

Thurrock: A place of opportunity, enterprise and excellence, where individuals, communities and businesses flourish

## Corporate Parenting Committee

The meeting will be held at **7.00 pm** on **9 March 2017**

**Committee Room 1, Civic Offices, New Road, Grays, Essex, RM17 6SL.**

### Membership:

Councillors Bukky Okunade (Chair), Leslie Gamester (Vice-Chair), Chris Baker, Jan Baker, Martin Kerin, Sue MacPherson and Joycelyn Redsell

Natalie Carter, Thurrock Open Door Representative  
Christina Day, Children in Care Council  
Jackie Howell, Chair, The One Team, Foster Carer Association  
Sharon Smith, Vice Chair, The One Team, Foster Carer Association

### Substitutes:

Councillors Tom Kelly, Ben Maney, Aaron Watkins and Kevin Wheeler

### Agenda

Open to Public and Press

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To approve as a correct record the minutes of the Corporate Parenting Committee meeting held on 10 January 2017.	
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To receive additional items that the Chair is of the opinion should be considered as a matter of urgency, in accordance with Section 100B (4) (b) of the Local Government Act 1972.	
<b>4 Declaration of Interests</b>	

<b>5</b>	<b>Presentation on the Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health Service</b>	
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**Queries regarding this Agenda or notification of apologies:**

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Agenda published on: **1 March 2017**

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# DECLARING INTERESTS FLOWCHART – QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

Breaching those parts identified as a pecuniary interest is potentially a criminal offence

## Helpful Reminders for Members

- *Is your register of interests up to date?*
- *In particular have you declared to the Monitoring Officer all disclosable pecuniary interests?*
- *Have you checked the register to ensure that they have been recorded correctly?*

## When should you declare an interest *at a meeting*?

- **What matters are being discussed at the meeting?** (including Council, Cabinet, Committees, Subs, Joint Committees and Joint Subs); or
- If you are a Cabinet Member making decisions other than in Cabinet **what matter is before you for single member decision?**



Does the business to be transacted at the meeting

- relate to; or
- likely to affect

any of your registered interests and in particular any of your Disclosable Pecuniary Interests?

Disclosable Pecuniary Interests shall include your interests or those of:

- your spouse or civil partner's
- a person you are living with as husband/ wife
- a person you are living with as if you were civil partners

where you are aware that this other person has the interest.

A detailed description of a disclosable pecuniary interest is included in the Members Code of Conduct at Chapter 7 of the Constitution. **Please seek advice from the Monitoring Officer about disclosable pecuniary interests.**

**What is a Non-Pecuniary interest?** – this is an interest which is not pecuniary (as defined) but is nonetheless so significant that a member of the public with knowledge of the relevant facts, would reasonably regard to be so significant that it would materially impact upon your judgement of the public interest.

### Pecuniary

If the interest is not already in the register you must (unless the interest has been agreed by the Monitoring Officer to be sensitive) disclose the existence and nature of the interest to the meeting

If the Interest is not entered in the register and is not the subject of a pending notification you must within 28 days notify the Monitoring Officer of the interest for inclusion in the register

Unless you have received dispensation upon previous application from the Monitoring Officer, you must:

- Not participate or participate further in any discussion of the matter at a meeting;
- Not participate in any vote or further vote taken at the meeting; and
- leave the room while the item is being considered/voted upon

If you are a Cabinet Member you may make arrangements for the matter to be dealt with by a third person but take no further steps

### Non- pecuniary

Declare the nature and extent of your interest including enough detail to allow a member of the public to understand its nature



You may participate and vote in the usual way but you should seek advice on Predetermination and Bias from the Monitoring Officer.

**Vision: Thurrock:** A place of **opportunity**, **enterprise** and **excellence**, where **individuals**, **communities** and **businesses** flourish.

To achieve our vision, we have identified five strategic priorities:

**1. Create** a great place for learning and opportunity

- Ensure that every place of learning is rated “Good” or better
- Raise levels of aspiration and attainment so that residents can take advantage of local job opportunities
- Support families to give children the best possible start in life

**2. Encourage** and promote job creation and economic prosperity

- Promote Thurrock and encourage inward investment to enable and sustain growth
- Support business and develop the local skilled workforce they require
- Work with partners to secure improved infrastructure and built environment

**3. Build** pride, responsibility and respect

- Create welcoming, safe, and resilient communities which value fairness
- Work in partnership with communities to help them take responsibility for shaping their quality of life
- Empower residents through choice and independence to improve their health and well-being

**4. Improve** health and well-being

- Ensure people stay healthy longer, adding years to life and life to years
- Reduce inequalities in health and well-being and safeguard the most vulnerable people with timely intervention and care accessed closer to home
- Enhance quality of life through improved housing, employment and opportunity

**5. Promote** and protect our clean and green environment

- Enhance access to Thurrock's river frontage, cultural assets and leisure opportunities
- Promote Thurrock's natural environment and biodiversity
- Inspire high quality design and standards in our buildings and public space

## Minutes of the Meeting of the Corporate Parenting Committee held on 10 January 2017 at 7.00 pm

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- Present:** Councillors Bukky Okunade (Chair), Leslie Gamester (Vice-Chair), Chris Baker, Jan Baker, Martin Kerin (arrived 7.05), Joycelyn Redsell and Aaron Watkins (substitute for Sue MacPherson)
- Jackie Howell, Chair, The One Team, Foster Carer Association  
Sharon Smith, Vice Chair, The One Team, Foster Carer Association
- Apologies:** Councillor Sue MacPherson  
Natalie Carter, Open Door  
Christina Day, Children in Care Council
- In attendance:** Paula Gregory, Designated Nurse  
Rory Patterson, Corporate Director of Children's Services  
Andrew Carter, Head of Children's Social Care  
Alan Cotgrove, Business Manager, Local Safeguarding Children's Board  
Roger Edwardson, Interim Strategic Leader School Improvement, Learning and Skills  
Angela Grant, Independent Reviewing Officer  
Neale Laurie, Safeguarding and Child Protection Coordinator & LADO  
Paula McCullough, Commissioning Officer, Children's Services  
Jenny Shade, Senior Democratic Services Officer
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Before the start of the Meeting, all present were advised that the meeting may be filmed and was being recorded, with the audio recording to be made available on the Council's website.

### **18. Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on the 4 October 2016 were approved as a correct record.

### **19. Items of Urgent Business**

There were no items of urgent business.

### **20. Declaration of Interests**

There were no declarations of interest.

### **21. Information on Recent External Placements for Young People**

The Officer presented the report that updated Members on the range of issues regarding the placement choices made for Children Looked After for the period 10 June and 30 November 2016.

The Officer referred members to comparison data within the report which included:

- The increase in the number of the Children Looked After within this period. The Officer stated that the number of Children Looked After since the report had been published had been reduced from 350 to 327.
- The decrease in the number of unaccompanied asylum seekers. The Officer stated that the decrease in the number of unaccompanied asylum seekers was due to the closure of the asylum camp in France and with the introduction of the Eastern Region Transfer Protocol .
- The comparative rate for Thurrock was 62.6 compared to the national rate of 60.0. The Officer stated that this figure did not include the number of unaccompanied asylum seeking children.
- The increase in the number of children under the age of one in this period.
- The increase in the number of children between the age 12-15 and 16+.
- The reduction of placements into residential care.
- The approval of six new in-house foster carers with further assessments in place.

The Officer stated that work continued on the recruitment of foster carers and that work with iMPower was ongoing dealing with the challenges of Children Looked After that had been placed outside the borough.

Councillor Redsell asked Officers for clarification on the increase of children under the age of one. The Officer stated the number had increased due to the drive to swiftly place children permanently and accounted for those babies up for adoption.

Councillor Redsell stated that the 49 Councillors should be used to promote the recruitment of foster carers with leaflets being tabled at Full Council. The Officer agreed and had been working with the communications team on how best to use Councillors and employees to increase the number of potential foster carers.

The Chair asked Officers had the six new in house foster carers been an improved figure compared to last year. The Officer stated that overall this was not the case but the direction of travel was right and that foster carers were being used more effectively.

The Chair asked for the opinion of a foster carer on the changes that have been made. Jackie Howell stated that there were no longer levels of foster carers and that all carers were expected to take in emergency placements. Jackie Howell had concerns though that these emergency placements had to be in the interest and safety of children that were already in situ. She had an



understanding of the expectations of foster carers and had received good support. The Officer agreed with the comments made and that dialogue with foster carers would continue to ensure that the right matches were made and that the support continued.

## **RESOLVED**

**That the members of the committee note the efforts made by officers to choose appropriate resources for Children Looked After, including our more difficult to place children and unaccompanied asylum seeking children.**

### **22. Thurrock Local Children's Safeguarding Board (LSCB), Serious Case Review (SCR) Report - James**

The Officer presented the report that included a summary which was provided to the Local Children's Safeguarding Board. The Officer stated under regulation 5 of the Local Safeguarding Children's Board Regulations 2006 set out the requirements for Local Safeguarding Children's Board to undertake this serious case review and to learn from the findings. The report was published on the Thurrock web site from the 1 December 2016 and will remain on there for 18 months. The same report will be published on the NSPCC national website.

All members agreed that the findings of this report were tragic and heart rendering to read.

The Officer stated there were six findings and 16 recommendations in the report that will be drawn up as an action plan and be will reviewed and presented to the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee in February 2017.

Councillor Redsell stated that practitioners, social care and education had to work together and learn from the mistakes made. The Officer stated that schools already formed part of the Local Safeguarding Children's Board and would be involved in all the proposals.

Councillor Kerin asked Officers whilst James was in school what may have been picked up to have encouraged him to stay in education. The Officer confirmed that James had a real focus in music but James had been reluctant to engage on any courses. James had received continued support and social workers had made every effort to help him gain employment or further education.

The Officer stated that work continued with the Youth Offending Service to identify the long term consequences of gang life.

Councillor Watkins asked that based on the circumstances could James been picked up earlier as a Child Looked After. The Officer stated that there had

been no issues with the family and that engagement with them had continued throughout.

Councillor C Baker stated that pressures from gangs may have contributed to his death. The Officer stated that the review had been recorded as an open verdict so unfortunately this may never be known but work with the Youth Offending Service continued on educating young people on exit routes from gangs.

The Officer stated that James had not appeared on the Intelligence and Gang Matrix and that intelligence sharing was vital across boundaries to keep track of gang memberships.

Councillor Redsell stated that the Police and Crime Panel were looking at how gang activities could be addressed and disrupted before they took hold.

The Chair asked Officers how recommendations worked for those allocated to other local authorities. The Officer stated that the counterparts in these local authorities would work on behalf of Thurrock Council to ensure that action was carried out and reported back to Thurrock so that the action plan could be updated.

Councillor Gamester asked what the timescales were for following up with these actions. The Officer stated that the board was proactive and that the review of the serious case review group met every six months. Updates from agencies were received within the appropriate timescales.

*Alan Cotgrove left the committee room at 7.45 pm.*

## **RESOLVED**

- 1. That the Corporate Parenting Committee scrutinised the report of the Local Children's Safeguarding Board, its findings and its recommendation.**
- 2. That the Corporate Parenting Committee track progress by Children's Services in responding to the recommendations of the review.**

### **23. Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health Service**

The Officer presented the report that provided Members with an update on progress made with the development and performance of this new service with a specific focus on support for Children Looked After. That mental health services were on a significant transformation journey that would take time and that the transfer from four providers across Thurrock, Southend and Essex into one had been complex. The Officer stated that the new components were now in place and had already seen a doubling of young people being supported. Communications with stakeholders was ongoing and the service had been presented to a number of partnerships.

The Officer stated that the “Open Up, Reach Out” had key ambitions for the first stage of the transformation, these were:

- Improving access and equality
- Building capacity and capability in the system
- Building resilience in the community

The Officer briefly updated members on the performance and waiting time targets.

The Chair thanked the Officer for the report and the achievements made so far.

The Chair asked Officers what reassurance could be given that waiting times would be met based on the increased demand. The Officer stated that providers delivered evidence based therapies over a shorter period of time with a wraparound support package working in partnership with health, social care and education to ensure those children in the system got well and left the system. A risk register would be developed for those individuals where concern had been identified and to bring them back into the system if necessary.

Councillor Redsell asked how many schools were being trained. The Officer stated that a bespoke training pilot will be undertaken with Tilbury Pioneer School and evaluated and then offered to all schools. The number will depend on how many of the schools take up the training.

Councillor Redsell asked for clarification on where the contact details can be found for the children’s crisis teams. The Officer stated that this number was openly available and through the NELFT service. The Officer confirmed that based on the referrals coming to Thurrock it was evident that this number was known.

