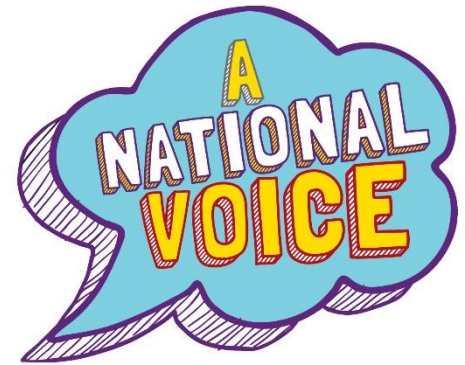


Spotlight
on practice



Rights & Voice

Southampton City Council

Commitments to children in care

July 2023

Southampton Voices Unite (children in care council) works on lots of projects including 'welcome' letters to children who are just coming into care.

Why? The ANV AMPLIFY awards aim to champion and recognise the work of children in care councils and care leaver forums. They were held in October 2022 ([Amplify - Coram Voice](#)) – Southampton Voices unite were nominated for the ‘Voice award’.

What did they do?

The Children in care council in Southampton is called Southampton Voices Unite – it’s all about sharing views & opinions & making sure these are heard by senior leaders as well as having fun. The group have negotiated & agreed six corporate parenting commitments – which all managers have signed up to.

1. Be there for me whatever mood I am in
2. Help me to understand why I am in care
3. Help me be safe & understand safe relationships
4. Help me succeed at school
5. Help me understand about a healthy life
6. Help me understand my rights & put these into practice

The work was praised by the young people judges:
“The commitments are a really good idea...The photos of all the activities and involvement amongst the young people and professionals is really positive.”

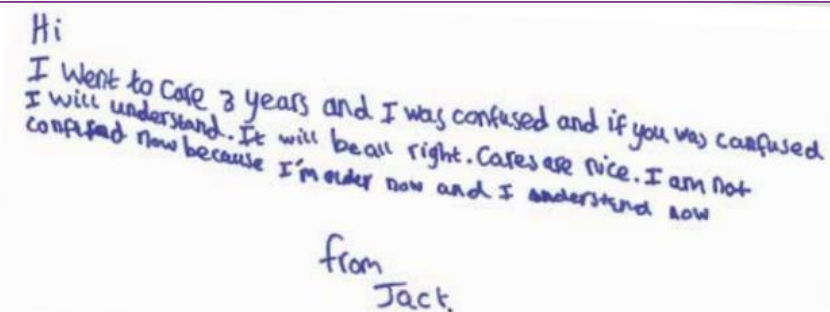
What difference is it making?

Children who take part in the group enjoy the chance to:

- Make new friends
- Do fun activities / go on trips
- Represent the views of young people
- Gain new skills & build confidence.

All managers have signed up to the commitments – they were launched during ‘Love our children week’.

