



# **Children and Young People's Voice**

September 2016

**Central Bedfordshire  
Children's Trust**



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## **1. Introduction**

Central Bedfordshire Children's Trust Board is committed to listening and involving children and young people as a means of ensuring the right services are being provided at the right time, needs are being met, and outcomes improved for children and young people growing up in Central Bedfordshire.

This report provides an update on engagement activities, and details the work underway to ensure the voice of children and young people is embedded in the work we do.

This report forms part of Children's Trust Board Annual Report 2015/16.



## **2. Children and Young People's Voice: Determining the effectiveness of what we do and sharing best practice**

- 2.1 2015/16 has seen progress being made to the way in which partner organisations within Central Bedfordshire consider together the effectiveness of their engagement with children and young people.
- (a) Effectiveness: Strategic Level**
- 2.2 During 2015/16 an Active Participation Self Assessment Framework was developed to enable partners within Central Bedfordshire to establish the effectiveness and quality of their approach to the development of their active participation policy and practice.
- 2.3 The work on the Framework has been led by the 'Voice of the Child' group (a sub group of Central Bedfordshire Safeguarding Children Board).
- 2.4 The Framework was circulated to partners for completion. A small number of responses were received.
- 2.5 Good areas of practice were noted for example in respect of the recruitment of staff, fostering, Special Educational Needs and Disabilities, the work of Youth Parliament and the Children in Care Council. However the findings also included that the vast majority of respondents had either rated themselves as 'not yet started' or 'emerging' in terms of obtaining the voice of the child, how feedback was used, and how staff were involved in the work.
- 2.6 The Voice of the Child Group concluded that the development of active participation policy and practice within organisations was still very much in its infancy.

### **(b) Effectiveness: Operational Level**

- 2.7 In order to obtain more in-depth information, a Partner Forum was arranged for staff working with children and young people to enable the identification and sharing of good practice around the Voice of the Child. This took place in June 2016.
- 2.8 There was good attendance at the forum with a wide range of partners present. Positive feedback was received on the event.
- 2.9 Through the forum, the Voice of the Child Sub Group was able to capture in-depth information on activities taking place, and possible areas for improvement.

### **(c) Effectiveness: Children and Young People’s Perspective**

- 2.10 To complete the picture (‘triangulating’ findings from the Self Assessment Framework and the Partner Forum) a Youth Conference will be held in Autumn 2016.



## **3. An Active Participation Strategy for Central Bedfordshire**

*Active participation refers to children and young people having opportunities to have their voice heard, but also opportunities to have real influence in decision-making and being empowered to make decisions for themselves.*

- 3.1 Taking into account the above findings, a more systematic approach to the way in which we engage with children and young people is required and an Active Participation Strategy is now being developed for Central Bedfordshire. The draft Strategy is expected to be available in 2016.
- 3.2 To complement this, a new Children and Young People’s Board is being set up to provide a more coordinated and strategic approach to engagement. The Board will hold the Council and partners to account for the delivery of services that improve outcomes for children and young people.

### **Children and Young People’s Voice (Engagement and Activity Updates)**

- 3.3 Alongside the above developmental work, engagement continues to take place with children and young people and an update is provided below on some of the initiatives that have taken place.



## **4. Improved Educational Attainment and Progress**

### **Engagement through School Councils**

- 4.1 Schools councils enable children and young people to be involved in school decision making processes.
- 4.2 Examples of how they have enabled children’s views to be taken into account include:

4.3

**Aspley Guise Lower School:**

The school council:

- meets each week and provides prompt verbal feedback to the rest of the school.
- is consulted before major school changes e.g. the school council considered quotes for a piece of playground equipment and selected the best for the children.
- proposed many improvements e.g. a clock is now fitted to the outside of the school as pupils told the school council that they wanted to know how long it would be before playtime ended, a buddy bench and sign were also purchased at their request, and litter picking is carried out weekly.
- also proposed several Mufti days to raise funds for charities of interest. (The school council has organised these days.)

**‘A Better Curriculum for Life’ a Central Bedfordshire Youth Parliament priority.**

4.4

Central Bedfordshire Youth Parliament (CBYP) provides opportunities for 12-18 year olds to use their voice in creative ways to bring about social change. It helps to influence the services provided and ensure the views of young people are known and understood.