Councillor Watkins asked whether the numbers being recorded with mental health problems that had frequently been unnoticed or ignored had now decreased based on the work that had been undertaken. The Officer stated that a lot of work was being undertaken with schools to ensure that early identification was in place.

Councillor Watkins asked Officers what process would be in place to teach parents about social media apps. The Officer stated that this was beyond the scope of this report and that the local safeguarding children board would concentrate on this but would be dependent on parental up take.

The Officer stated that training sessions on “Walk the Line” for children and “Stranger Danger” for adults were available, alongside the digital safety magazine for foster carers.

Paula Gregory asked Officers if there had been any increase in the number of referrals for Children Looked After. The Officer confirmed there was no significant increase and this was a compliment to work undertaken by foster carers.

Councillor Kerin stated that he was pleased with the training being undertaken in schools but asked Officers what steps could be taken to be ahead of the game with social media apps. The Officer stated that this was beyond the scope of this report but the monitoring of apps would continue and training materials would continually be updated.

The Officer stated the Local Safeguarding Children's Board ran annual workshops that were presented by experienced Police Officers who had updated knowledge of key social media apps and websites. The Officer agreed to send dates for "Stranger Danger" training to all Members.

Councillor Redsell stated that focus should be on those children that would be transitioning from primary to secondary school. The Officer stated that this was already in the work stream to reach out to those vulnerable children and offer support.

## **RESOLVED**

**That the members request a presentation from the new provider on the specific needs of looked after children and the impact the service has had on the wellbeing of children in care.**

*Paula McCullough left the committee room at 8.15 pm.*

### **24. Independent Reviewing Officers Annual Report 2015-16 - clarification regarding children's voices being heard**

The Officer presented the report that was requested by members on the 13 October 2016 Corporate Parenting Committee that examples be recorded of the activities undertaken by the Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs) to ensure that children's voices are heard within the Children Looked After process.

The Officer stated that participation of children and young people in their reviews was good and continued to be an area of growth to ensure the voice of the child was heard. Observations of those that cannot verbally communicate and those of children, young people and parents when undertaking a review was a vital part of the Independent Review Officer role. The Officer continued to present to Members with some examples of child and parent behaviour whilst observing some recent reviews. All Members thanked the Officer for these.

The Officer confirmed that the Independent Review Officer stayed with a Children Looked After until they were out of care.

The Officer stated that foster carers could complete a booklet called “My Life” on behalf or with children and young people in their care.

The Chair asked for clarification on the number of children that did not attend their review and what plans were in place to ensure they attended in the future. The Officer stated that this was dependent on the age of a child, those that attended but were not verbalised and adolescents who do not always want to engage.

The Officer stated that within three days of a child coming into care they will be presented with a card that listed all the names, photos and contact details of all the Independent Review Officers. Foster carers were encouraged to use these and displayed them in their homes so that their Children Looked After would know who their Independent Reviewing Officer was and how they could contact them.

Jackie Howell stated that Children Looked After should be given the opportunity to attend a review but this must be at the best interests of that child. Some children may engage more than others but all should be given the chance to attend and speak.

Councillor Watkins asked what the follow up process would be for those that did not attend a review and for those Children that did not speak in reviews. The Officer stated that each case would be treated on an individual basis and relied on a child stating what reviews they would like to attend. The service would rely heavily on foster carers and social workers who knew a child well to understand when they were ready to attend a review.

## **RESOLVED**

**That the Corporate Parenting Committee to satisfy itself that children are included and are encouraged to engage in the care planning process/ Looked After Reviews.**

*Angela Grant and Neal Laurie left the committee room at 8.37 pm.*

## **25. Performance Dashboard**

The Officer introduced the report and stated that the Performance Dashboard was created to set out and provide members with a range of performance data and measures for Children’s Social Care. An Improvement Plan Overview Group had been established to provide an additional layer of oversight and challenge to ensure Officers maintain high ambitions for the service and improvements are implemented with pace.

All members agreed that it was a comprehensive report that should continue to be presented to the Corporate Parenting Committee in its current format. The Chair commented that at a glance information should be added to the dashboard.

Paula Gregory asked Officers whether information on health assessments should be included in the performance dashboard. It was agreed by Officers and Members that the health assessment report should stand independently and be reported on separately away from the performance dashboard.

Councillor Redsell asked Officers for clarification on what happened when the 20 unaccompanied asylum seeking children had left care. The Officer stated that there was a robust process in place which included the unaccompanied asylum seeker either:

- Leaving care.
- Moving outside the borough and would follow the transfer route and be the responsibility of that local authority.
- Go missing nationally and would follow the national referral mechanism and that the Police would be notified.

## **RESOLVED**

- 1. That the Corporate Parenting Committee consider if the current Dashboard covers the areas that the committee wishes to focus on and identifies any other areas for scrutiny.**
- 2. That the Corporate Parenting Committee received assurance as to the current functioning and performance of Children's Social Care.**
- 3. That the Corporate Parenting Committee identified any areas that they would require a "deep dive" analysis of.**

## **26. Educational Attainments of Children Looked After**

The Officer presented the report that stated that raising achievement in all areas of education for Children Looked After remained a key priority for Thurrock Council and that the Virtual School monitored and supported the educational progress and outcomes for Children Looked After irrespective of where they are placed in or out of borough. The Officer explained that the Virtual School was responsible for pupils aged between 3 years and 18 years and that included those children who had left care during an academic year.

The report included provisional outcomes for all pupils in the Virtual School cohort for the academic year 2015-16 and the year groups reported on were:

Early Years – Foundation Stage  
Year 1 (6 year old)  
KS1 (7 year old)  
KS2 (11 year old)  
KS4 (16 year old)

The Officer explained that the Good Level of Development measure was awarded at the end of the early years foundation stage and how performance

compared of Thurrock Children Looked After against national and Thurrock non-Children Looked After pupils.

The Officer stated that year on year improvements had been made but the results were not where they should be for Children Looked After. The Officer referred Members to the Children Looked After outcomes against the total cohort and the outcomes for the 19 eligible Children Looked After students who were entered for GCSE for clarification.

Councillor Redsell thanked the foster carers for all the good work done.

Councillor Kerin echoed Councillor Redsell comments and asked Officers how many Children Looked After were in a pre-school setting. The Officer confirmed that this was a small number and that each child would have a personal education plan prepared and would be monitored under the early years' service.

The Chair asked Officers how the performance of Children Looked After placed outside the borough was being monitored. The Officer stated that this was challenging and placements locally would be preferred so that Thurrock Children Looked After could be monitored and schools challenged more if placed in a Thurrock school.

The Officer stated that the performance of Thurrock Schools was tremendous and the virtual school and the Council would continue to work with schools and families. The aim was to build up resources of foster carers so that Children Looked After can be kept close to Thurrock and would do the utmost to ensure that all Thurrock children get the benefits from Thurrock schools.

Councillor Redsell asked how many Children Looked After were home tutored. The Officer agreed to supply this figure to members.

## **RESOLVED**

- 1. That the Corporate Parenting Committee notes the provisional outcomes of the summer 2016 tests and examinations and commends the pupils their schools and parents/carers on their achievements.**
- 2. That the Corporate Parenting Committee recognises that data cannot be compared to previous years due to a change in curriculum and assessments (particularly at Key Stage 1 and 2).**
- 3. That the Corporate Parenting Committee recognises that the cohorts of pupils are small and that this should be considered when comparing year on year data.**
- 4. That the Corporate Parenting Committee recognises that the length of time in care can affect the progress and outcomes of the pupils.**

**27. Work Programme**

Members agreed to add the Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health Service Report to the work programme for the 9 March 2017 committee.

Officers agreed to table for Members the “Suicide Prevention Guidance” for the 9 March 2017 committee.

**The meeting finished at 9.00 pm**

Approved as a true and correct record

**CHAIR**

**DATE**

**Any queries regarding these Minutes, please contact  
Democratic Services at [Direct.Democracy@thurrock.gov.uk](mailto:Direct.Democracy@thurrock.gov.uk)**



<b>9 March 2017</b>	<b>ITEM: 6</b>
<b>Corporate Parenting Committee</b>	
<b>Information on Recent External Placements for Young People</b>	
<b>Wards and communities affected:</b> All	<b>Key Decision:</b> Non-Key
<b>Report of:</b> Paul Coke, Service Manager, Through Care Services	
<b>Accountable Head of Service:</b> Andrew Carter, Children’s Social Care	
<b>Accountable Director:</b> Rory Patterson, Corporate Director of Children’s Services	
<b>This report is Public</b>	

## Executive Summary

This report updates members of the Committee on a range of issues regarding the placement choices made for looked after children

### 1. Recommendation(s)

**1.1 That the members of the Committee review the efforts made by officers to choose appropriate resources for looked after children, including our more difficult to place children and unaccompanied asylum seeking children.**

### 2. Introduction and Background

2.1 Reports for previous meetings of the Corporate Parenting Committee have provided elected members with some detailed information about the placement choices being made by officers for looked after children. These reports have included information on new external placements made in the period immediately preceding them and commented on a number of the presenting issues which influence decision making.

2.2 The numbers of looked after children in Thurrock is detailed in a comparative table below. This is a snapshot within the month, as the numbers will fluctuate as children/young people enter and cease being looked after throughout each month – **Table 1:**

	Apr	May	Jun	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
<b>2016/17</b>	342	341	335	342	340	358	350	350	325	327		
<b>2015/16</b>	280	285	295	303	313	320	330	332	344	334	335	338
<b>2014/15</b>	287	293	292	297	302	299	294	293	290	286	276	282

2.3 The following table shows the numbers of **Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC)** that have become looked after during the financial year of 2015/16 and 2016 to November. – **Table 2:**

	Apr	May	Jun	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
<b>2016/17</b>	79	78	75	84	87	95	91	88	73	67		
<b>2015/16</b>	38	41	51	55	61	60	63	67	74	70	69	67

2.4 The comparative rates per 10,000 of the looked after population which the local authority benchmarks against as of January 2017 is as follows:

- National Rate: 60.0 (2015/16)
- Statistical Neighbours: 49.0
- Thurrock Rate: 80.0

2.5 The comparative rates per 10,000 without the numbers of unaccompanied asylum seeking children for Thurrock is as follows:

- Thurrock Rate: 63

2.6 The numbers in age groups entering and ceasing care during the period of 1 December 2016 – 31 January 2017 are as follows – **Table 3:**

<b>AGE GROUP</b>	<b>ENTER</b>	<b>CEASE</b>
0-5	5	5
6-11	4	1
12-15	4	4
16+	5	19

2.7 As of February 2017 we had 329 looked after children (0-17). The breakdown of this in terms of placement type is as follows – **Table 4:**

<b>Age of child</b>	<b>In house Fostering</b>	<b>Independent Fostering</b>	<b>Residential</b>	<b>Other</b>	<b>Total by age</b>
Under 1	7	6	0	0	13
1 – 5	16	8	0	0	24
6 - 11	37	30	9	0	76
12 – 15	36	48	7	2	93
16+	19	38	9	55	121
Total by provision type	115	130	25	57	327

- 2.8 The total number of children in **Table 4** is 327. There are an additional 2 children that are currently on Placement Orders in various stages of the adoption process.
- 2.9 It is important to define what we mean by In-house fostering, Independent Fostering, Residential and other. These definitions are governed by how we classify these categories by Placement Type and Placement Provider. The categories are defined by national government, and are how we report as part of the return each year (903 Return)

2.10

	<b>In House Fostering</b>	<b>Independent Fostering</b>	<b>Residential</b>	<b>Other</b>
<b>Placement Type</b>	All children & young people placed with foster carers & parents/connected family	All children & young people placed with foster carers & adopters	All children & young people placed: Children's homes Residential Care Home Residential School	All children & young people placed in Independent living YOI/Prison Supported/semi supported for our 16+
<b>Placement Provider</b>	Provision owned by Local Authority	Provision is: private or voluntary/third sector	Provision is: Own provision Private Voluntary/third sector	Provision is: Parents or others Other public provision Local Authority Private Voluntary/third sector

### **3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options**

- 3.1 The information within this report and the previous one shows the intent of the Department to make use of our in-house foster placements as opposed to IFA's.
- 3.2 We have increased our use of in-house foster placements from 96 to 115 and reduced the use of IFAs from 142 to 130. This has been achieved through more effective management of existing resources. More work is underway to reduce the overuse of IFAs.
- 3.3 Our use of residential has also reduced from 31 to 25 through effective management action and the planned moves of young people to more appropriate accommodation.
- 3.4 To date we have 65 UASC, which is a significant reduction.

