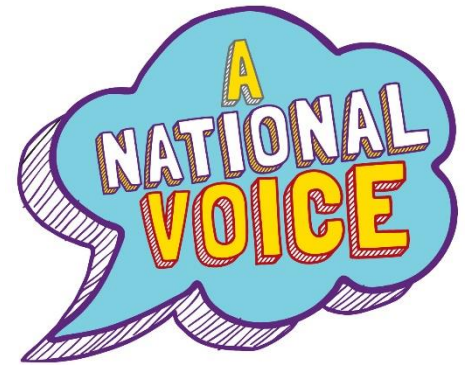


Spotlight
on practice

Rights & Voice



Essex County Council –
Proud to be Me CICC

Exploring identity

July 2023

Proud to be Me is a Children in Care Council for ages 12+ that brings children in care from ethnically diverse backgrounds together to explore identity, have fun and explore different cuisine and culture. Established in response to Black Lives Matters, the group meets to cook and chat and share ideas on how to improve support & services.

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](#)) – Essex children in care council were nominated for the 'Community award'. [ANV Awards Nomination - Proud to Be Me - YouTube](#)

What did they do?

The 'Proud to be Me' group was established in response to the global movement Black Lives Matter movement as well as in response to local issues raised by the children in care council around ethnically diverse children not being supported with their hair and skincare.

The group is for young people to support each other – they look at identity, racism, cultural differences & meet with different professionals such as the lead for anti-racist practice. They have supported the development of a 'thinking tool for professionals' on

Race, Ethnicity, Religious Beliefs & Culture [[available on case study web page](#)]

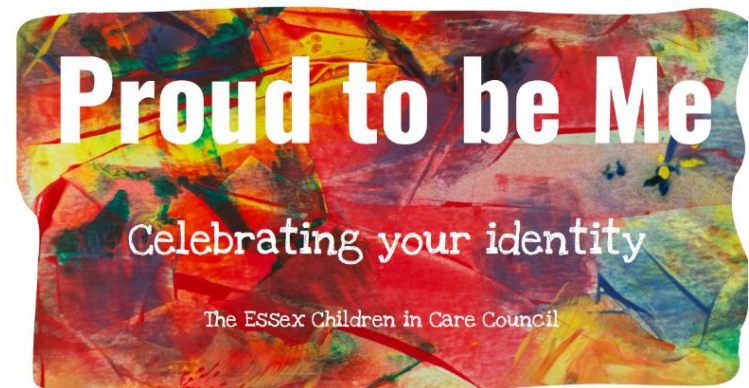
The group also especially enjoys cooking & dancing together.

The work was praised by the young people judges: *"we hope that this inspires more work like this!...it is so important to explore cultural differences and it's great that this group enables a space to embrace this".*

What difference is it making?

The 'Proud to be Me' group worked together to explore culture and identity, and developed "Please Do, Please Don't" guidelines; these are included in the Essex Corporate parenting strategy. [Essex County Council, Our Co-Parenting Strategy 2022 to 2027](#) & messages from the group shared with decision-makers.

Those attending the group report a sense of community and feel it's made a difference to them; *"It's important to not feel like the odd one out and to see and spend time with others like us".*



Our Priorities



A 'Proud to be Me' sub-group of the CiCC came together in 2021 to explore culture and identity, including developing their "Please Do, Please Don't" guidelines.



Please do...

- Make sure I understand my history and why decisions are made
- Embrace every child's culture and help them know their future
- Make sure I understand the culture of my birth family
- Look after our well-being, our hair, our skin. Think about food and cookbooks. Use these things to 'welcome' us.
- Support us to tell our 'story' about being in care and why we're in care
- Look forwards, not backwards
- Create a charter for children and young people who identify as black, Asian or from a minority ethnic group



Please don't...

- Think we are all the same
- Make assumptions about my religion, ethnicity, skin colour and culture
- Treat me differently to others in my school
- Get my name wrong
- Compare us to foster carers' own children
- Force us to change
- Make me feel like I'm not good enough

This ethnically and culturally diverse group of children in care continues to meet regularly and explore important issues exploring difficult subject such as racism and bullying in schools, the challenges of living with white carers and the difficulties of building a cultural identity when not living with their family. This learning is regularly shared with decision makers.

