

**Title of the Report: Young People Engagement.**

**Executive Summary:**

The Council4Kids, the “children in care council”, is the forum where Walsall’s looked after children, young people and care leavers are able to shape and influence the parenting and support that they receive. Since the last Corporate Parenting Board on 17 February 2020 young people have met once face to face and have undertaken all other meetings virtually due to Corvid 19.

***Reason for bringing to the Corporate Parenting Board:***

To inform the Corporate Parenting Board about enrichment activities provided for Looked After Children and Care Leavers between since February 2020

***Recommendations:***

- 1. The Board notes the activity and events of the Children in Care Council***

**Background papers:**

None

**Corporate Parenting Pledges**

The Council’s Pledge to Looked After Children have been reviewed and are subject a separate report to the Corporate Parenting Board. The current pledge that is relates to this report is

**Your Voice.....Your Influence**

- We will make sure you have chances to share your views, wishes and feelings. We promise to listen to you and tell you how your views and feelings are taken into account in making plans.
- We will make sure you know what your rights are on a regular basis and information will be shared with you in a child friendly manner.
- Contact with people who are important to you will be actively promoted and arrangements will clearly take into account your wishes and feelings.
- We will support the Respect group to make sure that looked after children in Walsall have their voices heard. Members of the corporate parenting board will meet with children and young people at least four times a year.

**Resource and legal considerations:**

The Children in Care Council is supported by the Children’s Champion and Participation Apprentice.

**Council Corporate Plan Priorities:**

- Children have the best possible start and are safe from harm, happy, healthy and learning well.
- People have increased independence, improved health and can positively contribute to their communities.

**Citizen impact:**

The services and the improvements play a key role in the quality of life and outcomes for the children, young people and families of Walsall. The Council and its partners as Corporate Parents make critical contributions to improve outcomes.

**Environmental impact:**

None

**Performance management:**

The Children's Champion works with children looked after and care experienced young people to ensure that the Council4Kids is rich and engaging forum. Regular reports are provided to the Director of Children's Services and the Corporate Parenting Board.

**Reducing inequalities:**

The children in care council seeks to secure improvements in the equality of services, which, when achieved will have a positive impact on our most vulnerable children, young people and families

**Consultation:**

The children in care council is one of the key forums through which services for children in care and care leavers seek to consult on service delivery and where children and young people are able to shape and influence the parenting they receive at every level.

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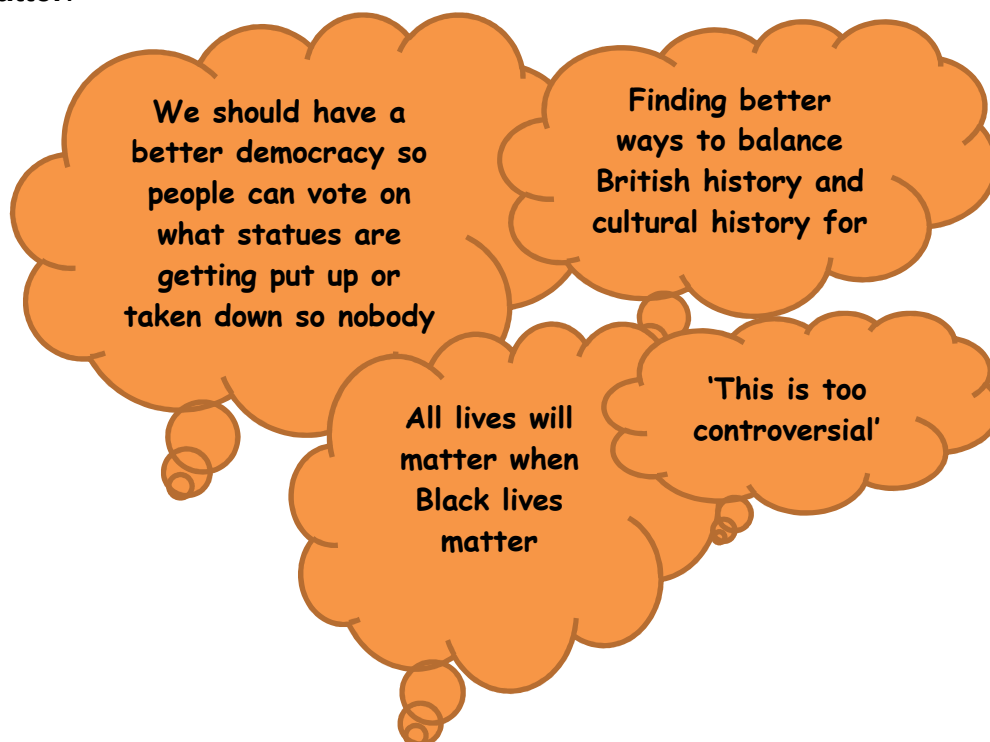
## Report: Young People's Engagement and Children in Care Council