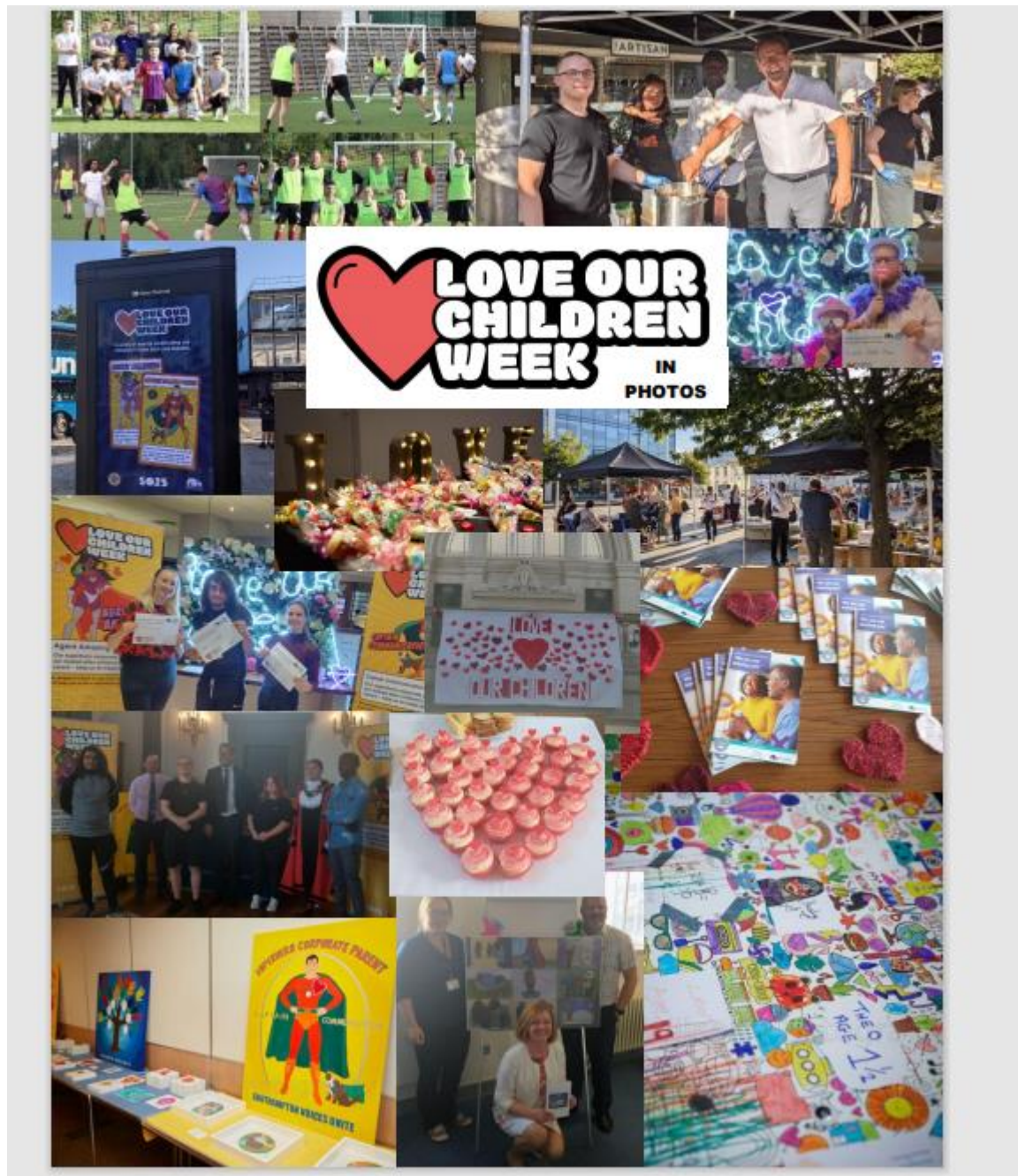
Another project the group worked on was to create shoe boxes which included letters and gifts to give to children coming into care to tell them about the opportunities it can bring and help them feel less scared of the unknown. The letters are included in the children in care guides: [Southampton Voices Unite](#)



Hi
I went to care 3 years and I was confused and if you was confused I will understand. It will be all right. Cares are nice. I am not confused now because I'm older now and I understand now
from
Jack.

Here is the
Southampton
entry to the
ANV awards

**SOUTHAMPTON
VOICES
UNITE**



Here is the Southampton entry to the ANV awards



SOUTHAMPTON'S COMMITMENTS TO CHILDREN LIVING IN CARE



At the beginning of the year Southampton Voices Unite worked hard to negotiate commitments with Southampton Local Authority as to what they would like to see from them as Corporate Parents. 6 commitments were agreed and launched in Love Our Children week in September 2021. All Heads of Service and Service Managers signed up to the commitments. Let us know if Southampton Local Authority are achieving their commitments to you! You might also like to discuss the commitments with your IRO at each of your Reviews as to whether you feel these commitments are being fulfilled for you.



The Commitments are:

1. Be there for me whatever mood I am in.

Understanding that I will have good and bad days, but what's important to me is that I always know you will be there for me, when I need you and be understanding of me when I don't want you there.

2. Help me to understand why I am in Care

As I get older and when the time is right, it is important you help me understand why I am in care, where my family are, and how I can contact them if it is safe enough and in my best interest to do so. It is important for us to have a family tree, a life storybook with photos and text which will help us to talk when processing our past.

3. Help to keep me safe and to understand what safe relationships look and feel like.

I will make mistakes and take risks as all children and young people do. But I need you to help me make better choices and keep me as safe as possible from harm and neglect. We need you to build a bond with us so that we feel safe to talk about our feelings. I need you to build a bond with me and for you to be honest about the secrets you can't keep, like secrets which will cause me or others harm, but tell me clearly what you will do with my secret and who you will share it with.

4. Help me succeed at school

My education is important to me being a successful adult. As I get older I need your help to identify my future life and career goals, and how my education plans will help meet them. I need you to help me understand the plans for me, and that those plans will always reach as high as possible for my future. I need to know that you will always have my back through my education. It is important that the fact that I am Looked after is kept confidential from my school friends, unless I wish to share this.

5. Help me to understand why leading a healthy Life is important to me.

Keeping as healthy and fit as possible is important to me. To help me I need to have regular health and dental check-ups and personal health care, a varied and balanced diet, and regular activities. I also need people talk to me about my health needs as clearly as possible according to my age and understanding, to allow me to make informed decisions about my healthcare as I get older.

6. Help me to understand and put into practice my Rights and Responsibilities

I need to know what my rights and responsibilities are to make my own choices, as I grow older. Even when we do not agree with each other, I still want my views to be heard. This means providing the right people, including the offer of an advocate to each child and young person, who can support me to say what my views are and that you do not get offended with me when you do not agree with me.