



**Somerset
Council**

**Somerset
Care Councils**



Winter 2024

SiCC & SLCC Newsletter

Somerset in Care Council & Somerset Leaving Care Council



www.somersetincarecouncils.org.uk



Who are SiCC and SLCC?

SiCC & SLCC stands for the Somerset In Care Council and the Somerset Leaving Care Council. We ensure that the voices of children looked after and care leavers are included within the planning and reviewing of services.

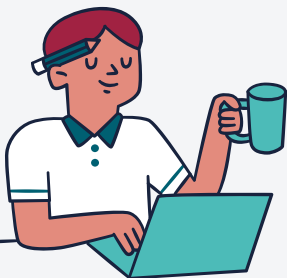
Who are the SiCC and SLCC Creatives?

The SiCC and SLCC Creatives are a group of young people who use art, poetry, and music to have their voice heard. The crew express their lived experiences, their needs and the things that they'd like to change through creative means.



Who are the SiCC and SLCC Films Crew?

The SiCC and SLCC Films crew help to develop films and animations to share their views, help other young people who may be going through - or are about to go through - similar experiences to them and to help shape services for other young people. The crew are directly involved with the creating, designing, writing, voicing and production of every SiCC and SLCC Films animation and film.



If you would like to join SiCC and SLCC, if you have an idea for an article or have some artwork that you'd like to include in the next issue of the newsletter email somersetincarecouncils@somerset.gov.uk or contact Damien via WhatsApp on **07585 983 356**

Dates for the Diary!!

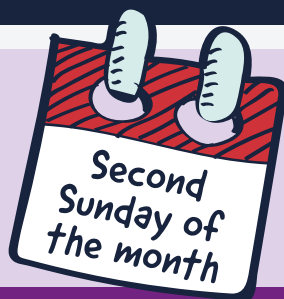
SiCC and SLCC Core Group meetings

We meet the **second Sunday** of each month at the **Rollercoaster in Bridgwater**.

Meetings are from **11am - 3.30pm** and we provide lunch.

The next core group meeting dates are:

- **Sunday 10th March**
- **Sunday 14th April**
- **Sunday 12th May**



"Being a new member has opened me up to new opportunities which I didn't know existed and how welcomed the group made me feel and how supportive they were about my contributions."

Homes & Horizons A National Voice Awards



Homes and Horizons

SiCC and SLCC have won an award from a leading advocacy group for their work on homes for children.

SiCC and SLCC were presented with an award from A National Voice – a leading advocacy group for care leavers and children in care. Winning the ‘Collaboration’ category, the award recognised the efforts of young people on the Homes and Horizons project, a partnership between Somerset Council, Shaw Trust, and Somerset NHS Foundation Trust to develop 10 homes for children, two therapeutic schools and a therapeutic fostering service.



Young people from both SiCC and SLCC have been actively involved on the Homes and Horizons project from the start, helping the Council decide to partner with Shaw Trust. The young people visited children’s homes across the UK to see how they were run, interviewing staff and residents to find out what worked well. They also represented young people in decision-making groups, and spoke to neighbours about the project. They even selected furniture and décor and chose the name of this award-winning initiative – Homes and Horizons.

As a result, Somerset’s children have homes for children designed with people who have direct experience of the care system, which led to the Homes and Horizons project winning an MJ award for partnership and innovation.

Councillor Tessa Munt, Previous Executive Lead Member for Children, Families & Education at Somerset Council said:

What an amazing achievement for our young people! It's a credit to them that they have shaped the Homes and Horizons project with their knowledge and experience to ensure the homes work well for all young people who will live there now and in the future.

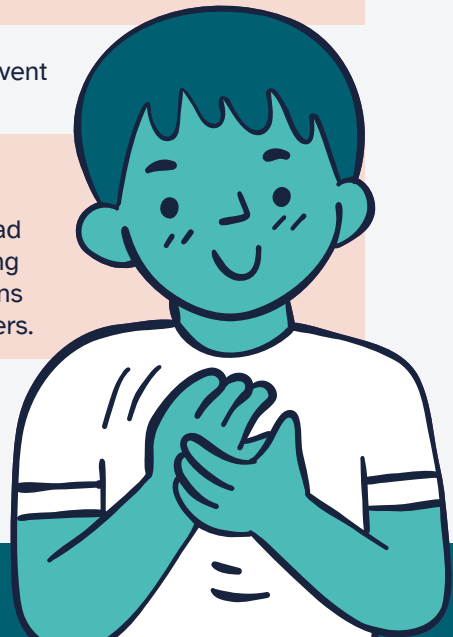
It's been a privilege to work with these young people, who have formed closer bonds with each other, especially after travelling all around the UK. They have gained skills and the confidence to use them through this work. They've learned to present and negotiate, and been involved in commissioning and procurement for this award-winning project. The next stage of this partnership will see young people trained to be young inspectors to assist in checking the quality and standards in our homes. Well done them!