- 3.5 The Commissioning Service are also developing its arrangements to commission accommodation for young people 16+ as a part of its overall placement commissioning framework.
- 3.6 The Department continues to monitor placements through the various panels, such as the Placement Panel, which is chaired by a Senior Manager and also involves the Corporate Director of Children's Services, and is multi-disciplinary, and the High Cost Placement Panel, chaired by either the Head of Service or the Corporate Director of Children's Services.
- 3.7 The Department recognises the need to manage the budget and works very closely with the Finance Department and other professionals in ensuring placements are of good quality, that we get the best value from each placement and we plan the transition of our young people where necessary.
- 3.8 The Department continues to work on the recruitment of foster carers and increase our pool of in-house foster carers. Progress to date has been steady, and the shift in balance of placements has been managed by a combination of an increase in carers and more effective management of the resource.
- 3.9 The Department have approved a further 11 carers since April 2016. It is currently in the process of assessing a further 10 potential carers, with the aim to have them all approved by the 31 March 2017.
- 3.10 In the last financial year, April 2015 – March 2016, the Department approved 16 carers, and by February 2016 had approved 8.
- 3.11 This year is a marked improvement in the numbers, as the target for the year is 20, which we are on course to achieve and exceed.
- 3.12 In respect to the Independent Fostering Agencies (IFAs); when referrals for placements are requested it is expected that exploration of our current in-house foster carers is our first point of call before IFAs are looked at. Agreement for IFAs has to be approved by the Service Manager, once all explorations of in-house have been exhausted.

#### **4. Reasons for Recommendation**

- 4.1 It is hoped that members of the Committee will continue to find this information useful in developing their understanding of the issues involved. Officers accept there is a very real challenge in balancing the need to find the best possible placement option for children and young people, whilst simultaneously working within the financial resources available.

#### **5. Consultation (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)**

- 5.1 None

## **6. Impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance and community impact**

6.1 None

## **7. Implications**

### **7.1 Financial**

Implications verified by: **Jo Freeman**  
**Management Accountant**

The numbers of looked after children in this report has decreased. The number of children/young people in residential has also reduced. There remains, however, significant cost pressures particularly in relation to semi-independent placements and IFA placements.

It also has to be acknowledged the ongoing financial impact of the UASC cohort, at significantly over the 0.07% rate.

### **7.2 Legal**

Implications verified by: **Lindsey Marks**  
**Principal Solicitor Children's Safeguarding**

It is important to note that whilst the Local Authority continues to scrutinise all placements it also has to be aware of its duties under the Children Act 1989, which must be the focus on the best interest of each child, especially when exploring placements.

### **7.3 Diversity and Equality**

Implications verified by: **Becky Price**  
**Community Engagement Officer**

Prior to progressing an external placement, the authority considers the needs of each young person in line with the Equality Act 2010 to ensure that individuals with protected characteristics are not adversely impacted.

### **7.4 Other implications (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder)**

Placements have to also take into consideration the experience and quality of staff, health and safety issues within each placement and that all the providers used are aware of their duties within the Crime and Disorder legislation.

Providers, whether regulated or not, must also be aware of their responsibilities when it comes to child protection issues.

**8. Background papers used in preparing the report** (including their location on the Council's website or identification whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

- Not applicable

**9. Appendices to the report**

- Not applicable

**Report Author:**

Paul Coke

Service Manager, Through Care

Children's Services, Care and Targeted Outcomes

<b>9 March 2017</b>	<b>ITEM: 7</b>
<b>Corporate Parenting Committee</b>	
<b>Ofsted Inspection Action Plan</b>	
<b>Wards and communities affected:</b> All	<b>Key Decision:</b> Non-Key
<b>Report of:</b> Andrew Carter, Head of Children’s Social Care	
<b>Accountable Head of Service:</b> Andrew Carter, Children’s Social Care (CATO)	
<b>Accountable Director:</b> Rory Patterson, Corporate Director of Children’s Services	
<b>This report is Public</b>	

## Executive Summary

This covering report provides an update on the Ofsted Inspection Action Plan. A copy of the updated action plan is attached to this report.

### 1. Recommendations

- 1.1 That Children’s Corporate Parenting Committee consider the current progress and direction of travel in completing the required actions.**
- 1.2 That Children’s Corporate Parenting Committee receive assurance that action plan will deliver the required improvement.**

### 2. Introduction and Background

- 2.1 All local authorities in England are inspected under the Single Inspection Framework (SIF) within a three-year period. The Children’s Safeguarding Board is inspected at the same time. The Ofsted inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers took place between 22.2.16 – 17.3.16.
- 2.3 In response to the recommendations of the Ofsted Report the department has completed a detailed action plan. The action plan is attached to this report as Appendix 2.

### 3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

- 3.1 Services to children, young people and families in Thurrock were judged to ‘Require Improvement’ by Ofsted. The inspectors stated in their report that ‘children and young people were found to be safe in Thurrock during this

inspection, with none identified who were at immediate risk of significant harm without plans and services being in place to reduce these risks and to meet their needs’.

- 3.3 Ofsted has made 16 recommendations in relation to practice improvements that are required in Thurrock. Key areas of concern included:
- The instability of the social care workforce. The service was dependent on a high proportion of agency social workers, although it was acknowledged that a range of creative ideas had been implemented to improve recruitment;
  - The service for children looked after was not consistent and too many children became looked after on an emergency basis;
  - More needed to be done to increase the number of in-house foster carers as too many children and young people were placed out of the borough;
  - Management oversight needed to be improved and frontline staff had to be supervised regularly to improve the quality of practice;
  - The organisation’s use of management information and quality assurance was poor and this impedes improvement; and
  - Training for all social workers to ensure permanence work with children starts earlier and that delay is avoided.
- 3.4 The draft Action Plan to address the recommendations made by Ofsted has previously been presented to Children’s Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the Corporate Parenting Committee and the Health and Wellbeing Board.
- 3.5 A final copy of the Action Plan has been shared with Ofsted.
- 3.6 An improvement Board was established and has been meeting regularly to ensure that all of the recommendations and other areas for improvement have been implemented. The Board is chaired by the Corporate Director of Children’s Services. The Portfolio Holders for Children and Adults and Education and Health will provide an additional layer of oversight and challenge through by monitoring progress against the action plan on a monthly basis.
- 3.8 Ofsted is currently consulting on a new inspection framework where it is proposed that those authorities who were judged Requires Improvement will receive another inspection within three years. In addition, it is anticipated that new modular inspections will be undertaken in the next year. These inspections are carried out over 2-3 days to test whether authorities are making the requisite progress with their improvement plans. Furthermore, social care departments will be expected to submit an annual self- evaluation to Ofsted which must evidence improvement. While this is discretionary, failure to do so could trigger a full inspection of the service.
- 3.9 Effective progress is being made across all areas of the plan and additional input is being provided to address those areas that require this to remain on track.



#### **4. Consultation**

- N/A

#### **5. Impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance and community impact**

The completed action plan will allow the council to meet and improve upon its core statutory functions in the delivery of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers.

#### **6. Implications**

##### **6.1 Financial**

Implications verified by: **Jo Freeman**  
**Management Accountant**

There are no immediate financial implications for the authority arising out of the action plan.

##### **6.2 Legal**

Implications verified by: **Lindsey Marks**  
**Principal Solicitor Children's Safeguarding**

The Local Authority has a statutory duty to provide services to children in need of help and protection, failure to effectively do so could lead to legal challenges and reputational damage. The Local Authority is required to provide clear evidence of how it is implementing the inspection recommendations.

##### **6.3 Diversity and Equality**

Implications verified by: **Becky Price**  
**Community Development Officer**

The local authority and its partners must ensure that a range of services and provision is in place to protect children from all backgrounds. In implementing the action plan the authority must ensure that improvements are made for children and young people from all backgrounds and that none are directly or in-directly discriminated against.

6.4 **Other implications** (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder)

- N/A

7. **Background papers used in preparing the report** (including their location on the Council's website or identification whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

- Ofsted Single Framework Inspection Report dated 24.5.16

8. **Appendices to the report**

- Appendix 1 - Ofsted Single Inspection Report & Local Authority Action Plan - Final

**Report Author:**

Andrew Carter

Head of Service

Children's Social Care

## Appendix 1 - Thurrock Council Children's Services Single Inspection Framework Improvement Action Plan v3 - 25.8.16

Rory Patterson	Name of Reviewer
9.2.17	Date of Review

### Introduction

The Ofsted inspection of services for children in need of help and protection and for looked after children in February 2016 gave an overall judgement that children's services require improvement to be good. Although services to children, young people and families in Thurrock require improvement, children and young people were found to be safe in Thurrock during this inspection, with none identified who were at immediate risk of significant harm without plans and services being in place to reduce these risks and to meet their needs.

We welcome the recommendations and areas of improvement highlighted by Ofsted. As a result we have incorporated these into our regular performance monitoring but also want to be explicit about how we are responding to these recommendations. This plan sets out how we will do this.

The improvement plan will be overseen by the corporate parenting committee. In addition a further level of scrutiny has been created by the children's portfolio holders who will be meeting regularly with officers to review progress against plans.

No.	Recommendation	Assigned Lead - Job Title/Name	Update February 17	Direction of Travel compared to last review - please select	Description of Action(s) - How	Owner(s) - Who	By When (date)
1	Ensure that accurate performance data is analysed and that this leads to specific actions for improvement	Iqbal Vaza, Strategic Lead   Performance, Quality & Business Support   HR, OD & Transformation	1	Improving	A) Increase capacity to develop and implement new performance digest, with clear metrics & analytics. B) Implement new 'Improvements Board' to be chaired by the DCS and underpinned by metrics & analytics within new digest . C) Review structure of Data and Performance Team to maximise effectiveness.	Director of Children's Services	Actions a,b & C completed.

No.	Recommendation	Assigned Lead - Job Title/Name	Update February 17	Direction of Travel compared to last review - please select	Description of Action(s) - How	Owner(s) - Who	By When (date)
2	Strengthen oversight, coordination and quality assurance of early help services to ensure that children and families are receiving the right support at the right time	Clare Moore, Acting Strategic Lead-Disabled Children, Family Group Conferencing, Emergency Duty Team and Early Offer of Help.	2	Improving	A) Complete demand management service review B) Implement improvement plan and service restructure to maximise effectiveness of the Early Offer of Help. C) Re-engage partners in the provision of help to the right families at the right time. D) Ensure quality assurance framework is reviewed and extended to include EOH services. E) To increase the amount of Early Help assessments for 0-5 by targeting Childrens Centres, Health Visitors and Early Years settings to promote the need for early intervention.	Head of Children's Social Care	Phase 1 in relation to points A-E have been completed and iMPOWER are finalising their reports. A further 6 months timescale is required to transform the service and embed the iMPOWER recommendations by June '17
3	Ensure that assessments and plans for children are of a consistently high quality	Teresa Gallagher, Service Manager, FST & Joe Tynan, Service Manager, MASH & CFAT	4	Maintained	A) Complete implementation of Signs of Safety and monitor through audit programme. B) Introduce regular quality workshops with social workers to review quality of practice. C) Scope the introduction of volunteers within the assessment service to strengthen direct intervention with families during assessments. D) Implement demand management plan to reduce the number of assessments undertaken (specifically those that lead to NFA), to reduce quantity and increase quality.	Head of Children's Social Care	June - Dec 16 - Action is overdue re: point 'A' pending outcome of Signs of Safety national bid. A revised timeline is required until August 17
4	Improve the offer of return home interviews to children and young people who have been missing from home or care to increase take-up of these interviews	Paul Coke, Service Manager, Children Looked After & Neale Laurie, Service Manager, Safeguarding and Child Protection	1	Improving	A) Weekly monitoring of children who go missing from home and care, and the referral and take up rate of return home interviews. B) Monthly monitoring of referral rates for looked after children to ensure that this increases from 80% - 100%. C) Improved contract monitoring to require pro-active engagement of young people by provider.	Head of Children's Social Care	Actions completed but needs to be monitored and maintained.

