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One Minute Guide: The Voice of the Child

What is it?

Voice of the Child is a monthly meeting where feedback from children and young people is shared along with information on the different processes used to seek the views of children and young people.

There are a variety of mechanisms and methods in use across Redbridge to seek young people's views and ensure their voice is heard, both in relation to their own personal involvement or 'journey' with Children's Services and also to ensure that services are delivered in a child focused way. Already in place are:

- Children in Care Council which raises issues on behalf of looked after children and care leavers. The young people are supported in this role by our participation officer.
- A well established advocacy service provided by our Children's Rights Officer, supports children and young people who wish to raise concerns or make a complaint related to their care.
- Independent Reviewing Officers who meet with children and young people prior to their reviews.
- Viewpoint – our new electronic method of capturing the views of children that are looked after.
- Independent Visitors who are matched to individual looked after children.

Regular updates of feedback received from children and young people are shared with CTMT and the Director of Children's Services on a monthly basis. This is then progressed into an action plan with clear timescales and named people to lead and take forward the actions identified.

The Children in Care Council and young people can request items to be discussed at the Voice of the Child meeting or to be raised elsewhere. Some examples of items already suggested by young people are: birthday alerts on

Protocol for social workers, so birthdays would not be forgotten; a review of the case recording policy and development of a Chronology Policy to take into account how key and significant events for young people are recorded and for a Children in Care Council to have increased participation from younger looked after children.

Why are we doing it?

Children's Services is committed to ensuring regular and frequent feedback and consultation with children, young people and their families to ensure that the voices of children are being heard, are influencing the services that are being provided and that we are practising in an evidence informed way. The Voice of the Child meeting supports this. It is important to ensure that children and young people's voices are heard throughout the services they use and we are striving to embed a culture of participation and feedback across the service.

A representative from Workforce Development also takes part in the meeting so we can promote and celebrate good practice that is taking place as well as ensuring that the knowledge gained can be incorporated into learning and development activities, including the Children's Services Learning and Development Programme.

It is important we learn from other organisations about different methods and mechanisms of seeking to hear the voices of children, including serious case reviews (SCRs). The Voice of the Child meeting is a good forum for this exchange of information.

When is it happening?

The meeting occurs on a monthly basis, usually in different venues. We will publicise future dates and venues for the next year in due course.

For venue information, please contact voiceofthechild@redbridge.gov.uk

Who are the key players?

The meeting is chaired by the Principal Child and Family Social Worker. The meeting also includes practitioners from front line teams across Children's Services, as well as support staff including the Children's Rights Officer, the Participation Officer, and representation from Safeguarding and Care Planning, Quality Assurance, Workforce Development and CAMHS.

It could also include you! If you are interested in becoming involved, please discuss this with your line manager.