We have done a lot since the spring edition and there have been changes in the Children's Rights Office! As usual, every edition focuses on a topic and this time, we are talking about Adoption.

This topic is close to everyone we know at home, school and even in the celebrity world so we think we should know some facts about it.

Hellos and Goodbyes…

We have a new Programme Manager, Paul Maher. You will soon meet him but in the meantime this is what he looks like. Astrid Copeland is back in her role and looking forward to meeting you all but for those who do not know Astrid; this is what she looks like.

Gillian Green is an advocacy worker who works with children who are not in care. This means she works with children in need and those subject to a child protection order. (If you would like to know more about this please contact Gill and she will be happy to tell you all about it.)

A new programme manager, means we are losing Circle Steele.

Circle has worked in Rochdale for the past eight years and has decided to follow her adventures elsewhere. I am sure you will join us in thanking Circle for her great work and changes to Children’s Rights work.

Circle has had a wonderful time and the only things she will be losing are her footprints in Rochdale.

Circle says… “I feel passionate about championing the rights of the children and young people I work for. It has been a privilege and honour to work with you.”

Adoption

What it is? – Adoption means belonging to and growing up with a new family when you can’t live with the one you were born into. The people who adopt you become your legal parents and you live with them permanently. If there are other children in that family, they become your brothers and sisters.

Why it happens? – There are lots of reasons why children can’t live with their birth families. All families have their ups and downs. But some have real problems that they can’t sort out. Maybe your birth parents found it hard to look after you properly and keep you safe. Sometimes that means adoption might be the best option for you. Remember, though, that your opinions and feelings will always be taken into account.

How it happens? - Most children who are adopted have a social worker – that’s someone who tries to help children and their families when they have serious problems. Sometimes when the problems are too big and there are worries that the child may not be safe with their birth family the child may need to go and live with foster carers. Whilst children are with foster carers the social worker will try to help the birth parents improve the way they look after children. Sometimes this works and the children may return home. Other times this does not work and the children cannot return home. If this happens the social worker may go to court and ask for a decision to be made about the child’s future.

There are lots of people who help the social worker make the final decision about whether a child should be placed for adoption i.e. a Guardian ad Litem, foster carers, the birth parents and others.

What happens next –

1. Your social worker and Guardian ad litem* will listen to your views and feelings about being adopted.
2. They then write a report with everyone’s views included.
3. The judge grants a Placement Order which gives permission for your social worker to search for and place you with new adoptive parent/s.
4. You meet the adoptive family to get to know them.
5. You then move to live with your new adoptive family.
6. Your social worker still visits you to make sure you are happy with your new family. It can take a little while for you to settle down properly.

* A Guardian ad litem is appointed to represent the interests of a child when their wishes differ from those of either parent.
7. Once the social worker is sure that you are happy and settled then your adoptive parents ask for an adoption hearing in court.

8. You and your new family all go to court to see the judge. If the judge agrees that you should stay with your new family for ever they will make an Adoption Order. This means that your adoptive parents become yours by law and they will be your family for the rest of your life.

What age can children be adopted? - Children can be adopted up to the age of 18, however most children are adopted when they are younger.

Other things you need to know.

Life story book - All children placed for adoption today should have a life story book which tells the story of their life before they went to live with their adoptive family. It is for younger children and includes siblings, other relatives and friends. Older children may not have one, but their adoptive parents can request one for them.

Later life letter - All children placed for adoption today should have a later life letter. This tells the story of why they were for adoption but is written more for an adolescent. Again some older children may not have one, but their adoptive parents can request one for them.

Contact

Letterbox contact - This is where the adoptive parents write to members of the child’s birth family. The birth family may write back, but sometimes they don’t.

Direct contact - A few adopted children see members of their birth family, including birth parents, aunts, uncles, or grandparents. This only happens if it is in the child’s best interest. There are not many adopted children who still see members of their birth family.

Some adopted children still see brothers and sister who may live with foster carers or with other adopters. Again this happens if it is in the child’s best interest. This happens more often than contact with brothers and sister who are still living with members of the birth family.

Post Adoption Support - Each local authority has workers who offer support to anyone affected by adoption whether this be the child themselves, members of the birth family or of the adoptive family.

Access to adoption records - Once a child reaches 18 they can contact the local authority where they live and request access to their adoption records. If this local authority is different than the one which placed the child for adoption it will request the records from the correct local authority.

In Rochdale the Post Adoption Workers can be contacted on 01706 922 300. When contacting them for the first time you need to ask to speak to a duty worker in the adoption team.