4.5

CBYP is represented on Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire, Police Independent Advisory Group, Central Bedfordshire Children’s Trust Board and a mental health of young people in schools forum.

4.6

During 2015/16, CBYP published their ‘Better Work Experience’ report. The report provided details of a consultation exercise with Year 9 to Year 12 children to explore how young people feel about work experience and to encourage young people to put forward ideas on how it can be improved. 270 young people in Central Bedfordshire took part in the consultation.

4.7

Findings of the survey included that:

- Of the respondents, 61% have been able to participate in work experience;
- Of the respondents, 59% found their work placement opportunities to be useful or very useful;
- 68% of respondents believed work experience should be mandatory.

4.8

A number of key themes were also raised by young people in the survey, including:

- The need for work experience to be more tailored to career

aspirations;

- The benefits of work experience being planned and built into the wider curriculum with young people (with more time to prepare young people for this experience);
- The importance of considering the timing of work experience - ensuring it is not being offered in the run up to exams.

4.9 Respondents also suggested that more work needed to be done to raise awareness of the opportunities local businesses can offer. In addition, it was also suggested that there is a need to get more businesses / companies offering young people work experience opportunities.

4.10 CBYP also ran a survey for local businesses to find out how they can become involved in providing meaningful placements. Some employers stated that there are restrictions to offering work placement opportunities due to the cost of insurance and time. Travel costs were also identified as a barrier to accessing placement opportunities within surrounding authorities.

4.11 The provision of careers education and work experience opportunities remains a high priority at both a local and national level and is reflected in Ofsted standards. The CBYP 'Better Work Experience' campaign of the Central Bedfordshire Youth Parliament highlights that the quality of opportunities for young people varies significantly across Central Bedfordshire.

*'In terms of chosen career paths it is very difficult to get work experience at places that might be helpful e.g. vets. Most people end up at schools or in retail for their work experience. Can be helpful for getting part time jobs though, and learning some basic skills.'*

4.12 The 'Better Work Experience' report can be viewed on the Central Bedfordshire Children's Trust website:  
<http://www.centralbedfordshirechildrenstrust.org.uk/cbct/youth-voice/links-to-key-documents-and-information-3>

### **Learning about the functions and responsibilities of the Fire Service: Fire Cadets**

4.13 Bedfordshire Fire & Rescue Service Fire Cadets are based at two fire stations. There are 28 Bedfordshire Fire & Rescue Service Fire Cadets between the ages of 13 and 18. The Cadets attend a fire station one evening per week and are currently undertaking the Pearson Btec Level 2 Award in Fire & Rescue Services in the Community. This award is run over a single academic year and includes the function & responsibilities of the Fire Service, community harm reduction, risk assessment and anti-radicalisation workshops as well as traditional firefighting skills. In September 2016 the



cadets will embark on their Duke of Edinburgh's Award, this internationally recognised award is undertaken over 12 months and is divided into skills, physical, volunteering and expedition modules.

- 4.14 The Fire Cadet scheme promotes safety to young people and creates opportunities to enhance their self-belief, improve their learning and promotes independence.

### **Learning about the Commissioning Process: Young Commissioners**

- 4.15 Young Commissioners are young people trained to work alongside the Youth Support Service. During 2015/16 the Young Commissioners have supported the commissioning process for 'Peer Mentoring' and 'Youth Work' tenders.

The following feedback was received from a young person:

*'It has been very interesting to sit on both the Youth and Adult Panels. It has been good to know that Central Beds is valuing Young Peoples views when appointing companies to Youth Work in the area, because if Young People think the companies are going to be good for them, it can really influence what the Adult Panel finally decides. Also the fact that the marks were split near enough 50/50 with both panels meant that the Youth actually had power into who was going to get the contract.'*



## **5. Protecting Vulnerable Children and Young People**

### **Bedfordshire Police – Working with Schools**

- 5.1 Bedfordshire Police continues to work in schools and other educational settings and this year's work has mainly focussed on digital safety (unwanted contact, cyberbullying and self-generated indecent images), Child Sexual Exploitation, gangs and weapons, personal safety and the PREVENT agenda (Counter terrorism and domestic extremism).
- 5.2 In addition the force has been working towards a new national strategy for the policing of children and young people. The strategy focusses on four priority areas:
- Stop and search
  - Looked After Children
  - Detention, custody and the criminalisation of children and young people
  - The relationship between young people and the police.