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Introduction</b>
<b>1.1</b>	<p>Walsall's Council4kids is a forum where care experienced Children and Young People have a chance to meet, build friendships and networks and <b>"Have a SAY"</b> about the things that really matter in their lives. Children and young people are able to have influence and shape the services and policies which impact on the parenting and support that they receive at every level. Walsall Children in Care Council has met virtually since March 2020 and has not been able to meet as frequently as we previously did.</p>
<b>1.2</b>	<p><b>WhatsApp:</b> Prior to March, the use of WhatsApp was being piloted, however, once the Government imposed a national lockdown, this tool was made available across Children's Services and has been one of the key mediums that we have been using to communicate with our children and families. we have also used Zoom and Skype as well as Teams . WhatsApp is now one of many modern technology's chosen methods used with professionals to communicate more effectively with young people.</p>
<b>1.3</b>	<p><b>Key updates since February 2020</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The <b>'Have your say'</b> event was undertaken at the Educational Development Centre for young people to come along and have their say as part of the renewing of the pledge. ( Appendix 1) Professionals from across the service attended. Young people informed professionals through discussion what was important to them from services they accessed. The event was informal and was co - hosted with young people. Agencies from across our service who support young people through their lives were present. They hosted stalls from giving out information and freebies to our young people to help them with their daily lives. The Rees Foundation who is a charity organisation who we partnership work was also present giving out advice and guidance on how they can support our Care Leavers.</li> <li>• We welcome the new Participation Apprentice Kyle. Kyle has a very engaging character and has wasted no time in getting to know our young people. Young people have welcomed Kyle's creative skills which has a real presence in the virtual meetings.</li> <li>• We took advantaged of Artslinks trip to the BBC. Artslink whose aim is to ensure all children and young people in care are able to access high-quality arts and cultural experiences and activities. Young people enjoyed a trip to the BBC and learnt about its history. During the visit young people had the opportunity to make a short video about important things in their life. The young people who attended chose to talk about being part of the Children in Care Council, receiving positive feedback from the reporter who worked with the young people on the day. The reported could see the young people showed a natural talent in front of the camera.</li> <li>• Children in Care Council launched a Creative Arts Competition during lockdown. ( See Appendix 2 ) We felt it was important our young</li> </ul>

	<p>people had the opportunity to express themselves, pre lock down and during lockdown. We wanted to capture their creativity with the opportunity to win a prize and all entries published. The competition was aimed at age's 7-25years. We will be launching a Creative competition for the younger children in the near future. It is important all children has an opportunity to showcase their creativity.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To ensure we are delivering a good service to our care experienced young people in Walsall are involved in the review of our Children's Homes. Young people who have lived or are currently living in our Children's Homes will have the opportunity to tell us about their experiences, what worked well, what didn't work well and shape the future of the service. We are meeting with young people to gather their views, understand what life is / was like and what needs to change.</li> </ul>
1.4	<p><b><u>Our Meetings:</u></b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. At our last face to face meeting we had the pleasure of Sally Rowe the Director of Children's Service and Colleen Male the Assistant Director of Children's Service attend. Young people had fun with testing our directors on their knowledge of young people with an ice breaker which was called 'Young people's language' Young people had fun listening to what our director's responses. Young people interviewed Sally and Colleen at the meeting to get to know them more and also gain an insight around they wanted to achieve for young people of Walsall. The young people liked that the directors would like more young people to attend the meetings as this is what young people have said. Young people would like more young people to have the opportunities they are having.</li> <li>2. Due to Corvid 19 Children in Care Council face to face meetings were temporarily placed on hold. Whilst it was very important we heard what Children and Young People had to say it was important we considered the impact on our young people's mental and emotional wellbeing. We felt it was important young people processed the significant change in their life, which was proving difficult to some young people.</li> <li>3. Virtual meetings have resumed whereby we made use of modern technology adapting to young people's communication very quickly. A WhatsApp group was set up which gave young people the opportunity to receive daily greetings information but most important use the group for support during Corvid 19 and form friendships with other young people.</li> <li>4. Young people used their meetings to share what they were doing during lockdown. It was very difficult for some young people as their routines had been disrupted so tried to keep meetings upbeat. During our virtual meet ups we had quiz afternoons which enabled young people to have fun and take their mind off lockdown. Kyle was the quiz master and put young people through their paces.</li> <li>5. During meetings young people shared their creative cooking skills, taking photographs of their food and sharing it with others, which highlighted some creative talent with our young people. Young people have been doing origami, and having lengthy discussions centred on current world events such as Black Lives Matter protests and the tearing down of the</li> </ol>