No.	Recommendation	Assigned Lead - Job Title/Name	Update February 17	Direction of Travel compared to last review - please select	Description of Action(s) - How	Owner(s) - Who	By When (date)
5	Ensure that more children are supported to participate in, and contribute to, their meetings, conferences and reviews, that they and their parents have access to reports beforehand, and that meeting minutes are circulated promptly	Neale Laurie, Service Manager, Safeguarding and Child Protection	1	Improving	A) Monitoring systems in place for all Child Protection Conference and Review minutes. B) Scoping exercise to be undertaken re: how best to increase participation drawing on good practice models. C) Advocacy and support services to be reviewed to ensure that these are promoting activity engagement and participation / challenging poor practice.	Head of Children's Social Care	All actions have been completed but plan needs to be monitored for a further 6 months re: impact - June '17.
6	Ensure that robust arrangements are in place to reduce the need for children and young people to become looked after in an emergency	Joe Tynan, Service Manager, MASH & CFAT and Teresa Gallagher, Service Manager, Family Support.	2	Improving	A) Review the patterns and numbers of children coming into care B) Strengthen preventative and support services to avoid accommodation or delay accommodation, so that this is planned. C) Strengthen role of Threshold Panel in managing accommodations	Head of Children's Social Care	Sept 16 / ongoing. Actions A & C completed. Action B linked to iMPower timescales.
7	Ensure targeted recruitment of foster carers to better meet the current and future demand for foster placements and reduce the number of children looked after who have to be placed out of the borough	Andrews Osei, Service Manager, Fostering, Adoption and Placements	1	Improving	A) Targets are now in place for the recruitment of foster carers in line with current and predicted demand. Performance against these targets will be monitored at monthly performance surgeries. B) Monitor impact of refreshed recruitment campaign.	Head of Children's Social Care	Actions completed and now ongoing re: iMPower work and evaluations.
8	Ensure that personal education plans are of a consistently high standard & that the virtual school effectively monitors and analyses the progress of all children looked after, including those who attend schools outside of Thurrock	Keeley Pullen, Head of the Virtual School	1	Improving	A) Establish a governing body to monitor, drive and improve all aspects of the work of the virtual school. B) Corporate Parenting Committee and Children's Overview and Scrutiny to continue to monitor and challenge the academic progress and outcomes for looked after children. C) Regularly undertake quality audits to monitor improvements in plans	Roger Edwardson, Interim Strategic Lead, School Improvement, Learning and Skills	01/09/2016- actions a,b and c now complete. Ongoing monitoring of outcomes / impact
9	Ensure that managers oversee and effectively drive forward permanence plans for children	Paul Coke, Service Manager, Children Looked After & Andrews Osei, Service Manager, Fostering, Adoption and Placements	1	Improving	A) Embed partnership working with Coram and strengthen early permanency with a pro-active offer of concurrency and foster to adopt. B) Maintain and increase reduction in number of days between court authorisation to place for adoption and placement for adoption. C) Continue to target with Coram, through effective permanency planning, a significant reduction in the number of days between a child becoming looked after and placement for adoption - to bring this below the England average.	Head of Children's Social Care	May 16 - March 17

No.	Recommendation	Assigned Lead - Job Title/Name	Update February 17	Direction of Travel compared to last review - please select	Description of Action(s) - How	Owner(s) - Who	By When (date)
10	Develop post-adoption support arrangements to ensure that all children and families who are eligible have access to an appropriate service	Andrews Osei, Service Manager, Fostering, Adoption and Placements	1	Improving	Develop a new delivery model for post adoption support with Coram. Seek feedback from adopters on the quality of provision.	Head of Children's Social Care	Completed and being further developed with Coram
11	Ensure that an effective Staying Put policy makes it possible for more young people to live with their former foster carers beyond the age of 18 years	Paul Coke, Service Manager, Children Looked After & Andrews Osei, Service Manager, Fostering, Adoption and Placements	1	Improving	A) Update and improve current Staying Put policy in consultation with Thurrock Foster Carers and IFA providers. B) Promote Staying Put as an option for all fostered young people. C) Monitor and review the number of young people who are Staying Put to identify blocks and address these. D) Work in partnership with Eastern Region partners to better improve the local and regional offer.	Head of Children's Social Care	June - Sept 16 - Actions A;B C completed. Work with Eastern Region now part of business as usual. Impact to be monitored re: increase in young people staying put. Continue to monitor alongside staying close re: establishing rising trend in young people staying put or close.
12	Ensure that pathway assessments and plans are developed to engage care leavers effectively and that care leavers benefit from regular reviews	Paul Coke, Service Manager, Children Looked After	2	Improving	A) Redesign the current Pathway Plan with care leavers and the CICC (update on previous re-design), to make it as simple and user friendly as possible. B) Establish Senior Practitioner post currently within the Aftercare Team to continue to lead on the review of pathway plans and track timeliness within revised performance digest. C) Undertake regular quality audits of plans.	Head of Children's Social Care	Sept 16 & June 17
13	Ensure that care leavers are effectively supported to gain independence skills, including through the setting of aspirational targets to help them to achieve educational and employment goals.	Paul Coke, Service Manager, Children Looked After	2	Improving	A) Develop a group work model of independence training / support for carer leavers and complement current 1:1 work. B) Continue to increase the number of care leavers who are EET (62%) and exceed aspirational target of 70% EET. Strengthen integrated working with Employability and Skills service to drive improvements.	Head of Children's Social Care	August 16 & March 2017

No.	Recommendation	Assigned Lead - Job Title/Name	Update February 17	Direction of Travel compared to last review - please select	Description of Action(s) - How	Owner(s) - Who	By When (date)
14	Secure a more stable workforce to ensure that children are able to build enduring relationships with social workers and to enable the local authority to drive through improvement to services, such as increasing early planning for permanence for children that starts at the front door	Andrew Carter, Head of Children's Social Care	2	Improving	A) Continue to drive effective retention and recruitment through the Retention and Recruitment Board, chaired by the DCS. B) Expand on programme to 'grow our own' staff through the ASYE Academy and the Aspiring Managers programme. C) Reduce the use of agency staff within the Eastern Region, MoC & work with iMPower on demand management.	Director of Children's Services	Ongoing
15	Ensure and demonstrate that children's and families' views and feedback are used to demonstrably shape service developments	Cherrylyn Senior, Principal Social Worker	2	Improving	A) Strengthen participation work stream to ensure that this is producing clear outcomes that are monitored and evaluated at the 'Improvements Board'. B) Corporate Parenting Board and Children's Overview and Scrutiny to be encouraged to set clear targets for evidence of improvements / service developments that have been based on user feedback, consultation and or co-production.	Head of Children's Social Care	Nov' 2016 - improved but not yet fully embedded, action is therefore overdue re: Nov' 16 target and needs to be extended to April '17
16	Regularly audit supervision files to ensure that frequency and quality are resulting in improved practice	Neale Laurie, Service Manager, Safeguarding and Child Protection	1	Improving	Establish a new quality assurance framework and put in place a regular cycle of auditing. Review and disseminate supervision policy and monitor compliance. Progress to be monitored at Improvements Board and proposed annual report to Children's Overview and Scrutiny on the quality of practice.	Head of Children's Social Care	Actions completed and ongoing monitoring required.

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<b>9 March 2017</b>	<b>ITEM: 8</b>
<b>Corporate Parenting Committee</b>	
<b>Children in Care Council and Voice of the child</b>	
<b>Wards and communities affected:</b> All	<b>Key Decision:</b> Non-Key
<b>Report of:</b> Natalie Carter, Open Door	
<b>Accountable Head of Service:</b> Andrew Carter, Children’s Social Care (CATO)	
<b>Accountable Director:</b> Rory Patterson, Corporate Director of Children’s Services	
<b>This report is Public</b>	

## Executive Summary

This report updates members of the Committee in respect to the functioning of the Children in Care Council (CICC) and its actions in representing the voice of the child for looked after children and care leavers.

- 1. Recommendation(s)**
  - 1.1 Corporate Parenting Committee support the role of the CICC**
  - 1.2 Councillors and senior officers attend the CICC meetings when invited**
  - 1.3 Corporate Parenting support and endorse the role of the Young People’s Project**

## 2. Introduction and Background

### Children in Care Council

- 2.1 The Children in Care Council is part of the Government’s drive to ensure the voice of the child is an integral part of all the work undertaken within Children’s Services.
- 2.2 The Government White Paper, Care Matters, Time for Change in 2007, made it a statutory duty for all local authorities to have a Children in Care Council
- 2.3 The document stated: *‘It is important that children have a chance to shape and influence the parenting that they receive at every level – from expressing their wishes and feelings about the individual care they receive in their*

*placements, through to helping shape the overall strategy for children in their area through a Children in Care Council'*

- 2.4 The Children in Care Council was transferred to Open Door in February 2012, following a review undertaken by former care experienced young people (LILAC) in February 2011
- 2.5 The review stated: *"LILAC Assessors felt that potentially an independent body should take more of a hand in running the CICC so that issues can be explored fully, as currently members of the CICC feel they stop at a certain level of management and it may be possible for more to be achieved without any risk of a conflict of interest."*
- 2.6 The Children in Care Council currently have 15 active members who attend the monthly meetings, training and planning days and promotional events. Since the transfer there have been 26 young people who have joined the Children in Care Council.
- 2.7 The Children in Care Council have a Chair and Vice Chair nominated by the children and young people.
- 2.8 There is an agenda drawn up for each meeting and in the past 2 years they have devised a yearly work plan, which does change throughout the year depending on the current issues and the membership.
- 2.9 The Department provides Open Door with £8,000.00 per annum to assist with the costs of running the Children in Care Council

#### Voice of the child

- 2.9 As mentioned, the voice of the child is an integral part of the work Children's Services undertakes regardless of what the issues are.
- 2.10 The Children Act 1989, section 1 (3a) states that *'when determining any question with respect to the upbringing of a child, the court shall have regard in particular to the ascertainable wishes and feelings of the child concerned (considered in the light of his age and understanding)*
- 2.11 A further piece of guidance that is very important to note is that of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Article 12 states the following:
  1. *Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views, the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.*
  2. *For this purpose the child shall in particular, be provided the opportunity to be heard in a judicial and administrative proceedings affecting the child, either directly, or through a representative, or an appropriate body, in a manner consistent with the procedural rules of national law.*

- 2.12 Open Door work within the National Advocacy Standards (Department of Health, 2002), and as such is led by the young people.
- 2.13 The voice of the child is sought via many avenues within the processes undertaken within the Department and in practice. Examples of this are as follows:
- Within public court proceedings the child is represented by a Children's Guardian appointed by the courts
  - In Looked After Children's Reviews the IRO will speak to the child/young person on their own to seek their views
  - It is expected when Social Workers visit the children/young people they are seen alone in order to obtain their views
  - Within **all** reports (ie assessments, care plans, pathway plans, court reports) it is expected that the views/wishes and feelings of the child/young person is recorded
  - We have the services of Open Door and the Advocacy Service, along with the Independent Visitors who will also represent the views of the children/young people.
- 2.14 The advocacy service is known as the Young People Looked After Project (YPLA), and is an independent project facilitated by Open Door. The project works with young people aged between 8 – 25 who are looked after or have been looked after and are entitled to an after care service.
- 2.15 The aim of the project is to give young people a voice in matters that affect their lives, particularly regarding issues that come about through being looked after or leaving care.
- 2.16 The project in the main works with individuals, but can provide a service for groups of looked after children/young people with identified common issues. It aims to nurture a trusting and honest relationship with the young people, but also with professionals.
- 2.17 The Advocacy Service is a confidential service but works within the statutory guidance for child protection.
- 2.18 The Project wherever possible aims to help resolve issues at the earliest opportunity to cause the minimum amount of distress and to prevent escalation to a formal complaint stage.

### **3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options**

#### **3.1 Issues**

### 3.1.1 Children in Care Council Activity

The CICC supported the Looked After Children celebration event held in February 2016, allowing young people to celebrate their achievements for 2015. Young people with their foster families had an evening of roller skating, attended also by staff, Councillors and senior officers. The event was very well attended.

3.1.2 The next celebration event will be on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017 for achievements in 2016. Certificates of achievement will be presented to all young people including those who do not attend. Their certificates will be posted to them.

3.1.3 Nominations are made prior to the event by professionals, these are reviewed by a panel of people from social care and members of the CICC. Two awards are given to four age groups, 11 and under, 12-16, 16-18, 18 +. The CICC have requested an additional award category of 18 +. The CICC were of the opinion that many young people make life changing achievements within this age group. The previous achievement category awarded those 16 and above.

3.1.4 In July and September 2016 the CICC facilitated a workshop for the social work recruitment day. This gave members the opportunity to be part of the recruitment process for new social workers who had applied to join Thurrock's social work teams. The aim of the workshop is to assess the candidates to see how well they can work as part of a team and demonstrate good organisation skills using the resources available.

3.1.5 The CICC have met with Health, Education, Team Managers and the Commissioning Team to consult on issues that particularly affect children and young people in care.

3.1.6 The CICC have been involved in the commissioning process in relation to foster care agency recruitment since 2012. They have contributed to the tendering process by devising two questions for prospective agencies. They were given the opportunity to mark the answers received as part of the tendering process organised by the Eastern Region Foster Care Select List, and give their feedback.

3.1.7 In September 2016 Joseph Kaley was supported by Natalie Carter to apply for the SIAG position. This is for a young person to become a member and attend the Strategic Independent Advisory Group. Joseph was successful and appointed for this position and now attends regular meetings representing young people in care.

3.1.8 The CICC facilitated the out of borough survey report presented to the corporate parent committee in October 2016. The Young people would like this to continue annually and to include a survey to all looked after young people about their views on the pledge.