## Schools – Chelsea’s Choice

- 5.3 ‘Chelsea’s Choice’ is a hard-hitting Applied Theatre Production that has proven highly successful in raising awareness of the issues surrounding Child Sexual Exploitation. The play has now been seen by hundreds of professionals and over 340,000 young people throughout the UK.
- 5.4 Chelsea’s Choice was commissioned by Central Bedfordshire Safeguarding Children Board - giving young people the opportunity to attend the production, and more fully understand what child sexual exploitation is, how it manifests and who they can go to if they feel worried.
- 5.5 The play was seen by approximately 6500 students in 16 Central Bedfordshire schools. Students in eight schools completed evaluations, although some only sampled groups of students. 696 evaluation forms were received.

5.6

<b>Chelsea’s Choice: Pupil Feedback:</b>	
<b>How helpful did you find what you learned through watching the play?</b>	
Very helpful:	312
Quite helpful	342
Not at all helpful	36
<b>Who would you go to if you were worried that you, or a friend were facing the same risks as Chelsea? (ticking all that apply)</b>	
A parent / carer	559
A friend	392
R-U Safe?	156
A teacher	360
Brother or sister	227
Police	435
I don’t know	30
<b>Will you do anything different in your own relationships / friendships having watched the play? (ticking all that apply)</b>	
Yes, I need to treat others with more respect	164
Yes, I need to be treated with more respect	111
Yes, I will delete all those I’ve not met face to face from my online friendship lists	142
No, I am happy and feel safe in my relationship and friendships (including online)	433
<b>Are you worried about your, or a friend’s relationship and would like to talk to someone about it?</b>	
Yes and I already knew where / who I will ask for help	71
Yes and having watched the play, I now know I can ask for help and where to go	47
Yes but I don’t know where / who I’ll ask for help	15
No, I’m fine thanks	564
<b>Do you know about any services available in Bedfordshire that support young people?</b>	
Yes	330

No	320
<b>What did you learn from the play? comments included:</b>	
<p><i>'Don't talk to people you don't know'</i></p> <p><i>'It can happen to anyone'</i></p> <p><i>'It's not just girls that can be abused and exploited, (boys too)'</i></p> <p><i>'I learnt that not only strangers can sexually expose you but your family can'</i></p> <p><i>'I learnt not to use the internet to find someone to love'</i></p> <p><i>'Not to do stuff that you don't want to'</i></p> <p><i>'Protect yourself, be aware of what you do and make sure you are ready'</i></p> <p><i>'Be careful what you put on the internet as it will remain on there forever'</i></p> <p><i>'Put Social Media on private setting'</i></p> <p><i>'Exploitation occurs in lots of different ways that are not always obvious'</i></p> <p><i>'I learnt nothing'</i></p> <p><i>'You have the right to say "NO"'</i></p> <p><i>'These things happen in local areas'</i></p> <p><i>'There will always be a place to go if you get sexually abused'</i></p>	

5.7 Work has also taken place with social workers, youth workers and young people to consider the most effective ways in which the Council can raise awareness of campaigns such as those relating to child sexual exploitation.

#### **'Don't Hate Educate' Campaign**

5.8 Young people met with Andrew Selous MP and Alistair Burt MP in January 2016 to discuss their 'Don't Hate Educate' Campaign. This campaign was voted for by over 95,000 young people across the UK, its purpose is to challenge negative attitudes and stereotypes around race and religion and work with communities to tackle ignorance.

5.9 The next step will be for young people to meet with their headteachers to arrange an information and awareness session with fellow students. Young people are also working with Bedfordshire Police highlighting issues in respect of hate crime and mental health.

#### **Children in Care**

5.10 The Children in Care Council (CiCC) is a group of children and young people who are, or have been in the care of Central Bedfordshire Council.

The members of the CiCC work with the Corporate Parenting Panel to improve services for Central Bedfordshire Council's looked after children.

5.11 The Children in Care Council includes children aged 16-25. There is also a 'Young Voices' group which engages with younger children aged 8-15.