Edward Colston statue, life in lockdown and when things go back to normal and the activities they want to participate in future meetings.

**Some things young people said when we talked about Black Lives Matter.**



6. We had regular checks in via texts, WhatsApp, teams and telephone calls. Young people had the opportunity to share their concerns regarding Corvid 19, worries and what their daily routine.
7. Young people will be involved in the M-E-L Research commissioned by Walsall Council to look at what it is like to be a child in Walsall. This will be undertaken during August and September whereby young people will speak to a friendly researcher via online discussions and telephone calls. A report will be produced and any contributions from young people will be anonymous.

**1.5**

**Partnership working**

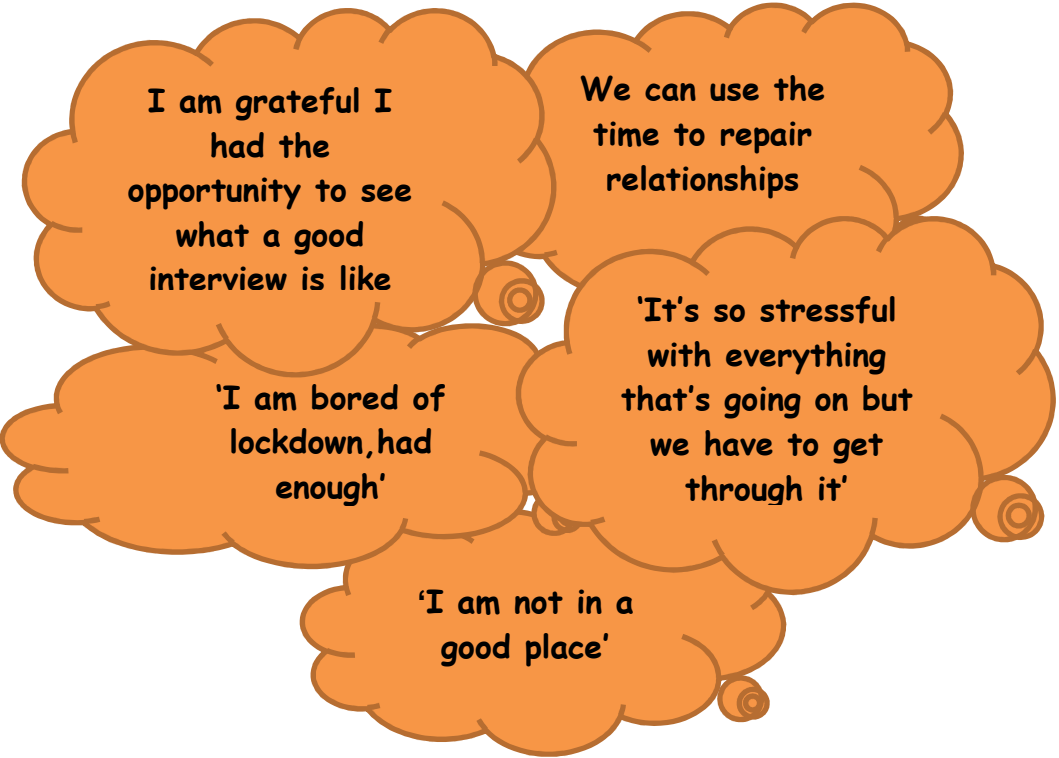
1. Young people are still working closely with Turning Point and contributing to the running of the service delivery virtually. Young People continue to have meetings virtually to discuss how they can be influential in the Service delivery.
2. We continue to have strong links with the Care Leavers Covenant as one of the trailblazers of Local Authorities who the Covenant work closely with. Our young people are able to take advantage of signing up to the Covenant's portal and database. This enables care leavers to access offers and information. Care leavers who sign up to Connects Portal will receive tailored communications from the Covenant based on the details they submit allowing the Covenant to provide them with appropriate employment and recreational opportunities. This a great opportunity which some of our young people are starting to take advantage of.(Appendix 4)