Chris Luck, Chief Executive of Shaw Trust said:

At the heart of everything we do at Shaw Trust is the voice of the people we support. Too often services and systems are designed to deliver what those creating the services believe is required. But what most people need is to be heard and understood, they are the experts. Only by listening to them and understanding their thoughts, needs, wants, aspirations can we design and deliver services that properly support and empower people to progress.

Members of SiCC and SLCC who attended the event said:

Wow! What a day! Meeting inspirational and hard-working members of fellow care councils from up and down the country. Honestly, we had the most amazing day, it was really eye opening to not only be able to share our voices, opinions and experiences but also to hear those of others.



SiCC & SLCC Quality Checkers

SiCC & SLCC QUALITY CHECKERS

Would you like to train as a young inspector?

We are delivering training in March for any one who would like to help inspect the homes for children in the Homes & Horizons service.

The SiCC and SLCC Quality Checkers visit residential homes across Somerset, helping to make sure that young people in care have the best accommodation that they can have.

Young people who participate have the opportunity to learn new skills, gain more awareness and build both social and employability skills.

You get **£50 in Love2Shop vouchers** for your time visiting a home.

If you are interested in becoming a young inspector, talk to your leaving care or social worker, drop us an email at somersetincarecouncils@somerset.gov.uk or contact Damien via WhatsApp on **07585 983 356**



Rent Guarantor Scheme

Members of SiCC & SLCC were pleased to learn about the new scheme backed by Somerset Council to give young people in care a chance to become more independent.

Childrens Commissioning came to talk to us about the process and if it was clear and accessible for care leavers needing a guarantor to be able to take up a private tenancy. Overall we enjoyed a very interesting and positive session.

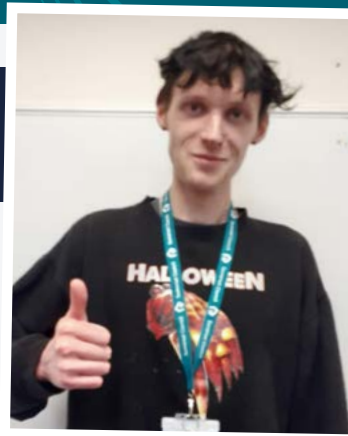


Leaving Care Content Creator Apprentice

By Matt Dodd

My name is Matt, and I'm a Leaving Care Content Creator Apprentice. My main role as a Content Creator is to work on the social media, I make posts for our Instagram and Facebook accounts.

My goal now is to make as many Care Leavers aware of all they are entitled to while being in the care system such as making content that shows what they may not know otherwise, for example PureGym is currently giving a 50% discount to care leavers but didn't promote it at all, so with these sorts of things I feel they should be advertised as much as possible because I would want to know them too. I've also helped plan events with the council, for example we did an art exhibition in Taunton library where around 30 care leavers let us show off their art and talents to the public on Christmas 2022 and had another event this Christmas where we held a winter warmer.



My other main duty as a Leaving Care Worker is, to update and improve our website with information about the leaving care workers you could be working with in the team as a care leaver, everything you need to know about your entitlements, and I update the front page with information about what plans we have for events or even just what the apprentices are up to. I also update it with upcoming events and offers that should be taken advantage of by as many people as possible!

At the moment I've been working with the Engagement and Participation team and SiCC & SLCC, they have been teaching me different art styles I can use to create more engaging content. firstly, I learned stencil cutting/spray painting and I'm working towards being able to animate and learn as many different styles as possible to make my content as good as it can be. They have helped me a ton in a short amount of time and really helped me pursue my passion of content creation, I feel a lot more adept with social media and I can't wait to see what comes next with the team.

Naming of the new 16+ Accommodation Service

SiCC & SLCC have supported the Childrens Commissioning team throughout the re-tendering of the new service.