- 3.1.9 The CICC held a meet and greet event in November 2016. All councillors, managers and staff were invited to this event. This was a good opportunity for the CICC to showcase some of the work they have done, how they feel about being part of the CICC and to discuss future work the CICC plan.
- 3.1.10 The CICC has been focussing on ways to promote the pledge. Members of the CICC directed a short video clip on the importance of the pledge. The video clip demonstrates the need for professionals to take the promises within the pledge into consideration during their everyday practice.
- 3.1.11 In November 2016 a few CICC members went along to a regional event held at the University of Cambridge. This gave the CICC an opportunity to interact with other CICC's. Members participated in workshops to voice their opinions and experiences in care. The event was attended by Anne Longfield, Children's Commissioner for England and her team. The young people felt listened to and they shared ideas with other CICC's.
- 3.1.12 The CICC are supporting the Trailblazer Project to encourage young people and their carers to access the ongoing opportunities the Royal Opera House offer. This has given young people and carers the opportunity to experience a welcome performance of the opera 'La Traviata'.

## 3.2. Pledge

- 3.2.1 All looked after young people have been provided with a copy of the pledge / advocacy leaflet and 'who cares magazine'. The promotion of the pledge will continue to those in care and those entering the care system. CICC members would like to have a role in the foster care and social work training for Thurrock.
- 3.2.2 The amendments made to the pledge in 2015 regarding passports and bank accounts are now included in the work programme of the corporate parent committee, the young people are now satisfied this is being monitored and statistics will continue to increase, leading to all young people having identification and a bank account when they leave care.
- 3.2.3 The Pledge is due to be reviewed and amendments identified in 2018, the CICC will consult with young people in care about the pledge during 2017 and identify any amendments to be made during this period, an update and any amendments can be submitted to the corporate parent committee in March 2018.
- 3.2.4 The CICC on behalf of all looked after young people will focus on promoting the pledge to social care / foster carers and will continue to consult with young people about the promises made in the pledge.

### 3.3 Voice of the child activity

3.3.1 In 2015-16 our advocates addressed and raised 106 issues on behalf of Thurrock Looked after Children. The majority of issues raised were dealt with at an informal stage. Only three issues were raised through Thurrock's complaints procedure.

3.3.2 The Young people looked after project is client led and `issue led` the young people are supported until the matter is resolved to everyone`s satisfaction.

3.3.3 The issues raised on behalf of the young people in 2015-16 included the following:

- Sibling contact
- Contact with birth parents
- Change of placement
- Assessing education (ESOL)
- Travel costs
- Change of social worker
- Support at formal meetings such as LAC reviews & CP meeting (for care leaver parents)
- DWP & Home Office issues
- Introducing young people to legal professionals

## 4. **Reasons for Recommendation**

4.1 It is important that we have mechanisms to elicit the voice of children and young people.

4.2 The CICC is statutory, but we need to continue to increase the numbers of those engaging and create other means for communicating the work of this group, such as a web page within the Looked After Children web site.

## 5. **Consultation (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)**

N/A

## 6. **Impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance and community impact**

N/A

## 7. **Implications**

### 7.1 **Financial**

Implications verified by: **Jo Freeman**  
**Management Accountant**

The numbers of looked after children have increased. This will have an impact on the work undertaken by Open Door and its capacity in term of staffing

Finance for the functioning of the CICC needs to be assured as it is a statutory duty

The use and the role of the Young People's Looked After Project will need to be financed and supported as it is also an integral part of the work undertaken on behalf of Children's Social Care

## 7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Lindsey Marks**  
**Principal Solicitor Children's Safeguarding**

The Local Authority has a duty to provide all the services mentioned in this report and will need to continue to provide these services in the future.

## 7.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Becky Price**  
**Community Development Officer**

The Children in Care Council provides a voice for looked after children, or those leaving care, and is an integral part of the work of Children's Services. The CICC helps to ensure that young people can influence matters that affect their lives the. The report refers to future efforts to increase the numbers of young people engaging and therefore represented by this service.

## 7.4 Other implications (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder)

N/A

## 8. Background papers used in preparing the report (including their location on the Council's website or identification whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

## 9. Appendices to the report

- Appendix 1 - Children in Care Council terms of reference (1)
- Appendix 2 - The National Standards for the Provision of Children's Advocacy Services 2002

## Report Author:

Natalie Carter  
Open Door Services

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# Thurrock's Pledge



To Children and  
Young People  
in Care

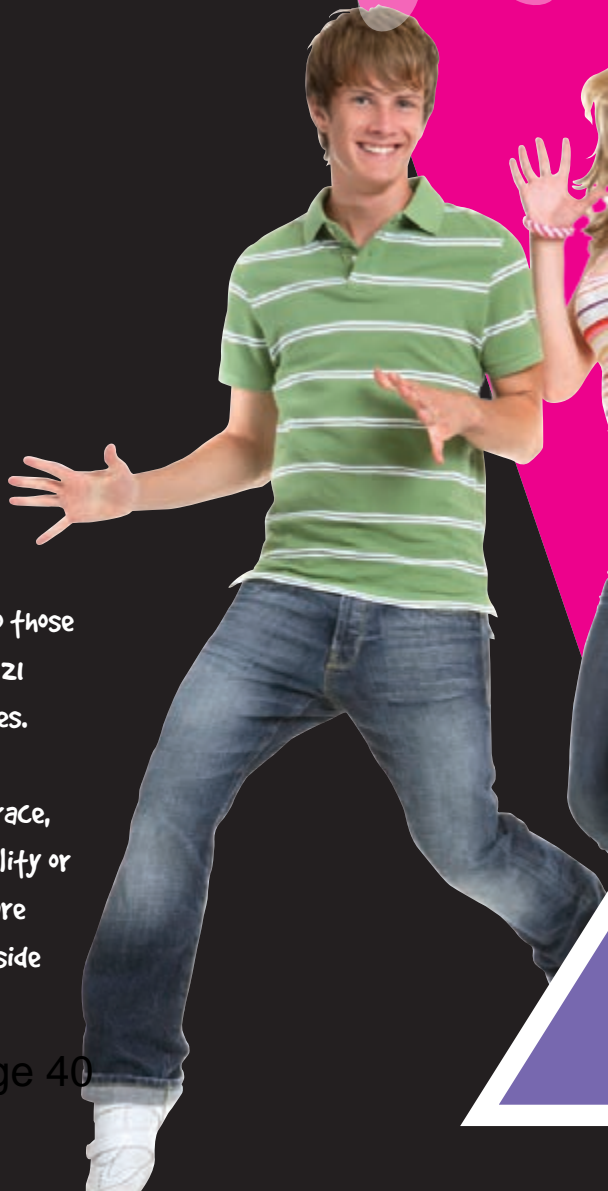
our pledge was written by young people and has been adopted throughout the council for children and young people in the care of Thurrock Council.

our pledge makes five promises,  
These cover:

- \* Health
- \* Education
- \* Reaching your potential
- \* Positive relationships
- \* Leaving care.

It applies to all children and young people, from birth to 18 years of age who are in our care. Some apply to those leaving care, from the age of 18 up to 21 years and even 25 years in a few cases.

The pledge applies regardless of sex, race, sexual orientation, disability, age, ability or background. It applies wherever you are placed, whether you live inside or outside Thurrock.



# Thurrock's

# Pledge



We promise to work to  
help you to develop  
healthily



We will help you keep fit and healthy. We will give you the resources and information to continue a healthy journey. We will support you to have regular health and dental checks



We will support you in all aspects of your development and give you every opportunity to flourish

# Thurrock's Pledge

We promise to do everything we can to keep you safe and feel important to us while in care:

We will be available to speak to you when you need to. We can discuss problems, anxieties and achievements.

We will visit you at least 12 times a year and give you the opportunity to meet with social workers independently during visits.

We will involve you in decisions and plans that will affect your current and future life.

We will ensure you access life story work in conjunction with Thurrock's life story policy including a book or memory box containing important information about your childhood. This information will include: where you were born, the area you grew up in, schools you attended, photos, family tree, calendar of events and other memories you may wish to add.

We will not change your social worker unless absolutely necessary.

We will give you advice and support to stay safe, both within your home and in your community.

We will give you a way to contact your social workers directly, such as email, mobile number and/or office number.

We will always try to call you back within 24 hours.





# Thurrock's

# Pledge



We promise to help you reach your dreams while in care:




We will celebrate your achievements and recognise your goals and help to push you further while in care.



We will support you to attend and achieve throughout your education.



We will provide you with good educational opportunities that best meet your abilities.



We will provide you with a translating dictionary in your language when you first come into care if your first language is not English.



We will give you the same opportunities available to young people who are not looked after.



We will respect your privacy when possible.

# Thurrock's Pledge

We promise to support your positive relationships and social activities:



We will give priority when you ask to stay with friends and relatives away from your normal placement.



We will seek your views about contact arrangements and support you in attending family contacts.



We will aid you in having easy access to libraries, youth clubs and positive activities.



We will give you access to an independent visitor/mentor.



We will support you in being heard throughout the local authority - across all departments.


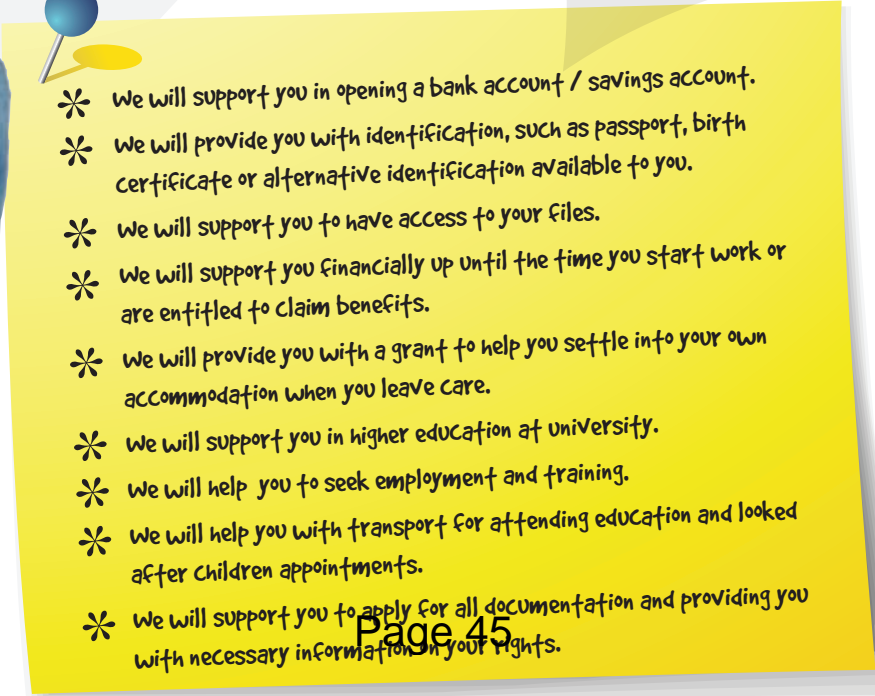




# Thurrock's

# Pledge

We promise to help you reach your dreams while in care:

- 
- 
- \* We will support you in opening a bank account / savings account.
  - \* We will provide you with identification, such as passport, birth certificate or alternative identification available to you.
  - \* We will support you to have access to your files.
  - \* We will support you financially up until the time you start work or are entitled to claim benefits.
  - \* We will provide you with a grant to help you settle into your own accommodation when you leave care.
  - \* We will support you in higher education at university.
  - \* We will help you to seek employment and training.
  - \* We will help you with transport for attending education and looked after children appointments.
  - \* We will support you to apply for all documentation and providing you with necessary information on your rights.

# Thurrock's Pledge

## From the Director of Children's Services

The PLEDGE is our PROMISE, made by Thurrock Council and its staff. We make promises to you that we intend to deliver.

We have the responsibility to ensure that you are healthy, stay safe, learn, enjoy life and achieve your goals. We will prepare you for your adult life when it is time for you to leave care. We may not always be able or willing to do what you want; but we will always involve you in the important decisions that affect your lives. We will always treat you as an individual and take into account the unique things about you, for example your age and sex, your race, language and religion, your sexual preferences and any disabilities you might have.

Thurrock Council will listen to you and your views within the Children in Care Council. The CiCC is your direct voice to all the Directors, Elected Members and council officers who make the decisions in Thurrock that affect all residents.

We have special responsibilities for you. I want you to know that we are committed to you and to your future.

This pledge shows the commitments that we have made to you, putting you at the heart of everything that we do as a Council.