3. As part of our partnership working with the Covenant, Young People have the opportunity to participate in a national online event Be Inspired 2020 hosted my John Baptise from the BBC, a young man bought up in Care. Young people are already signing up and will be able to select an interest which will contribute to the inspirational online events on the day.
4. We created special Influencers Newsletter editions during lockdown, (See Appendix 5) which offered advice and information on how young people could occupy their time during the pandemic. Young people felt this was very important as they recognised the impact of having their routine disrupted, could impact on their mental health. There was reminders to Stay Safe and Stay home, and examples of mask making.
5. The trip to Sheffield University for young people to be involved in training about how to evaluate services and learn new skills in order to be better equipped to inspect services effectively is currently on hold due to the Coronavirus. The young people will be informed when new dates will be agreed.
6. We continue to partnership work with the Rees Foundation following on from the success of the drop in café. The themed event on how Care Leavers can be supported when they want to access their records as been postponed due to Coronavirus. However young people can still access support from the Foundation.
7. The Walsall Community Recognition awards where the Young People were nominated under the category of Inspiring Youths in recognition of their commitment in the Children in Care Council has been postponed due to the pandemic. We look forward for the new dates as this was well deserved award for our young people.
8. Recruitment which is always a firm favourite of our young people. Most recently The Social Work academy are working with young people to ensure they are included in the decision making in the selection process of the next cohort of Social Worker Apprenticeships from across Walsall Council, Young People feel as interview panellist they learn new skills which has helped boost their confidence and self-esteem.

One young person said '***I am grateful I had this opportunity to see what a good interview is like***'

We have proposed all interviews undertaken that involves working with young people directly or indirectly have a young people's interview panel.

9. The young people continue to attend the Corporate Parenting Board and they hosted the last meeting Corporate Parenting Board at the TLC Hub where Young People presented the work they had undertaken. This was well received and very interested. The meeting at the TLC was a more relaxed environment for young people, which also boasted their presenting skills.

1.6	<p><b>Some of the things Young People have said during Lockdown.</b></p>  <p>I am grateful I had the opportunity to see what a good interview is like</p> <p>We can use the time to repair relationships</p> <p>'It's so stressful with everything that's going on but we have to get through it'</p> <p>'I am bored of lockdown, had enough'</p> <p>'I am not in a good place'</p>
1.7	<p><b>Celebrations and achievements of some of our young people:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ It's been a difficult time of all our young people therefore would like to say a big well done to all our young people who adhered to the rules during lock down. Staying home, staying safe and staying alert was not always easy for some. Young people have missed out on many events that carries lifelong memories such as exams, proms, leaving assemblies, education, graduations and everyday things that contributes to young people's everyday life.</li> <li>✓ A big well done to all our young people who continued with their education during difficult times.</li> <li>✓ Children and Care Council would like to thank all our professionals who continued to make a difference in young people's life during lockdown.</li> <li>✓ Social workers have made sure that the achievements are recognised</li> <li>✓ Many of our children and young people have completed a " Covid Time Capsule.</li> </ul>
1.8	<p><b>Total Respect Training:</b></p> <p>Whilst we recognise the importance of Total Respect training which enables professionals to work more effectively with children and young people. The training is temporarily on hold and will resume once we have had discussions with Training and Development and it is safe to do so.</p>
1.9	<p><b>Dates for forthcoming events and children in care council meetings.</b></p> <p>8<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> September</p> <p>13<sup>th</sup> October</p> <p>3<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> November</p> <p>5<sup>th</sup> December</p> <p><b>Some dates may be subject to changes and meetings will continue to be held virtually.</b></p>

## Appendix 1

### Our Children and Young People at the Pledge workshop

**'COME ALONG and  
have YOUR SAY'**



**Monday 17<sup>th</sup> February  
10.00am-2.00pm**

Educational Development Centre,  
Pelsall Lane, Rushall, Walsall, WS4 1NG

Are you a young person in care or have care  
experience? If so we need you to help us make  
a difference to services here in Walsall

For further information contact Michelle on  
07787 284 682 or at [michelle.cummings@walsall.gov.uk](mailto:michelle.cummings@walsall.gov.uk)

food and drinks provided

 **Walsall Council** 





# 2020 Creative Arts

# LOCKDOWN Competition

## Calling Walsall's Creatives...

Now is your chance to win great prizes and vouchers  
Tell us your lockdown stories write a poem,  
draw pictures, write a story, make a dance video.  
Be as creative as you want...