5.12

**Members of the Children in Care Council were asked to list 2015/16 achievements, these included:**

- *The Annual Achievement Awards for Looked after Children and Care Leavers (September 2015) – over 100 young people attended.*
- *CiCC members have been engaged with the Frontline Training Programme which included organising training for 128 social work students and developing a workshop to create a 'social workers toolbox'. One young person was invited to attend the opening ceremony - reading one of her poems to 220 guests.*
- *CiCC members have worked with a practice educator to develop a training programme for newly qualified social workers. Feedback from participants was very positive and social workers shared that the training made them think about their communication and using more creative ways to work with young people.*
- *Two CiCC members attended the National 'Corporate Parenting Taking it to the Next Level' event. Representatives from other Children in Care Council's commented and provided praise on the relationship between the CiCC and the University of Bedfordshire and wanted more information to share with their local universities.*

***'We were able to listen to other children in care councils and it was interesting to hear some of the things that they do to support their young people but it was good to see that we do pretty much the same plus more which was something to be proud of. We also came away from the day ready to re design our pledge which was a huge positive as it's now underway.'***

- *One young person attended the launch of the Children's Commissioner report on State of the Nation Report 1 Children in Care and Care Leavers Survey, presented information and took part in a live question panel with MPs, other care leavers and the Children's Minister.*
- *CiCC members were invited to attend a consultation event on the Supervised Contact provider. The young people gave their views on what is good about the service and what could be improved.*
- *CiCC was invited to be part of the staff conferences which were organised for Children's Services officers. One member made a speech about people that have made a difference in her life.*
- *Members of the CiCC have met with senior managers to get support for college work and a 'mentoring' relationship has started to develop. This was considered to be a good example of how young people are being supported by their Corporate Parents and something the young people would like to further develop for Looked After Children.*
- *The University of Bedfordshire has continued to support Looked After Children and Care Leavers through their Access Partnership Team. The team organised two days where young people were able to engage in fun*

*activities whilst thinking about their future aspirations. The young people recorded a radio show and took part in a graduation ceremony. Workers from the Virtual School attended the days and supported the young people.*

(Includes information from the Children in Care Council and Participation Annual Report 2015-16)

5.13 CiCC has also been involved with a number of consultation events including:

- A consultation event with Independent Review Officers to consider 'what makes a good Looked After Children's Review'. Feedback from workers and young people has been very positive, one young person stating *'it was good to meet our IRO outside of the meetings we have and to go and do a fun activity with them.'* Another young person said following the event *'my review was the best one I have ever had as I felt I now had a relationship with my Independent Review Officer and it wasn't just another professional at my review'.*
- Informal consultations on the comments, complaints and compliments procedure.
- Design of the CiCC website [www.cbccicc.org.uk](http://www.cbccicc.org.uk)
- The summer activities programme and the Leaving Care Christmas Party.
- Information evenings and training for foster carers where a house was created to represent what makes a good foster carer.
- Promoting leisure activities and activity days for Looked After Children.
- One member of CiCC attended the Looked After Children's Health Improvement Meeting and shared her experiences. One of the main issues this young person wanted to raise was around the emotional and mental health support for children and young people and the transfer to adult mental health services. This young person also attended a meeting with the new service provider for the Child and Adolescent Mental Health service and was invited to sit on an interview panel for positions within this service.
- Recruitment - including Independent Review Officers, the manager of the Conference and Review Service, Personal Advisers working with the Virtual School and Youth Support Team, and a Looked After Children Support Officer for the Virtual School.

## **Fostering**

5.14 A small number of children, foster carers and social workers took part in an evaluation of foster care provision in Central Bedfordshire. Findings included:

5.15

### ***What we do well:***

- *Good quality of care, which is highly rated by children and social workers.*

- *Children like having nice homes, good food and access to leisure activities.*
- *75% of children said they had enough of a say in their care (74% of carers said the same).*
- *Most carers feel well-supported and have good relationships with the Fostering team and support from carers groups.*

**What we could do better:**

- *The social care 'system' can be intrusive for children, and there are issues around communication and decision-making.*
- *Family contact caused logistical and emotional issues for 41% of carers, and could pose problems with transport.*
- *Some carers felt they didn't have access to relevant and convenient training opportunities.*
- *Carers need to be better integrated into planning and decision making.*

*None of the children who participated said they had any issues with the service.*

**What difference has it made?**

- *Children all said they feel safe and happy in their placements.*
- *Carers help children achieve stability with routines and boundaries, and a positive sense of family life.*
- *Children have good health and wellbeing outcomes.*
- *Engagement with education was good; however, more needs to be done to promote children's achievement.*
- *Children were being given positive new experiences, which helped broaden their horizons in preparation for adult life.*

5.16 A number of recommendations are being taken forward:

- a CAMHS psychologist is working with the Fostering team to provide support to carers as well as children;
- work is taking place with the Virtual School to help Looked After Children do better in education;
- the Corporate Parenting service is looking at ways to help young people, particularly those in foster care, make a better transition to independent living.

