

We also recognise that as Councils we could work together more closely across the South East, from Berkshire to Medway, so that we share ideas and develop better services.

How you can help us?

You can **help us to understand what it is like to be a child in care**. We want to make sure that the services and support we provide are child or young person friendly and that they help you to become successful adults and good parents.

You can help us to do this by taking part in our surveys and your review meetings and getting to know your representatives on your local Children in Care Council. You can also make sure that the **Virtual School Head**, who looks after your education and keeps an eye on your Personal Education Plan, knows what is important to you.

You can also help us by making sure that the good things we mention in this leaflet are happening in your area and also that we carry on developing new ways to make sure that we listen to you.



Thank you for taking the time to read this leaflet.

Keep talking to us!

What is a Children in Care Council?

A Children in Care Council is a group of young people who are in care and who meet to talk with members of the Council. Young people can let the Council know how they can make being in care better for them and for other young people and children. The Council is a way for young people to get their ideas across to those who are responsible for their care.

What is the Pledge?

In 2007 the Government asked every Council to create a pledge to all looked after children and young people. Each Council will have published a pledge which sets out what the Council will do to give looked after children and care leavers the best opportunities they can have in life.

Contact Points

Thanks to West Sussex County Council for the work they did on the Children in Care report. This leaflet is a result of that work.

Copies of this leaflet may be obtained in large print, Braille, on audio tape or in other languages. To obtain a copy in an alternative format, please telephone 01344 352000.

Children in Care Learning from you



Learning from listening to children and young people in care

This leaflet is for you. It explains what has been done to help the Council better understand what you think is important to you and what needs to be done to help you in your life.

What we did

We asked an independent researcher to look at how the best Councils listen to children in care. You may already be a member of a **Children in Care Council** (CiCC) where you have the opportunity to talk about what is important to you. But Councils are also keen to hear from all of you and our researcher looked at other ideas for getting your voice heard. They also looked at how well the **Corporate Parenting Panels** were working and how what you said had influenced their work.

What we found

Our researcher found many good things happening across the Councils in the South East of England but also made some suggestions of what else you could do.

- Take an active part in review meetings and have your views recorded. Social workers play a key role and an **Independent Reviewing Officer** will take your views into account when deciding if anything you say needs further work.



- Make sure your views on how well you are doing at school are included in your **Personal Education Plan**, and your ambitions for the future are clearly recorded.
- Any **comments, complaints or compliments** you make are taken seriously and acted upon. Complaints are dealt with quickly using simple, direct and honest language.
- It is easy for you to send a comment to the Council as your corporate parent. Some Councils use **challenge cards** to help you to raise issues that concern you.
- **On-line surveys** are also used effectively to find out what is on your mind and develop provision to better meet needs.
- Many of you are involved in the **recruitment** of social care staff.

Areas Councils continue to develop

- Ensure we **understand the consequences** of what we do and what it means for you. Make sure that **the Pledge to Children in Care** is at the heart of all that we do.
- Continue to ensure that the **Corporate Parenting Panels and local councillors, council staff and others who work to support you** all know what is happening in the local area.
- Ensure that the Children in Care Council **represents the views of a wide range of children.**
- Improve communications through the use of social media, websites and virtual groups.

Some Councils have separate CiCCs for younger children, care leavers or those placed out of the local area. One has appointed 'Care Ambassadors' who are over 16 and have at some stage been in care. They work with the Council to review what they are doing and also assist with the appointment of staff.

What else can we do?

It is important that what you say to us actually makes a difference. We want to deal with your concerns and **use your ideas for making things better for you.** We want you to shape and influence the parenting and services you receive.

We want to improve how what you say to us **makes a difference.** We will be looking more closely at the effect that what you have said to us has had on your life. After listening to what you had to say, **has anything changed?**

We also want to be clear about how we **measure the impact of the support** we give you. Certain things such as your attendance at school and the progress you are making are easy to measure. Other matters, such as how confident you are as a person, your ambitions and general well-being are more complex to measure but are just as important.

We think that we can best do this **by talking with you and by you being open and honest in what you tell us.** We can do this through meetings, in group discussions or you can write to us. We will respect the **confidential nature** of some discussions and may decide to produce anonymous case studies to share with others. This will help us to learn from your experience. We will talk with you about this beforehand.