Some famous people that were adopted as children include: the late Steve Jobs of Apple and iphones, Nelson Mandela, former president of South Africa, Pierce Brosnan, from the Bond films. NOW we are waiting to add your name to the list of famous people.

Listen Up!
Children in Care Council, CiCC

What have we done...

• Corporate Parent meetings
What does ‘Corporate Parent’ mean?
When you are in care the local authority acts in place of your parents. They care for you and do all of the things for you that your parents normally would. However, it is not one person who is responsible for this, but the whole of the local authority.

Some of us attended the Corporate Parents meetings on 7th May and 13th June. Corporate Parents is made up of heads of social care, members from Listen Up group and councillors for Rochdale Council.

We represented your views on various issues raised by the group.

We are recruiting members to represent all young people at the meetings. So if you would like to take part see page 7.

• Meeting with OFSTED

OFSTED carry out inspections and sometimes, they get young people to give feedback about the services they receive. This is a positive way to make changes and to learn how policies are made and how we can improve things for ourselves.

• The Art Work... going to Cheltenham

Thank you to everyone who supported us with the launch day.

In February we hosted an open evening at Rochdale’s Touchstone’s Museum! The event was a great success and was attended by young people, their carers, social workers, heads of social care and corporate parents.

The art work (left) can now be seen at the main Library in Rochdale.

The artwork is a communication tool from young people about the way they are looked after and how they would like to work with service providers to make things better. It’s also to be exhibited at the Greenbelt Festival in August. If you are attending, you can be proud to see this beautiful creation by Rochdale’s young people.
**Children’s Champion**

The Listen Up group is recruiting members to represent the group and all children in care at the Corporate Parent meeting board.

- Are you passionate about being listened to? Do you care about all children in care?
- Have you ever wanted to make change for yourself or someone else?

**What we expect from you!**

- You will be expected to consult with the Listen Up group and other young people in care to ensure you are voicing their wishes, feelings and worries!
- Minimum of one year commitment

**What is in it for you?**

- You will receive accredited training
- Write articles in the Listen Up newsletter
- meet the corporate parents face to face

If you have what it takes to represent people, speak out and feed back to people and you would like to make a difference for young people, please fill the slip and send back to us. You can contact us directly on the details at the back of this Newsletter.

Please post back any or all of these forms to the address on the back page.

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**Interview Panel**

There are plenty of opportunities coming up within Social Care for young people to take part in interviewing social workers, Independent Reviewing Officers and directors for the service.

- Are you passionate about the work social care does?
- Do you want young people to receive the best care and service?

You will receive training, set questions for the interview and even ask the questions. You will get to meet different people and learn lots of skills.

**If you are interested please let us know. Post back by Friday, August 30 2013**

My name is ........................................
My address ..................................................
My contact number is ...................................

I would like the name ‘children in care’ to be changed to .................................................................

Don’t worry if you do not have a name, the group came up with these suggestions to get you thinking. If you like any of them, please vote Now!!

C4C (CARE FOR CHILDREN)

Children in Authority

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**Competition time**

**What’s in a name?**

The Listen Up group has been tasked with changing the name – ‘children in care’ to a name that you would like it to be. The group feel that being called ‘children in care’ is a form of stereotyping and they would like to change this!

_The group as always are giving a fantastic prize to the best name given. So get thinking..._

**Post back by Friday, August 30 2013**

Please complete this form:

- My name is ........................................
- My address is ..................................................
- My contact number is ...................................
- I would like the name ‘children in care’ to be changed to .................................................................

Don’t worry if you do not have a name, the group came up with these suggestions to get you thinking. If you like any of them, please vote Now!!

C4C (CARE FOR CHILDREN)

Children in Authority
We would like to thank the Listen Up group for all the endless hard work, determination and great influences and changes they bring to children’s lives.

Thank you to the carers, guardians and social workers who have ensured that young people attend the meetings.

If you would like to join the Listen Up group, please contact us at the address below.

We are here to help you
Do you feel you need help to be listened to?

• We can offer information and advocacy about your rights.
• Helping you to tell about the things that matter most to you.
• Do you need someone to just be there for you, to listen and do fun things? Then we can help you get an independent visitor.

Rochdale Children’s Rights Service

94-96 Hill Top Drive, Kirkholt,
Rochdale OL11 2RL
Tel: 01706 345 600
Freephone: 0800 072 6383
Fax: 01706 343 490
Email rcrs@childrenssociety.org.uk