-

**Audits**

5.17 Audits relating to children's social care provision are carried out within the Local Authority. In 2015/16 audits have been based on specific themes for example:

- Early Help;

- Repeat Child Protection Plans - to understand more about the reasons why children may be subject to a child protection plan more than once;
- Children under the age of 2 - to ensure that there is engagement with very young children and their families on service provision.

5.18 Work has also been taking place on the development of a generic audit which will help to:

- establish the key messages coming from a wider sample of children and young people;
- shape services - taking into account feedback received; and determine, over time, whether changes to services have resulted in improved outcomes for children and young people.

5.19 This will include specific questions in relation to the quality of the voice of the child in planning and in documentation, and will also look for evidence contained in records, of engagement with children and families. This is being rolled out in 2016/17.



## **6. Early Help and Improving Life Chances**

### **Speech and Language Therapy**

6.1

A number of focus groups were held with young people accessing speech and language therapy throughout the area. These groups took a workshop format in line with best practice.

6.2 During the workshops, young people reported that:

- They wanted all individuals supporting them with their speech and language to regularly communicate with each other;
- That they wanted a consistent and trusted individual to support them;
- That parents and teaching assistants often help them the most;
- That group therapy can support them to utilise the skills they have learnt;
- That they enjoy speech and language sessions the most when their therapist or assistant build activities into sessions such as games, reading, songs and making short films;
- That targets promote their confidence as they know what they need to achieve but also how far they have progressed.

6.3 These views are being built into the service redesign.

### **Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities**

6.4 The Children with Disabilities Service continues to promote the voice of the child throughout the social work, short break and residential services.

- 6.5 The following information is taken from the August 2016 Ofsted report following the full inspection of one of the short break homes (SC391503) for children and young people with disabilities, which is rated an 'Outstanding' service by Ofsted. The report says that:
- Children participate in an extensive range of community-based activities. This builds their self-esteem and allows them to widen their friendship groups.
  - Children's views are actively sought through a range of highly effective communication methods, which leads to children participating in their care plans, with their views at the centre.
  - Children's views are sought using pictorial children's requests forms. There is also a children's rights questionnaire in which the children can say how they are feeling about their stays. The children's responses form the basis of the next key-work sessions, with a summary communicated to the wider team at staff meetings. Each child has an 'all about me' book that summarises the essential information about the child from the child's perspective. This is a simple yet innovative way to ensure that the child remains at the forefront of the minds of the staff team. Children's views and wishes are firmly at the centre of their care and inform staff practice.
- 6.6 The other children's home for children with disabilities (SC391464) which is rated 'Good' by Ofsted have introduced a new 'achievement' record for disabled looked after children which enables them to actively contribute to the planning and reviewing process. It also provides a record of their lived experience. It contains specific achievement targets, details their contribution to the running of the home, what they and their key workers are proud of in the child's progress and what the child would like more help with.
- 6.7 A group of children with SEN have been working with Central Bedfordshire Council officers in the redesign of the SEN and Disability website to meet the requirements of the Children and Families Act 2014 Part 3.

### **Young Carers**

- 6.8 Young carers are children who look after someone in their family e.g. a person who has an illness, a disability, a mental health problem or a substance misuse problem. 140 young carers were identified and offered support in Central Bedfordshire in 2015/16.
- 6.9 Support for young carers includes one to one interventions. In addition groups are being set up in schools and work is taking place to learn from existing local models of support.
- 6.10 In 2015/16 41 young carers received a one to one intervention with a Young Carers Support Worker, this included regular contact with the young person and their family to help effect change. Every session is tailored to meet the need of the individual child and an evaluation tool 'Outcome Star' (completed by the young person) is used to determine whether there has been an improvement in outcomes following the intervention e.g. in



confidence and self esteem.

