

Let's Take Action 2013



Stockton-on-Tees
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Children and Young People

Big plans for the young people of our Borough

Who are Let's Take Action and What are our main objectives?

- The Let's Take Action Group was established in March 2007. It has had many different members over the years who have come forward to work together with professionals and other looked after children and young people to have their voices heard on issues that effect them. We currently have up to 14 members who attend regularly.
- The group meet every 2 weeks and talk about issues that are significant to us during our time in care. A wide and diverse range of issues are discussed within the group. All young people put forward their views and ideas on how things can be improved or developed for looked after children and young people in Stockton. We also talk about the good things that happen for Looked After Children and Young People in Stockton.
- It is a safe place to go to voice any concerns that Looked After Children may have, to find out what Social Care can do to help children and young people, gain new skills, get involved in new activities, have fun and make new friends.
- We are always asked if there is anything that we specifically want to do or which topics we would like to talk about.

Over the time we have been running we have had our voices heard which has impacted on change for Looked After Children and Care Leavers in Stockton. We are visited by the Corporate Director and Lead member for Children and Young People in Stockton who take on board our views, wishes and feelings.

What have we been involved in over the past year?

- A Cooking Project – with little sprouts catering company.
- We helped to organise the annual celebration event for care leavers.
- We were visited by the Diagnostic Inspection team for CESC.
- We were Involved in the Fostering and Adoption Inspection.
- The Peer Mentoring Project with the U12's Children in Care Council. This included supporting the group with activities such as; Story telling with animals, baking sessions, drumming lessons, creative writing, Adventure Valley Day out, Stockton Sparkles and going to a Christmas pantomime at Billingham forum.
- We have met with the National Youth Advocacy Service representative to discuss how they support children and young people.
- We have discussed safeguarding issues and worked with IYSS on Risk taking behaviour.
- We have shared our experiences of our first day in care and discussed the significance of this day for all looked after children.



What have we been involved in over the past year?

- We have put together questions for the Leaving Care Manager who came to talk to us about the Leaving Care Strategy.
- Filled in online surveys for A National Voice.
- We have been involved in interviews for future CESC staff.
- We have discussed the quality of our care and who plays what role within our lives.
- There have been discussions around what we want from our Social Workers.
- Contributed towards the project plans for the drop in area at Hartington Road.
- We talked to the customer excellence inspectors about our experiences.



My experience of being involved in the Let's Take Action Group - Ian

- “I have been involved in the ‘Peer Mentoring’ Project which was something that I really enjoyed. I did the training with the YMCA and supported the under 12’s group with a creative writing project. I let the children I was working with talk so that they could express themselves without me interrupting. I wrote down what they said so I could read it back to them to make sure that they understood what they had said.”
- “The training helped me to sharpen up my communication skills and learn how to talk to younger children. I wanted to share my experience of being in care and told them that I was applying to university to study medicine. Just because I was in care I wanted them to know that my personal dreams hadn’t faded away and that door are still open for you.”
- “I have enjoyed going to the Let’s Take Action group because I have learn about different experiences in care, met new friends, been involved in lots of activities and become more aware of safeguarding issues.”

My experience of being involved in the Let's Take Action Group - Stacey

- “I have been a member of the LTA since 2009. It has been a really good experience and I have learnt lots of things about Social Care that I didn't know before. I have made new friends and I get to tell people what I think about important issues that effect me. I can put my point across and get good advice and information on what choices are available to me.
- I have completed the ‘Peer Mentor’ training and supported a group through a drumming project.”
- “One of the significant projects that I have been involved in through the LTA was contributing to the creation and delivery of the ‘Contact – What's the point?’ course with the training section. In this session I talked about my own experiences of family contact whilst I have been in care.”
- “I am currently employed by one of the councils apprenticeship schemes doing a Business Administration NVQ through the regeneration team.”

My experience of being involved in the Let's Take Action Group - John

- “The Let's Take Action group do very important work. We try to get our points across to represent all children and young people in care so that we can continue to improve the experience of being in care.”
- “Everything that I have been involved in has been more or less through the Let's Take Action group. I have been involved with the cooking project, being the compare at the celebration event, interviewing potential CESC staff, peer mentoring and the Mattie's Bistro project.”
- “I had an issue with the way the apprenticeship scheme was conducted last year but I wrote a letter on behalf of myself and other applicants from the LTA and felt listened to. Whilst I didn't end up getting an apprenticeship with the council I did get one through my work with the Mattie's Bistro project. I feel confident that the apprenticeship application process has now improved and other care leavers have directly benefited

What's Next?

- We will be looking to recruit more new members for Let's Take Action in September.
- We have met with Library Staff to look at a family tree research project.
- Training want to engage more with the Let's Take Action group to get their views on courses they currently run for professionals within Stockton Borough Council.
- Wider consultation with harder to reach children in care and care leavers.
- Some of our members have been involved in a 4 week music pilot with Musinc and we will be starting this again in September.

Thank you for your time!

Please enjoy our some of the work done at our creative writing session that was supported through the Peer Mentoring project and Social Care staff. All of the children from the under 12's group wanted to record their own experiences, views, wishes and feelings through the form of letter writing.

All children who have recorded their work have agreed to share their work with you.



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