Thurrock Council wants to make sure we stick to the promises made to you and ensure that we are providing you our best service. Please discuss this pledge and let us know your views about how Thurrock Council is doing on its promises. This can be done through your independent reviewing officer or you can get in contact with the CiCC. Additionally, the CiCC is always looking for new representatives and would welcome your interest if you want to get involved. If you have any comments or questions about anything you see in the pledge, please contact your Social Worker.

email: [ciCC@opendoorservices.org](mailto:ciCC@opendoorservices.org)  
or Call 01375 389879 for further information



# Get it Sorted

Providing Effective  
Advocacy Services  
for Children and  
Young People Making  
a Complaint under  
the Children Act 1989



department for

**education and skills**

creating opportunity, releasing potential, achieving excellence



# Get it Sorted

## Providing Effective Advocacy Services for Children and Young People Making a Complaint under the Children Act 1989

### Overview

Consultation on draft guidance and regulations to be introduced in England, from April 2004.

### Action

Comments are welcomed from local authorities, advocacy organisations, voluntary organisations, advocates, children's rights officers, complaints officers, listening to children officers, children and young people and anyone with an interest in the subject matter of this consultation.

Please send response forms, by 31 December 2003, to: Barbara Herts, Children's Participation Co-ordinator, Department for Education and Skills, Room 114, Wellington House, 133-155 Waterloo Road, London SE1 8UG or by e-mail to: [advocacyconsultation@doh.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:advocacyconsultation@doh.gsi.gov.uk)

### Further information

General enquiries to: Barbara Herts, Children's Participation Co-ordinator, Department for Education and Skills, Room 114, Wellington House, 133-155 Waterloo Road, London SE1 8UG. Tel 020 7972 4237. e-mail: [advocacyconsultation@doh.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:advocacyconsultation@doh.gsi.gov.uk)

This document can be downloaded from [www.dfes.gov.uk/consultations](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/consultations)

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by quoting reference DfES/0492/2003



## Ministerial Foreword



Children and young people can be especially vulnerable at times when they have a problem or want to raise concerns and make a complaint. Providing advocacy support safeguards children and young people and helps to protect them from harm and neglect. This guidance builds on the key messages from *Every Child Matters* to make sure that vulnerable children and young people get the help they need, when they need it.

The Government wants to ensure that vulnerable children and young people with concerns, problems or complaints however big or small, get the assistance and support they need from advocacy and children's rights services.

This guidance on advocacy services is designed to provide managers, complaints officers, practitioners, advocates and children's rights officers and organisations with an understanding of the new duties in relation to advocacy introduced by the Adoption and Children Act 2002 and to discuss the implications for policy and practice.

If we are to get advocacy for children making complaints right, we need your help. I hope you will enjoy reading this consultation document and that you will write to us with your comments and suggestions using the feedback form provided.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Margaret Hodge". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

**Margaret Hodge MP**

Minister for Children, Young People and Families



## 1. Summary

The purpose of this consultation is to gather views on the draft Regulations and guidance. Chapters 1 to 6 contains the draft guidance. Annex A contains the draft Regulations.

The Adoption and Children Act 2002 applies to England and Wales, but this guidance and the associated Regulations apply to England only. Local authorities with social services responsibilities should consider the implications of the Regulations and guidance now. Local authorities should be ready for an implementation date of April 2004. The consultation results will be made public and final guidance will be published reflecting the outcome of consultation. A children and young people's booklet will be issued alongside the final guidance.

## 2. Impact on Local Authorities

The draft Regulations and guidance implement the new duties placed on local authorities in respect of the provision of advocacy services by the Adoption and Children Act 2002. Local authorities have received through the Quality Protects special grant, a substantial investment of funds to secure the development of advocacy, children's rights services and initiatives to improve the complaints process for children. Although the Quality Protects programme will end in March 2004, the increases in children's services spending under the grant and under the Children Leaving Care grant will continue to be available to local authorities under mainstream funding.

## 3. What is new about the 2004 Regulations?

By April 2004, all local authorities with social services responsibilities should ensure that advocacy services are provided for children and young people, making or intending to make a complaint under section 24D or section 26 of the Children Act 1989.

## 4. How to respond

Questions appear throughout the body of the document. Please photocopy the consultation form provided with this document or use the electronic version that you can find on our website at [www.dfes.gov.uk/consultations](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/consultations).

Please send your completed response, by 31 December 2003, to: Barbara Herts, Children's Participation Co-ordinator, Department for Education and Skills, Room 114, Wellington House, 133-155 Waterloo Road, London SE1 8UG or by e-mail to: [advocacyconsultation@doh.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:advocacyconsultation@doh.gsi.gov.uk).

### General queries

If you have any questions on policy issues please address these to Barbara Herts or Bill Jobson at the above address - tel. 020 7972 4237 or 020 7972 4346, or email [advocacyconsultation@doh.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:advocacyconsultation@doh.gsi.gov.uk).

Any general queries about local issues should be addressed to your Quality Protects Regional Development Worker (see pages 19-20 for contact details).

## 5. Additional copies

This document can be downloaded from [www.dfes.gov.uk/consultations](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/consultations). Hard copies will be available from DfES publications (0845 6022260) by quoting reference DfES/0492/2003





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## 1. Background: Why Legislate for Advocacy Services?

### Introduction

- 1.1 This guidance is issued under section 7 of the Local Authority Social Services Act 1970, which requires local authorities with social services functions to act under the general guidance of the Secretary of State. Only in exceptional cases may local circumstances justify a variation. It is designed to provide managers, complaints officers, practitioners, advocates and children's rights officers and organisations with an understanding of the principles and changes made by the Adoption and Children Act 2002 and to discuss the implications for policies, procedures and practice. This guidance is for local authorities.
- 1.2 Advocacy is about speaking up for children and young people and ensuring their views and wishes are heard and acted upon by decision-makers. This guidance builds on the core principles of the Quality Protects programme which puts children's views and wishes at the heart of the decision-making process.
- 1.3 When a child or young person articulates that a concern or problem is not being resolved and a complaint is likely to be made, local authorities should ensure that help and assistance is given if children or young people would like an advocate to speak for them. The purpose of this guidance is to ensure that children and young people are given help, including advocacy services when making or intending to make a complaint.
- 1.4 The Adoption and Children Act received Royal Assent on 7 November 2002. Amongst other provisions, it amended the Children Act 1989 and imposed on local authorities the duty to make arrangements for the provision of advocacy services for care leavers making or intending to make a complaint under section 24D of the Children Act and for children making or intending to make a complaint under section 26. Advocacy services do not need to be provided for a parent or another adult making a complaint on behalf of the child.
- 1.5 This guidance applies to all children in need, including looked after children and young people leaving care.
- 1.6 In all cases, advocacy services will have to be provided for a child in need or care leaver directly making or intending to make a complaint on their own behalf.

### Developing a listening culture

- 1.7 The Government wants advocacy and children's rights services to be linked to other activities which help professionals to listen to children, thereby creating a culture of openness where listening and responding to children and young people's concerns becomes an integral part of everyday practice.
- 1.8 The requirement for the participation of children and young people in day to day decision-making in their own care was spelt out in *The Government's Objectives for Children's Social Services* (September 1999). Objective 8 requires local authorities actively to involve users and carers in planning services and in tailoring individual packages of care, and to ensure effective mechanisms are in place to handle complaints.
- 1.9 The report of the Waterhouse inquiry, *Lost in Care*, cited many examples of children who had attempted to complain about an unhappy situation but whose voices had not been heard. The Government's response to the Waterhouse report emphasised the importance of hearing children's wishes and views in all aspects of the complaints process. Similarly, The Utting Report, *People Like Us*, made recommendations about a culture change which supports

children and young people to speak openly about their experiences and concerns. *“Putting something right about assessment, review, consultation or placement at an early stage can only improve the effectiveness of the overall process and reduce the risk of subsequent harm.”*

- 1.10 Listening to the voice of the child is one of the main messages running through *Keeping Children Safe*, the Government’s response to the Inquiry into the tragic death of Victoria Climbié. Listening to children keeps them safe and helps protect them from poor practice. Child protection is everyone’s responsibility; both staff who come into direct contact with children, and those who work with adults who are parents and/or carers. The Government’s response to the Victoria Climbié Inquiry report requires Directors of Social Services to ensure that the child is spoken to alone and introduces a range of recommendations to protect children.

**Table 1: Context – Recent Legislation Relating to Advocacy**

***Children Leaving Care Act 2000***

1.11 The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 requires local authorities to improve the life chances of young people living in and leaving care. The Government expects advocacy services to be accessible to all care leavers making or intending to make a complaint. Details about access to advocacy should be included in information and policies for young people about what services they might expect when they are no longer in the authority’s care.

1.12 One of the roles of the Personal Adviser is to act on a young person’s behalf as an advocate for them when they need help making a case, both in formulating the case and presenting it.

***Care Standards Act 2000***

1.13 The Care Standards Act 2000 establishes a complaints and representations procedure for children’s homes. The home’s complaints procedure enables children, staff, family members and others involved with children of the home to make minor and major complaints. The National Minimum Standards for Children’s Homes sets out information and advocacy requirements.

***Health and Social Care Act 2001***

1.14 The Health and Social Care Act 2001 places a duty on the Secretary of State for Health to make arrangements for advocacy services to be provided to people (including children and young people) wishing to make a complaint about their NHS care or treatment. *The Commission for Patient and Public Involvement in Health* (CPPIH) will identify and disseminate quality standards for the Independent Complaints Advocacy Services (ICAS), set criteria for its provision and provide a national assessment of ICAS services. The service will be accessible through many avenues, including Patient Advice and Liaison services (PALS) and complaints managers in NHS Trusts.

## 2. The Role of Advocacy Services for Children Making Complaints

### Introduction

2.1 Children and young people can be especially vulnerable at times when they have a problem or want to make a complaint. The emphasis in this guidance is on early detection and early resolution, so that concerns and problems are put right quickly and effectively. Complaints procedures should be devised and operated in the wider context of encouraging children to speak out and encouraging decision-makers to hear their views.

### The National Standards for the Provision of Children's Advocacy Services 2002

2.2 The National Standards for Children's Advocacy Services issued in November 2002, set out Government policy for the commissioning of advocacy services. The standards set out how advocacy services should be commissioned and delivered. The standards provide a framework for the planning, development and review of advocacy practice at all levels. In implementing this guidance, local authorities with social services responsibilities should ensure the standards are followed.

2.3 The purpose of advocacy in complaints procedures is to ensure that children and young people are given assistance when making or intending to make a complaint. Children's interests can be promoted more effectively by having a personal, adult champion, in the form of an advocate who can help children and young people to take an active part in the decision-making processes and to ensure their views and wishes are heard at all times. Advocacy is about empowering children and young people to make sure that their rights are respected and that their views and wishes are fully reflected in decision making about their own care.

2.4 The National Standards define Government policy and what we mean by 'advocacy' for the purposes of this guidance. Advocacy services provide independent and confidential:

- Information;
- Advice;
- Representation; and
- Support.

2.5 The National Standards spell out the core principles which should inform the delivery of advocacy services:

- advocates should work for children and young people;
- advocates should help children and young people to raise issues and concerns about things they are unhappy about;
- advocates should value and respect children and young people as individuals; *and*
- advocates should ensure that children and young people in care can understand what is happening to them, can make their views known and, where possible, exercise choice when decisions about them are being made.

2.6 An advocacy service needs to ensure that advocates are able to promote equalities. The advocate, when representing a child or young person, should be able to reflect an understanding of the child or young person's race, gender, sexual orientation, culture, religion and language, health or disability.

**Q1: Do you agree with the explanation of advocacy services in the context of complaints?**

## Enabling children to access advocacy services

- 2.7 Many children and young people describe ‘complaints’ as problems not being sorted out. The emphasis of this guidance is on providing help and assistance, and ensuring that independent advocacy is available quickly when requested. When a child or young person says that a complaint is about to be made, the authority should ensure that help and assistance is offered and given if children or young people would like an advocate to speak for them.
- 2.8 The children’s complaints officer or equivalent officer should:
- ask the child or young person if an advocate is wanted;
  - provide help and assistance about how to find independent advocacy services;
  - offer the child or young person help and assistance from the organisation with whom the authority has arranged the provision of advocacy services.
- 2.9 The child or young person should be asked if it is important to them if the advocate shares the same race, culture, gender and religion as themselves. The local authority should take this into account in each case. The local authority should take such matters into consideration when commissioning advocacy services (and wherever possible comply with the child or young person’s preferences).
- 2.10 The local authority should provide the child or young person with information about advocacy services. This will usually be the name, telephone number and contact point for the service. If the child so requests, the complaints officer should make initial contact with the advocacy service on their behalf.