- 6.11 Kidstime is a programme which occurs on a monthly basis specifically for young carers and their parents. These groups help children gain a greater understanding of the challenges their parent face if struggling with mental health issues. The children understand their parents illness in an age appropriate way. Waiting times to join this group are challenged as it is not time limited. In 2015/16, 12 families (a total of 24 young people) were involved. The group works well in establishing relationships with young people and this has encouraged the young people to engage with further work outside of the group.



## 7. Being Healthy and Positive

### **Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire: Health and Wellbeing Event for Young People**

- 7.1 Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire held a health and wellbeing event for young people which took place at Centre Parcs, Central Bedfordshire in February 2016. Over 85 young people attended the event along with HWCB staff directors, volunteers and key stakeholders – the aim being to engage a representative cross section of young people (12-18 years) living in Central Bedfordshire.
- 7.2 The event was designed to build on the work to ‘forge better, sustainable and more resilient connections with this age group to inform local Health and Wellbeing services and influence accessibility, inclusion and long term health improvements for this group of consumers.’
- 7.3 Five specific interactive workshops were included as part of the event – one of which was used to design and develop a 'Young Healthwatch' group, to engage local young people in all aspects of health and wellbeing services, including commissioning, evaluation and service redesign:
- Mental Health
  - Young Carers
  - Quality Standards
  - Young Healthwatch
  - Right Care, Right Place
- 7.4 A detailed report is available on the Healthwatch website which is available here:

<http://www.healthwatch-centralbedfordshire.org.uk/about-us/content-page/>

## Emotional Health and Wellbeing Survey (SHEU) 2015/16

- 7.5 4,416 children and young people participated in the survey in 2015-16, covering Years 4 to 12, and including special schools (48 schools). The survey was commissioned following a broader health and lifestyle survey in Central Bedfordshire in 2014, where the findings supported the need for a closer look at young people's emotional health and wellbeing.

### **Key issues identified in the 2015-16 survey:**

- 7.6
- *At least 1 in 10 children and young people report sometimes being so worried that they find it hard to concentrate on anything.*
  - *Over a third of Year 8, 10 and 12 pupils have low resilience scores.*
  - *Children and young people mostly turn to family and friends for support; however, a significant minority says they would not have any support for a range of issues.*
  - *23% of Year 6 pupils in Central Bedfordshire worry about the way they look, compared with only 16% of a wider reference sample from the SHEU data bank of 78,451 pupils in 2014.*

*The findings from 2015-16 were compared with the results from a survey in Central Bedfordshire schools in 2014, and the following changes were noted:*

- *The percentage of pupils with a high self-esteem score in Central Bedfordshire has improved since 2014.*
- *More pupils feel that their school cares whether they are happy or not, compared with 2014, although the percentage is still lower than the wider reference sample.*
- *The percentage of pupils answering that they got at least 8 hours sleep the night before the survey, has decreased compared with 2014, and pupils in Central Bedfordshire are less confident than those in the reference sample, that the amount of sleep they normally get is enough to stay alert and concentrate on school work.*

- 7.7 A mental health partnership task and finish group is being set up to lead on the improvement of mental health and wellbeing outcomes.

- 7.8 In addition, Youth Parliament will be looking to host a number of 'time to talk' events which will focus on reducing the stigma of talking about mental health and raising awareness of the different strands of mental health.

## **Family Weight Management Programme**

- 7.9 Public Health commissioned the 'BeeZee Bodies' family weight management programme to support children aged 5-15 years and their families to make positive changes in their lifestyle behaviours. Outcomes are good. In 2015/16 at least 72% of the children completing the programme maintained their body weight or achieved weight loss (measured by BMI). 100% of children and families rated the programme as 'good' or 'excellent' and said that they would recommend the programme to other families.

7.10

*'Beezee bodies has literally changed my life; I think Beezee Bodies is amazing because not only do you make new friends and have a great time, but you learn how to follow a healthy lifestyle.....*

*....Through Beezee Bodies I have lost a considerable amount of weight and I am extremely proud of myself; Beezee Bodies really helped me. Not only are the lessons and all the different activities great, but the staff really, truly do care about you and want the best for you'.*

*'The only thing I would change is I would make Beezee Bodies longer because I will miss it so much'.*

## **Sexual Health**

7.11 A Sexual Health Needs Assessment was carried out across Bedfordshire to inform the procurement of sexual health services in the area.