*Closing date*  
**23<sup>rd</sup> June**

### Age Ranges:

7 – 11 yrs

12 – 17 yrs

18 – 25 yrs

We will also be giving you the chance to have  
your amazing work published in our lockdown diary...

Struggling for ideas? Don't worry, be creative, anything  
you can think of during lockdown you can create.  
It can be as serious or funny as you want.  
Get those creative ideas going...

### Let's hear your story!

To enter send your entries to:

**Kyle Fray**

07880 108480 or [Kyle.Fray@walsall.gov.uk](mailto:Kyle.Fray@walsall.gov.uk)

**Michelle Cummings**

07787 284 682 or [Michelle.Cummings@walsall.gov.uk](mailto:Michelle.Cummings@walsall.gov.uk)

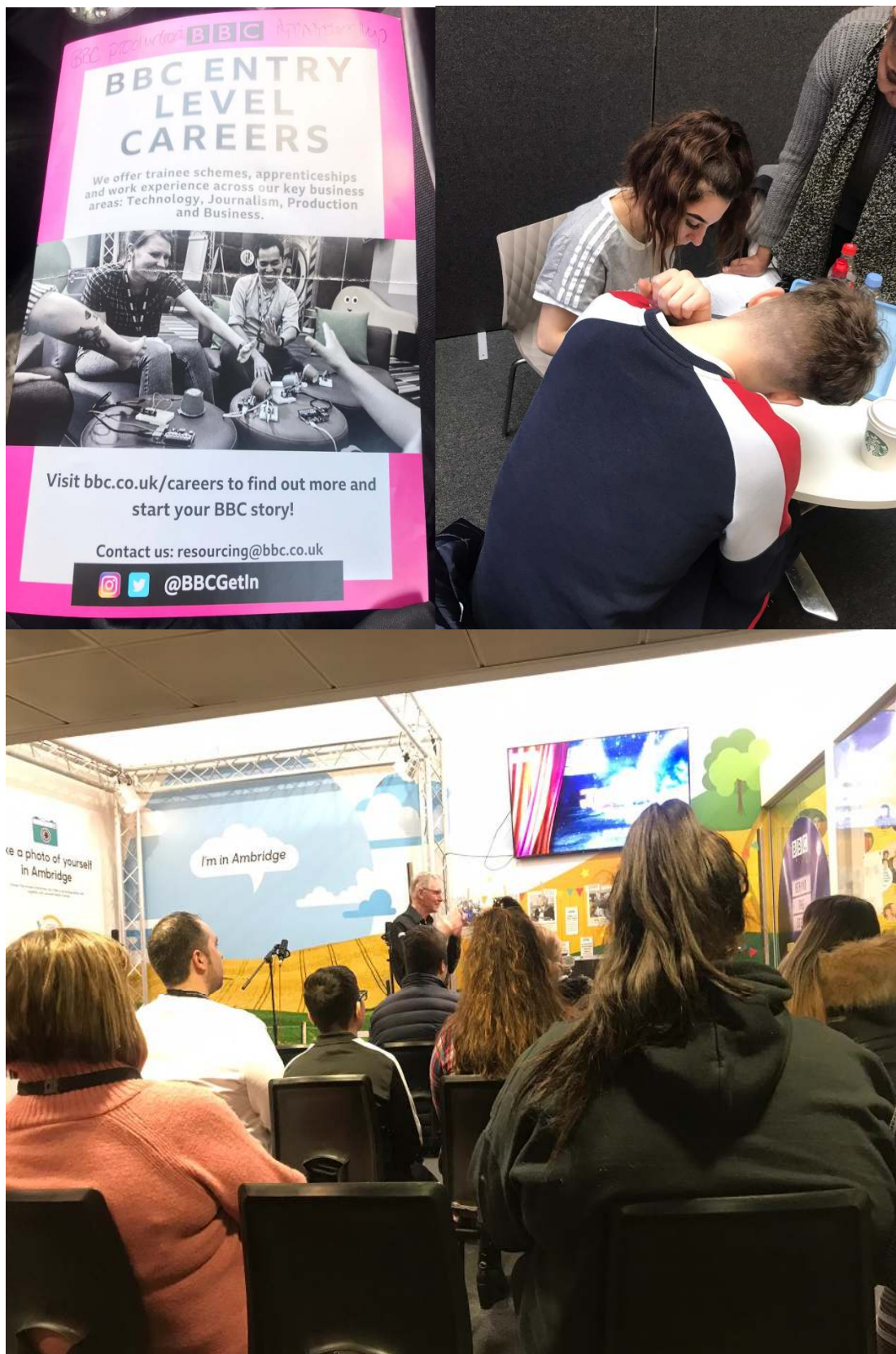


**Walsall Council**



### Appendix 3

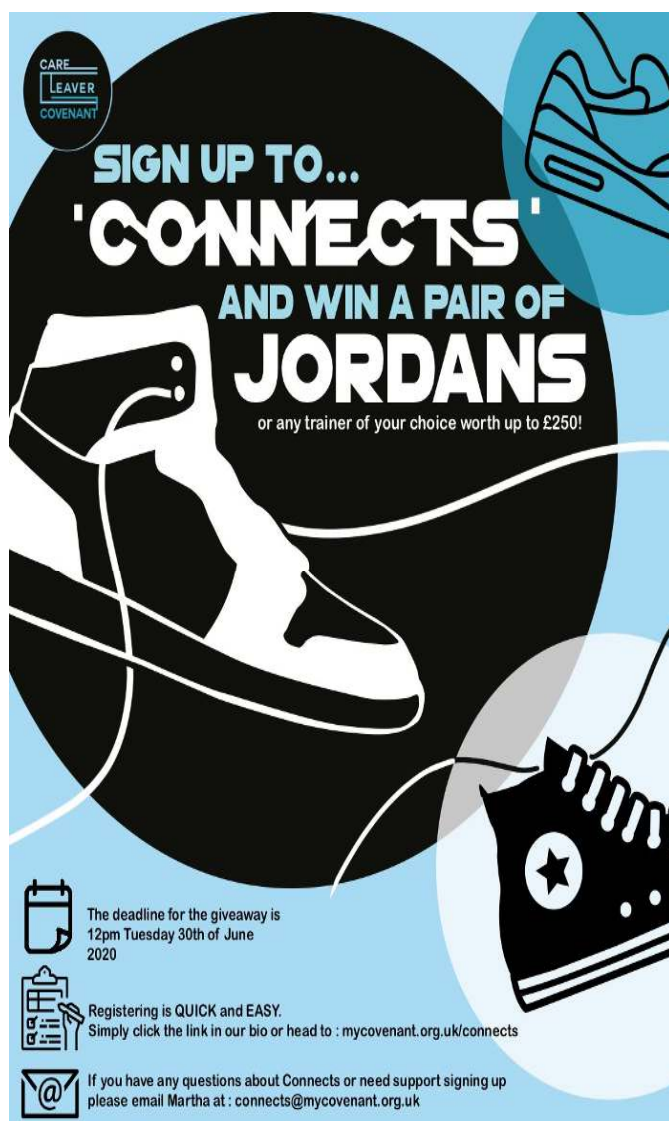
Young people enjoying a trip to the BBC and learning its history and making a short video.





## Appendix 4

Our Partners, The Care leavers Covenant encouraging young people to register for opportunities and the Be Inspired 2020 Event.