**Q2: Do you agree that this is the role of the children’s complaints officer or equivalent officer? Do they have other responsibilities in relation to children’s complaints?**

## Choice for the child or young person

- 2.11 There will be times when children and young people will wish to choose their own advocate, for example, a relative, teacher, carer, friend or family member. Children and young people may choose anyone of their choice as an advocate unless the person is prohibited by regulations from acting as an advocate (see paragraph 4.3), or there are conflicts of interest which cannot be resolved satisfactorily to enable them to act as an advocate. They should be helped by the complaints officer or equivalent officer to understand the choices open to them and the differences between the options.
- 2.12 The child or young person should be given an opportunity to meet an advocate and agree the arrangement before the advocate’s appointment is confirmed and any information shared with them. Where the child or young person requests a change in advocacy arrangements or the need to do so has been brought to the local authority’s attention, this should be acted upon quickly.
- 2.13 Where a child chooses their own advocate, the local authority should facilitate the support and advice required to enable the individual to effect the role of an advocate (see paragraph 3.9). For example the local authority should provide:
- information about the national standards for the provision of children’s advocacy services;
  - payment of travel expenses;
  - advice and support.

**Q3: Do you think the guidance is sufficiently clear about choice for the child and young person?**

**Publicity about advocacy services**

- 2.14 The *National Standards for the Provision of Children's Advocacy Services* set out the Government's policy for publicity about children's rights and advocacy services. The Government wants local authorities to:
- inform children and young people about advocacy and children's rights services if they intend or wish to make a complaint;
  - provide help and assistance when children and young people want an advocate to speak for them.
- 2.15 Where a local authority first becomes aware that a child or young person wants to make a complaint they should provide age appropriate and innovative materials about children's rights and advocacy services and talk to the child or young person to explain these, answer any questions and ensure that they understand their rights. Materials should include texting, minicom and the use of symbols for children and young people with learning difficulties. Publicity should include translation into the child's first language where appropriate.
- 2.16 As set out in the *National Standards for the Provision of Children's Advocacy Services*, appropriate materials and methods should be developed for very young children, those with little or no communication and those without literacy skills. Local authorities may wish to develop electronic methods of communication.
- 2.17 Age appropriate guides about making a complaint and information about children's rights/ advocacy services should be given to all young people when they first come into care or are assessed as being in need. This should be recorded in the child's care plan and checked at reviews by the Independent Reviewing Officer. Complaints publicity materials should include information about, advocacy and children's rights services and be kept under regular review.
- 2.18 Local authorities should have a programme of regularly updating information and publicity on advocacy services to staff and foster carers to ensure that new staff and carers are able to properly inform children and young people of the support they can access.

### 3. Advocates and the Complaints Procedure

#### Introduction

- 3.1 Children's participation in decision-making about their own lives is a key principle of the Quality Protects programme and many local authorities have taken forward initiatives to ensure independent advocacy for children making a complaint. This guidance builds on these developments.
- 3.2 Local authorities are required to appoint a designated complaints officer who has the overarching responsibility for the authority's complaints and representation system. However, the specific roles, duties and tasks may be performed or delegated to other staff in the organisation, for example, children's complaints officers or listening to children officers. Following the recommendations of the Waterhouse report, *Lost In Care*, and the Utting report, *People Like Us*, some local authorities have appointed children's complaints officers who co-ordinate, provide and monitor the provision of advocacy services to individual children and young people.

#### The Children's Complaints Officer or Designated Complaints Officer with Responsibility for Children's Complaints

- 3.3 The key role of the children's complaints officer and other officers depending on local children's advocacy structures is to:
- consult with children when they express their intention to make a complaint to help them understand the options available and how the complaints procedure works;
  - provide information, advice to children and young people about advocacy services and support in accessing these services; *and*
  - work with children and young people and their advocates concerning issues of complaint, and to provide information and advice about options for resolution both within the complaints procedure, or alternative routes of remedy and redress where appropriate.
- 3.4 Their role also includes a duty to:
- keep a written or electronic record of complaints made, the procedure followed and the outcome;
  - appoint any investigating officer;
  - appoint the independent person;
  - monitor the progress of the complaint;
  - keep the child making the complaint and key people informed at all stages;
  - ensure timescales are adhered to;
  - make recommendations to the local authority on any action to take following an investigation.

#### The Children Act complaints procedure

- 3.5 The Children Act 1989, requires local authorities to establish a representation and complaints procedure. In practice most authorities operate three stages in complaints procedures.
- Stage 1 – initial stage with the emphasis on problem solving leading to early resolution (provided for in regulations for complaints relating to care leavers under section 24D of the Act);
  - Stage 2 – Formal Investigation by the local authority with the independent person;
  - Stage 3 – Review Panel of at least three persons which includes an independent person.



An informal resolution stage prior to an investigation involving the independent person is already in place in regulations for complaints involving care leavers. The Adoption and Children Act 2002 amended the Children Act 1989 to allow for a similar initial stage for complaints involving looked after children and children in need. This is likely to be implemented in 2004. This will have implications for local authorities in commissioning advocacy services, as an ability to respond quickly in providing an advocate when a complaint is made will be critical in meeting regulations and resolving complaints as quickly as possible.

**Q4: Is the 14 day timescale practicable for an informal resolution stage for complaints in terms of appointing an advocate to help the child through this stage?**

- 3.6 A formal procedure is not the most appealing way for children to air grievances. There continues to be evidence that children in foster care appear less informed about complaints procedures than their contemporaries in residential care. Many local authorities have contracts with national advocacy organisations so that advocates routinely visit children's homes and meet children in foster care in order to build relationships and identify emerging concerns or problems as early as possible. Children and young people themselves have stressed the importance of this, and we see it as being best practice and want to encourage such initiatives. As most looked after children live in foster care, local authorities need to consider how best to raise children's knowledge of complaints procedures and how to facilitate regular contact with advocates.
- 3.7 Children placed outside of the authority, those in foster care, children with communication impairments and those whose preferred language is not English are particularly vulnerable. Local authorities should make sure that the arrangements they make for providing advocacy services are able to provide an effective service to these groups of children.
- 3.8 It is in no one's interest for complaints to have to proceed to the formal stages of complaints procedures, where with sufficient attention and appropriate support at an early stage problems can be resolved more effectively and speedily. Advocacy services have a very important role to play in the early identification and resolution of problems and complaints and local authorities should ensure that they commission services which are geared up to respond quickly.

**Case Study – Durham County Council**

Durham County Council piloted a rapid involvement of advocacy services when a young person wanted to make a complaint. This was a pro-active approach to advocacy where the young person was immediately contacted by the children's complaints officer when a complaint was received. They were advised that an advocate would contact them to offer support if they wished. This removed the onus from young people to make the initial contact and then it was the young person's decision whether to take up the support on offer. The initial contact with the advocacy service would not be made if the child or young person objected to this action, thus the young person was still in control. The pilot has resulted in a higher take up rate of advocacy and has been incorporated into the service level agreement.

**The role of the advocate in the complaints procedure**

- 3.9 The advocate's role is to help the child initiate the complaints procedures as well as supporting the child to pursue their complaint until a resolution is achieved. The advocate's role in the complaints procedures is:

- to empower children or young people by enabling them to express their views, wishes or feelings, or by speaking on their behalf;
- to seek the resolution of any problems or concerns, identified by the child, by working in partnership with children and only *with their agreement*;
- to speak for or represent children at the initial stage of the complaints procedures by providing information, advice and support;
- to support children and young people pursuing a complaint through the complaints procedure and to provide them with information about their rights and options, helping them clarify their complaint and the outcomes they are seeking;
- to represent children at any stage, including any formal hearing or interviews

3.10 In relation to complaints, we intend advocacy to mean the provision of assistance and representation to individuals to make complaints . Our intention is that this should involve the advocate facilitating the making of a complaint which a child wishes to make, being led by the child’s decision. An advocate should not prevent a child making a complaint because the advocate believes this is not in the child’s best interests. It continues to be the responsibility of the local authority to decide what is in the best interest of the child.

**Q5: Do you think that the role of the advocate in the complaints procedure is clear? If not, what needs to be clarified?**

#### **Children’s rights officers**

3.11 There is increasing overlap of roles between advocates and children’s rights officers. The local authority will need to give clear and age appropriate information to make sure that the child understands their separate roles and responsibilities and in particular where they can get individual advocacy support. Some local authorities have established children’s rights services which deliver individual advocacy services. Many focus primarily on participation work. Local authorities may appoint a children’s rights officer or contract with a children’s rights service to provide advocacy services for children or young people making or intending to make a complaint under the Children Act procedure.

#### **Independent reviewing officers**

3.12 Independent reviewing officers (IROs) monitor the review process of the care plans of looked after children by local authorities and challenge poor practice by local authorities, including ‘drift’ in care. IROs chair review meetings, and ensure that the local authority involves the child and significant adults in their review process. They have a role in checking that the child or young person is aware of their right to an advocate. The IRO has a role in resolving problems by negotiation with the local authority, and has, as a last resort, the power to refer children’s cases to the Children and Families Court Advisory and Support Service (CAFCASS) to take the case to court.

**Table 2: The Role of Other Professionals in the Complaints Procedure**

***Independent Person***

The Children Act 1989, section 26(4) requires that at least one person who is not a member or officer of the local authority takes part in the consideration of the representation and any discussion about action to be taken. An Independent Person is required at stages one and two under the section 26 (3) procedure of the Children Act 1989 complaints procedure. The person appointed should be neither a member nor an officer of the council with social services responsibilities. The key tasks of the independent person are to ensure that the process of investigation is open and transparent and to work alongside the investigating officer to provide an independent objective element to the investigation.

***Investigating Officer***

An investigating officer may be appointed by the council with social services responsibility to carry out an investigation. This does not remove the requirement to appoint an independent person, as these are two distinct roles.

***Independent Visitor***

Of all the advisory and support roles established for looked after children and young people, the role of the Independent Visitor (IV) is closest to that of an advocate. IVs have statutory duties established by the Children Act 1989 which include visiting, advising and befriending the child. IVs should be recruited, trained, assessed and approved by local authorities to provide advice and befriending to any young person who has had no, or infrequent contact with their parents for over a year. They may advise the child on where to find, or who to ask for, particular information. The child or young person may wish the IV to speak as a friend on his behalf in order to help resolve a particular issue or difficulty.

## 4. Maintaining the Independence of the Advocate

### Introduction

4.1 The independence of the advocate is essential for them to be able to act on behalf of the child or young person. The *National Standards for the Provision of Children's Advocacy Services* set out Government policy on the independence of advocacy services. Advocacy will only be used and is only possible if children and young people are confident that advocates are acting exclusively on their behalf and have no apparent conflicting interests and pressures. Therefore, the advocacy or children's rights service should, as far as possible, be funded and managed in a way that ensures independence from the commissioning organisation.

### Who may not be an advocate?

4.2 The draft Regulations (Annex A) prescribe that the following people may not act as an advocate. If someone is the subject of a complaint, they may not be an advocate for the person making that complaint. Neither may the manager of the service which is the subject of the complaint act as an advocate, nor the person managing the resource allocation or a person who may consider the complaint.

4.3 Therefore, the independent advocate should not currently be or have been involved in any of the following ways:

- a person who is the subject of the complaint or whose decision is the subject of those representations;
- a person responsible for the management of a person whose decision or action is the subject of those representations;
- a person who is or may become involved in the consideration of those representations;
- a person who has budgetary responsibility for the provision of services to the child in relation to whom the representations have been made;
- a person involved in the line management of the case;
- a person with control over the resources allocated to a child's case.

**Q6: Do you agree with this list of people who should not act as an advocate to the child? Are there any others?**

### Independence of advocacy services

4.4 There are a number of different models that the local authority can follow to ensure that the advocacy or children's rights service they commission, has sufficient independence and distance from their policy development, their service provision, their complaints service, their care planning and resource management functions.

4.5 Current arrangements vary among local authorities, since many local authorities are at different stages in developing their advocacy and children's rights services. The most common arrangement is to outsource advocacy provision to a voluntary organisation. It is important that children experience and perceive the service as independent. Feedback from children and young people suggests that separate literature, logos and identity can be important in promoting the 'arm's length' nature and independence of the service.

### **Children's Rights Services providing advocacy**

- 4.6 For children's rights services badged as a 'local authority' service, the service should be separate from the line management of operational services. The children's rights service should, as far as possible, be funded and managed in a way that ensures independence, from the service commissioner.

### **What is NOT appropriate?**

- 4.7 The advocacy service or children's rights service should not be line managed by any senior manager directly responsible for the service provided. Local authorities should ensure that they have systems in place to ensure that both the management and delivery of services is quite separate.

**Q7: Do you consider that the guidance provides appropriate levels of independence for advocacy and children's rights services?**

### **Conflicts of interest for advocacy services**

- 4.8 When advocacy services are provided by independent voluntary organisations who also provide other services to the local authority either directly relating to complaints handling or the provision of other services, the local authority should ensure that conflicts of interest are avoided in the provision of these services. For example, advocacy providers which also offer direct services or independent services in the consideration of complaints should have systems in place to ensure that both the management and delivery of those services is quite separate. Commissioning officers should identify all potential conflicts of interest prior to agreeing contracts for external advocacy providers and use this information to identify the most appropriate provider.