7.12 As part of this work, a survey was carried out with those aged 13 and above (which included a small number of young people under the age of 18). Findings from the survey included that:

- The most frequently reported method of finding out about available sexual health services in the event of a sexual health concern was looking at the internet (66%). The second most common method was asking a GP (43%). Respondents were least likely to find out through information at their school or workplace, or by asking family members.
- 88% reported that they had never visited the sexual health website [www.safesexinbeds.com](http://www.safesexinbeds.com).
- The most attended local sexual health service was the GUM clinic at Bedford Hospital, Luton and Dunstable Hospital or Milton Keynes Hospital.
- The majority of respondents who had used local sexual health services were very satisfied with the service provided at their last visit.

7.13 The feedback is being used to inform a new service model which is expected to be implemented in 2016.

7.14 In addition, consultation has taken place with young people to ascertain their views on sexual health services within schools. This has shown that the use of services in schools is highly dependant on the school supporting pupils to access these services in a confidential manner. In schools with a supportive environment (i.e. where staff promote and support access to services) pupils report that the on site

services are highly valued. Confidentiality of all sexual health services, including school based services, is a priority to ensure that young people are able to access the support they need, when they need it.

7.15 Commissioned sexual health services are monitored on a quarterly basis to ensure the views of children and young people using services are heard. Feedback is captured through a 'You said, We did...' board in the Brook main reception areas, where appropriate adaptations to the service are made in response to comments.

7.16 In addition, the Family Nurse Partnership is carrying out work to determine how young parents received/ would have liked to have received information on sex and relationships.



## 8. Complaints

8.1 In 2015/16 12 complaints were received by Central Bedfordshire Council directly from children and young people. These covered a range of issues including accommodation and placements. 2 complaints were upheld, 6 complaints were partially upheld and 4 complaints were not upheld. Where complaints were upheld, either in full or in part, there was a common theme that revolved around poor communication with young people. As a result of these complaints improvements have been made to ensure young people are fully updated about the progress in their case and that they are consulted on how they would prefer to receive these updates.



## 9. Key Messages

### 9.1 General

There is a need to:

- Develop a systematic approach to active participation – ensuring that there is 'join up' between activities happening at an operational level, and how the information is being considered by partners at a strategic level.
- Develop a more in depth understanding of the differences in views e.g. in terms of ages, sex, sexual orientation, disability, race, religion and belief – and how this impacts on need.

### Improved Educational Attainment and Progress

- The quality of work experience opportunities for young people varies significantly across Central Bedfordshire.
- To provide where possible, relevant work experience opportunities (outside of exam times).
- To raise awareness of the work experience opportunities that local businesses can offer and to seek to increase the opportunities available.

## **Protecting Vulnerable Children and Young People**

- To continue to consider the most effective ways to engage with children and young people e.g. using social media to raise awareness of campaigns (e.g. on Child Sexual Exploitation).
- For foster carers to be better integrated into the planning and decision making around a child.

Key messages from 2014/15 also included:

- The importance of children on child protection and children in need plans having an established relationship with a social worker to enable them to express their wishes and feelings, reduce stigmas and empower them to have a voice that is listened to.
- The importance of building friendships and opportunities to participate in the life of residential homes.
- Supporting transition to independent living.
- Importance of maintaining relationships when Looked After Children change placements, and the important role that placement stability plays in emotional wellbeing.

## **Early help and Improving Life Chances**

- Obtaining the views of a wider group of young carers on the support received.

## **Being Healthy and Positive**

- To consider the recommendations from the Healthwatch event.
- To continue to focus on improving the emotional health and wellbeing of children and young people within Central Bedfordshire.

Key messages from 2014/15 also included:

- Awareness raising of mental and emotional wellbeing services for Looked After Children (and wider universal provision).
- Ensuring join up and co-ordination of mental health services across schools.



## **10. Conclusion and Next Steps**

- 10.1 Research carried out over the past year supports the need for a more systematic approach to be developed in Central Bedfordshire to provide a comprehensive understanding of what children and young

people are telling us.

- 10.2 The key messages identified in this report do therefore need to be considered in the context of work being undertaken to develop a more systematic approach.