**CARE LEAVER COVENANT**

**SIGN UP TO... 'CONNECTS' AND WIN A PAIR OF JORDANS**  
or any trainer of your choice worth up to £250!

The deadline for the giveaway is  
12pm Tuesday 30th of June  
2020

Registering is QUICK and EASY.  
Simply click the link in our bio or head to : [mycovenant.org.uk/connects](https://mycovenant.org.uk/connects)

If you have any questions about Connects or need support signing up  
please email Martha at : [connects@mycovenant.org.uk](mailto:connects@mycovenant.org.uk)



**BE INSPIRED 2020**  
ONLINE

An inspiring virtual experience for care experienced young people across the UK

**27<sup>TH</sup> – 31<sup>ST</sup> JULY 2020**

WITH SPECIAL GUEST  
**MO GILLIGAN**

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[WWW.BEINSPIREDONLINE.ORG.UK](https://www.beinspiredonline.org.uk)

# THE INFLUENCERS NEWSLETTER SPECIAL

2<sup>nd</sup> Edition- Spring

## Coronavirus Facts

**COVID-19 is a new illness caused by a virus. This virus can affect your lungs and your airways.**

### What can i do to protect myself?

- ✓ Stay home
- ✓ Keep social distance 2 metres if you have to go outside for essential journeys
- ✓ Wash your hands regularly
- ✓ Try not to touch your face and mouth when outside
- ✓ Try to avoid close contact with people who are unwell



## Our Worries

- ✓ I fear for my family
- ✓ I feel UNCOMFORTABLE going outside
- ✓ I MISS my routine and my friends
- ✓ I worry about my future
- ✓ I feel anxious not knowing when the schools will re-open

Welcome to our special edition of the Influencers Newsletter from the Children in Care Council. We wanted to give you a few facts and tips around keeping safe and ideas to keep you busy during isolation time.

We know that you will be spending more time on line so we want you to keep safe. Social media can be fun and a great way of meeting different people and learning new things,



**THINK** before you post

**DO NOT** share personal details make sure your setting are private.

Watch out for them phishing (when someone tries to trick you into giving information like your passwords) and scams.

Never give out your password, even to your friend, this is your password.

Think about who you are talking to. There are lots of ways that people try to trick you into trusting them online.

Make sure you are keeping you device safe and secure, download regular updates, for apps, smart phones, tablets, alexa.



**Remember not everything online is true - Always go to a reliable source**

## Useful numbers to support you

- ✓ Childline: 0800 11 11
- ✓ [www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk) The MIX - Counselling [www.themix.org.uk](http://www.themix.org.uk)
- ✓ 0808 808 4994
- ✓ Time to talk: 0330 094 5645
- ✓ [www.ceop.police.uk/safety-centre](http://www.ceop.police.uk/safety-centre)
- ✓ [www.samaritans.org](http://www.samaritans.org) 116 113



# THE INFLUENCERS NEWSLETTER SPECIAL

3rd Edition

**WELCOME** to the 3rd Edition of our newsletter. We want to share with you some of the things we have been doing during lockdown and offer some tips on how to keep busy.

## **Our virtual interview with E&M, two young people from the Children In Care Council**

**How did you feel when you were told schools would be closing and you would be home schooled?**

Happy, but didn't think we would do homework at home.

**What are your biggest worries around the Coronavirus?**

Worrying, we don't go back to school as we both like it and miss our friends.

**How are you making contacts with family and friends?**

Calls, text and face time.

**How often are you listening to the news?**

Sorry every day because of my grandma.

**What advice would you give other young people around keeping themselves safe during lockdown?**

Wash hands if you go out, do school work in the morning, get rid of it, then chill in afternoon with family and friends

**E&M**

During lockdown we showed off our **CREATIVE** cooking skills showing our diversity, this kept us busy and during our virtual chats posted them as challenges. We made new friends virtually which has been good...



## **We would like to share our experience and concerns of lockdown**

'My experience during lockdowns a weird one, With this global emergency due to the Corona virus, I have been out of school and now work at home. When I came back from school one night in late March I was told that school was closed. At first it took me quite a while to register the fact that I am not at school. I don't see my friends or teachers but now I am getting used to these new things. Soon I will be going back to school, but not everything will be normal. In my classes everyone will be seated 2 metres apart from one another and there will probably be less people in my lessons. I do look forward to going back to school!'

**Mo**

'I am concerned about how we are going to get things back to normal, in my opinion this is going to affect me and others for a lifetime, just because everyone's always gonna be worried about catching it, even when it isn't around.'

**Jamie**

### **Important numbers**

- ✓ **CHILDLINE** 0800 11 11
- ✓ **SAMARITANS** 116 113
- ✓ **Counselling** [www.themix.org.uk](http://www.themix.org.uk)
- ✓ **0808 808 4994**

**QUIZ!**



We had Friday afternoon quiz with a prize which was fun.



**Walsall Council**