help you feel more in control.

MORE INFO

Share my good news

If you've done well at something or are feeling happy about something that's happened, use this form to let someone know.

MORE INFO

Get ready for a meeting

Would you like some help getting ready for a meeting? Perhaps you want to choose where it'll be, who should be there or what you'd like to talk about.

MORE INFO

Prepare for a Child Protection Conference

Do you need to prepare for a Child Protection Conference? If you want to know why the meeting is happening, or have something to say, you can do so here.

MORE INFO

Change something

Do you want something to be different, to stop or to start happening? Share what it is you want to change and your feelings around it.

MORE INFO

Sort a problem

Are you unhappy with something and want it sorting out? Here's where you can put down your thoughts and share them, or make a complaint if you want to.

MORE INFO

Planning for adulthood

Thinking about setting some goals? If you've started preparing for adulthood and want some help you can explore your thoughts here.

MORE INFO

Get ready for a foster care review

Say what it's like where you live. That way the good things about it can be supported to carry on, and anything you don't like can be sorted out.

MORE INFO

My Rights

My MOMO

How you feel right now

How are you right now? Pick all the feelings you want and add your own if you like.

OK

Calm

Anxious

Hopeful

Enthusiastic

Unsure

Confused

Angry

Excited

Unhappy

Happy

Ignored

[+](#)

Step 7: There are plenty of options to choose from once you have signed up.

Step 8: You will be asked a series of questions and you can pretty much answer them anyway you want. However you are feeling, just write it down and then choose the worker or workers you want to send it to.

For help or more information, contact
VSK_Participation@kent.gov.uk

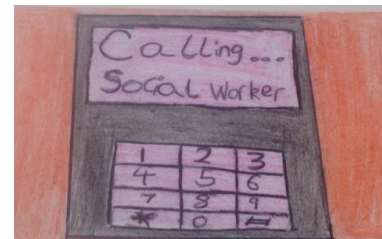
SUMMER COMPETITION

We would love for you to contribute to our summer competition!!

We are running a business card competition!! The purpose of these business cards is so you have the contact details of your Social Worker or other key people who support you and can get in touch with them easily. We would like your help to design some new cards so have set up this competition. We would like you to come up with a design or designs that are related to contacting someone.

Closing Date is 31st August 2018!!

Here's a couple of examples to give you some ideas:



Please make sure you have given us your details, otherwise we might not be able to contact you if your design is chosen. Get designing guys!

NAME:

AGE:

ADDRESS:

TEL:

Please **POST** your completed entries to **Chloe-Elizabeth Mutton at Virtual School Kent, Kent County Council, Brook House, John Wilson Business Park, Reeves Way, Whitstable, Kent, CT5 3SS**

or **SCAN** to chloe-elizabeth.mutton@kent.gov.uk

WINNERS WILL BE ANNOUNCED IN OUR NEXT ISSUE!!!