In order to launch the new service in March Commissioners came to the core meeting to ask for our help to find a name for the new project. We discussed all the things that the service will provide for young people and after coming up with lots of ideas of what the service should be called we voted on our top 3. We will support commissioners at the launch and look forward to hearing the final name.

Congratulations Kieran

Congratulations to Kieran Warren, care leaver and member of SiCC & SLCC who was successful in his bid to become a member of the Department for Education children's social care advisory board.

This is a national board and Kieran will be attending several meetings in London to discuss government policies relating to young people in care.



SDAS – Somerset Alcohol & Drug Service

Members of SiCC & SLCC advised SDAS from a service user perspective on the processes they use to support referrals to the service.

We discussed terminology, timescales, accessibility and keeping it in a non-judgemental person centred approach.

Members felt that we learnt about the service and enjoyed an interactive session. SDAS thanked us for our time with doughnuts and gift vouchers.



Getting to Know Jo Manning

Jo Manning is the new Head of Service for the Children Looked After (CLA), Leaving Care, Permanence and Children with Disabilities. She kindly took some time to answer some question about herself, her role and the impact of the financial crisis.

Can you tell us something about yourself?

Hi. I've been a social worker since 1989. Firstly in Wolverhampton and then in 1997 I moved to work in Somerset. I have mainly worked for Somerset since then. I've had roles working with children and their families at home, working with children in our care and care experienced, as an Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) and in fostering and residential for Somerset. Outside of work I like to swim and sing in a choir.

What are your top 3 priorities within your new role as Head of Service?

One of the areas of work I will be prioritising is improving the range of more local support for families where a child has a disability

We also need to continue to try to support children in foster homes and their foster carers to work out in advance where the stresses might be and support to stop children having to move where they live and who they live with due to relationship break down.

Also improve the accommodation and support available to young people, so they can be well supported to live independently, close to work and college.



How do you see the financial emergency affecting services for young people in care?

We are working really hard to limit the direct impact on young people in care who have left care. So we are looking at making the savings we need to through doing things in a different way when we can. Social workers and Personal Advisors (PAs) for children and young people are being asked to think about whether things could be done differently and cheaper, an example of this might be whether a young person is ready/able to take the bus to school rather than a taxi. Social workers now need to request spend in a different way which takes more time, however if its an emergency situation there should be no delay.

Young people in care and care leavers may also be impacted by any cuts across the wider council as a Somerset resident.

If children and young people have any thoughts about how we could do things differently or more cost effectively please let us know.

I am happy to meet regularly, or update regularly about services and any impact they may have for our children and young people.

What do you see as the impact on care leavers receiving support especially post 21 support within the current time?

We are still here to support care leavers until they are 25 if and whenever they need support. I don't see this being any different as a result of the financial crisis, although PAs will continue to be asked to justify anything they want to spend.





Somerset
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SiCC & SLCC
CREATIVES

GET CREATIVE

for Leaving Care Homes

Would you like to design art for your where you live?

What will we be making?

We will be creating graffiti wall art, Vinyl LP clocks, collages, furniture decoration and creating poetry.

Where will we be working?

These sessions will be taking place in **March** at:

Burtons Orchard (Taunton)

To sign-up contact us on **WhatsApp** at

07585 983 356

complete our online form

www.tinyurl.com/SiCCnSLCCGetCreative

or scan the QR code below



To find out more, please email the team
somersetincarecouncils@somerset.gov.uk
Phone 07585 983 356

MAKE SURE YOU'VE HAD YOUR SAY.

MAKE YOUR MARK VOTE
OPEN 29 JANUARY - 8 MARCH

Take part by visiting
<http://tinyurl.com/SMYM2024>

or scan the QR code



Make
Your Mark



Somerset

YOUTH
PARLIAMENT

& advisory group



Funded by
UK Government

British Youth Council
byc

ARE YOU CARE EXPERIENCED, AGED 18-25?



HELP MAKE A DIFFERENCE

A team from Plymouth University want to find out how best to support oral health for care experienced young people.

HAVE YOUR SAY

Tell us your experience of looking after your teeth and going to the dentist.

You'll receive a **£15 Love2Shop** voucher - to thank you for taking part!

Find out more at:

<https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/research/plymouth-sunny-smiles-project/care-experienced-young-people>



Or scan our QR code!



Share your views and experiences with one of our researchers, on-line or by phone.

Contact Jo Erwin at:
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07973902024