**Q8: Do you agree that there could be conflicts of interest when advocacy services are provided by voluntary organisations who also provide other complaints handling services to the local authority? How best could potential conflicts of interest be avoided and managed?**

**Table 3: Independent advocacy services – Case studies**

***Gloucestershire Advocacy Project for looked after children***

Gloucestershire's Children's Rights Service is 'in house' to social services but placed outside the direct line management of children's social services. The new service will be part of the Quality Group in the Performance and Support service section of Gloucestershire's social services department and therefore will not report to operational Children and Families managers. The service includes advocacy for looked after children and care leavers making a complaint or expressing concerns and support for young people at reviews and other meetings.

***Tower Hamlets***

Since the start of the Quality Protects programme, Tower Hamlets has used special grant funding to fund an independent children's rights service for looked after children and care leavers. The service is provided via a service level agreement by the NSPCC. Individual advocacy is provided by the children's rights officer who may be contacted directly by young people or via the Department's Complaints section.

The service has two main strands:

1. the provision of advocates for young people making complaints and representations; *and*
2. development work with young people, officers and elected members to promote the participation of young people in service improvement and scrutiny.

***Hertfordshire***

Hertfordshire Children, Schools and Families commissions Voice for the Child in Care to provide services to Hertfordshire's looked after children and care leavers. The service incorporates individual advocacy on a one to one basis; a visiting advocacy service to the County's residential children's homes; support to group work with looked after children and training for staff. Alternative advocacy supports are available and encouraged through the Youth Service, Connexions and POWhER which is the county's supported independent advocacy service for young people aged 16 plus.

## 5. Monitoring Advocacy Services

### Introduction

- 5.1 Local authorities should keep under regular review their arrangements for the implementation of this guidance. Review and monitoring of the guidance should take place at yearly intervals and should be the responsibility of the Head of Children's Services.

### Annual reports

- 5.2 Local authorities are already required under the Children Act 1989 to monitor the operation and effectiveness of their complaints procedure and to publish this information as a public document. Many local authorities produce annual or half yearly reports. This guidance extends the requirements to ensure a breakdown is given about the use of advocacy and satisfaction with the service.
- 5.3 An annual report dealing with the operation of the complaints procedure, including the provision of independent advocacy services, should be compiled and presented to elected councillors. This report should be compiled by the most appropriate officer in the local authority, depending on local structures.
- 5.4 Designated complaints officers, children's complaints officers and other officers will need to work closely together in compiling annual reports and reports to departmental management teams on the use of advocacy in Children Act 1989 complaints.

### What should the annual report include?

- 5.5 This report should include:
- a summary of statistical data about numbers, ages, gender, ethnicity of children using advocacy at all stages of the complaints procedures;
  - the organisation providing the advocate;
  - take up of service;
  - children's satisfaction with the service;
  - actions to ensure independence.
- 5.6 Complaints and representations annual reports are a statutory requirement under the provisions of the Children Act 1989 and the Local Authority Social Services Act 1970. This information is accessible under the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 (to be replaced by the Freedom of Information Act 2000 in January 2005).

### Measuring satisfaction of services

- 5.7 The process of measuring satisfaction with advocacy services should be child centered. Regular feedback from children and young people is crucial in maintaining standards. Local authorities should find creative ways in seeking the views of children and young people, for example, the creation of a children and young people's reference group and use of electronic methods.

**Q9: Do you agree with the guidance for reviewing and monitoring the provision of advocacy services?**

**Q10: Is the draft guidance clear? If not, where does it need to be clarified?**

## 6. Information Sharing and Confidentiality

### Introduction

- 6.1 This section of the guidance sets out Government policy in sharing information and confidentiality at all stages of the complaints procedures.

### Key Principles – information sharing

- 6.2 The National Standards for the Provision of Children’s Advocacy Services set out standards for information sharing and confidentiality. Local authorities should have clear protocols on information sharing in their service level agreements. Once the advocate is appointed, letters about the complaint should be addressed to the child making the complaint, with a copy to the appointed advocate and advocacy organisation as appropriate. Record keeping is an integral part of professional practice. Records should be clear, concise and a record of fact. They should be kept safely by all parties.
- 6.3 If the local authority is informed that a child has decided not to use his or her advocate any longer, it should write to the advocate to inform him or her of this decision.
- 6.4 Local authorities in their contracts with advocacy providers must adhere to the Data Protection Act 1998.
- 6.5 Particular attention is drawn to the need to ensure that information provided in relation to a complaint is only used for that purpose, and that information is not sought on matters outside the agreed scope of the complaint.

### Confidentiality and Safeguarding Children

- 6.6 The National Advocacy Standards for the Provision of Children’s Advocacy Services set out Government policy on confidentiality. They state that advocacy services should have a clear policy based on the concept of ‘significant harm’ and make sure that this policy should be publicised to all those using the service. Advocacy services must be clear about how they identify a level of concern that would trigger the making of a referral to social services, particularly when such a step takes place without the consent of the child and young person. Where there are concerns about a child’s welfare the procedures set out in *Working Together to Safeguard Children – A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the Welfare of Children* (1999) should be followed. The policy of the advocacy service should incorporate a requirement that advocates are fully conversant with legislation and practice guidance relating to child protection as well as local policies and procedures.
- 6.7 The local authority should satisfy itself that the organisation it commissions to provide advocacy services has effective arrangements in place to ensure that all advocates, their supervisors and managers of advocacy services are trained and able to demonstrate the appropriate level of knowledge and competence to understand and operate these requirements. The local Area Child Protection Committee should be consulted about providing appropriate training.

### What to Do If You’re Worried A Child Is Being Abused

- 6.8 On 19th May *What to do if you are worried a child is being abused* (2003), was issued by six Government departments. The booklet communicates directly with people working with children and families and explains their role in the safeguarding process. It applies to all children and young people, irrespective of whether they are living at home with their families and carers or away from home. The booklet is designed to help people protect children more



effectively, through a better understanding of what to do about any concerns, and particularly, when to refer them to social services.

- 6.9 This practice guidance briefly summarises the key processes but does not replace *Working Together to Safeguard Children* (1999) or the *Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families* (2000). It includes an appendix on information sharing to assist practitioners understand how to share information about children and their families in a lawful and ethical manner.

2004 No.

**CHILDREN AND YOUNG PERSONS, ENGLAND**

**The Representations Procedure (Children) (Advocacy Services)  
Regulations 2004**

*Made* - - - -

*Laid before Parliament*

*Coming into force* - - -

The Secretary of State for Education and Skills, in exercise of the powers conferred upon him by sections 24D(2), 26(5) and (6), 26A(3) and (4) and 104(4) of the Children Act 1989(a) and of all other powers enabling him in that behalf hereby makes the following Regulations:-

**Citation, commencements and application**

1.—(1) These Regulations may be cited as the Representations Procedure (Children) (Advocacy Services) Regulations 2004 and shall come into force on [1st April] 2004.

(2) These Regulations apply to England only

**Interpretation**

2.—(1) In these Regulations—

“the Act” means the Children Act 1989;

“advocacy services” means the arrangements made by a local authority for the provision of assistance;

“advocate” means a person who provides assistance;

“assistance” means assistance, including assistance by way of representation, to —

(a) persons who make or intend to make representations under section 24D of the Act; and

(b) children who make or intend to make representations under section 26(3) of the Act;

“complainant” means a person making representations under section 24D of the Act or a child falling within 26(3)(a) of the Act making a complaint under section 26(3) of the Act;

“representations” means representations under section 24D(1) or, as the case may be, section 26(3) of the Act;

“the Representations Regulations” means the Representations Procedure (Children) Regulations 1991(b)

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(a) 1989 c.41.

(b) SI 1991/894; relevant amending instruments are S.I. 1991/2033, 2001/2874.

“the Representations Regulations” means the Representations Procedure (Children) Regulations 1991<sup>(b)</sup>

### **Persons who may not provide assistance**

3. A person may not provide assistance if—
- (a) he is the subject of the representations;
  - (b) he manages the service which is the subject of the representations;
  - (c) he has control over the resources allocated to the service which is the subject of the representations;
  - (d) he is or may become involved in the consideration of the representations on behalf of the local authority.

### **Information to be provided to a complainant etc.**

- 4.—(1) Where a local authority receive representations from a complainant they must—
- (a) provide him with information about advocacy services; and
  - (b) offer him help in finding an advocate.
- (2) Where a local authority become aware that a person or child intends to make representations under section 24D or, as the case may, section 26(3) they must—
- (a) provide the person or child with information about advocacy services; and
  - (b) offer him help in finding an advocate.

### **Monitoring of compliance with the Regulations**

5. A local authority must monitor the steps that they have taken with a view to ensuring that they comply with these Regulations.

### **Amendment of the Representations Regulations**

- 6.—(1) The Representations Regulations shall be amended as follows.
- (2) In regulation 2(1) (interpretation) insert “section 24D or 26(3) advocate” means a person appointed to provide assistance (including assistance by way of representation) to a person who has made representations under section 24D or a child who has made representations under section 26(3)”.
- (3) In regulation 4 (preliminaries)—
- (a) In paragraph (2) after the word “complainant” insert “and any section 24D or 26(3) advocate”;
  - (b) In paragraph (2A) after the word “complainant” insert “and any section 24D or 26(3) advocate”.
- (4) In regulation 7 (withdrawal of representations) after the word “them” insert “or any section 24D or 26(3) advocate”.
- (5) In regulation 8 (notification to complainant and reference to panel)—
- (a) in paragraph (1)(a) after the word “complainant” insert “and any section 24D or 26(3) advocate”;
  - (b) in paragraph (2) after the word “complainant” insert “or any section 24D or 26(3) advocate”;
  - (c) in paragraph 5(a) after the word “complainant” insert “any section 24D or 26(3) advocate”; and
  - (d) in paragraph (6) after the word “meeting” in second place where it occurs “by any section 24D or 26(3) advocate or” and after the word “nominate” insert “the section 24D or 26(3) advocate or”.
- (6) In regulation 9(2)(b)(7) after the word “complainant” insert “and any section 24D or 26(3) advocate”.

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<sup>(b)</sup> SI 1991/894; relevant amending instruments are S.I. 1991/2033, 2001/2874.

## **Transitional provisions**

7.—(1) Where at the time that these Regulations come into force a complainant has made representations to the local authority and the procedure for considering the representations has not come to an end, then, subject to the provisions of paragraph (2), the local authority must provide the complainant with the information and assistance which the local authority are required to provide under regulation 4.

(2) For the purpose of paragraph (1) the procedure for considering the representations is to be treated as at an end once the panel have considered the representations in accordance with regulation 8 of the Representations Regulations even if they have not made their recommendation in accordance with regulation 9 of the Representations Regulations.

### **EXPLANATORY NOTE**

*(This note is not part of the Regulations)*

The Adoption and Children Act 2002 imposes a duty on local authorities to provide advocacy services for certain categories of complainant under the Children Act complaints procedure. It inserts into the Children Act 1989 a new section (section 26A) which requires local authorities to make arrangements for the provision of assistance, including assistance by way of representation, to care leavers and children who make or intend to make complaints using the Children Act complaints procedures under sections 24D and 26(3) of the Act.

These Regulations specify who may not provide assistance for a care leaver or child making such a complaint (regulation 3).

These Regulations also require local authorities to provide information about advocacy services and to offer help in finding an advocate to a child or young person who is making a complaint or, when they become aware of the fact, who intending to make a complaint (regulation 4).

Regulation 5 requires local authorities to monitor the steps that they have taken with a view to ensuring that they comply with the Regulations.

Regulation 6 amends the regulations governing the complaints procedures – the Representations Procedure (Children) Regulations 1991 – so as to ensure that an appointed advocate is involved throughout the process.

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33422 1p 3k Oct 03



<b>9 March 2017</b>	<b>ITEM: 9</b>
<b>Corporate Parenting Committee</b>	
<b>Care Leavers into Employment, Education or Training (EET)</b>	
<b>Wards and communities affected:</b> All	<b>Key Decision:</b>
<b>Report of:</b> Michele Lucas Strategic Lead Learning & Skills	
<b>Accountable Head of Service:</b> Michele Lucas Strategic Lead Learning & Skills	
<b>Accountable Director:</b> Rory Patterson	
<b>This report is Public</b>	

## Executive Summary

This report summarises our approach to improve the number of Care leavers\* into Education Employment & Training to enable them to access the regeneration opportunities in Thurrock.

\*Care leavers is the collective term used throughout this document but also includes Children in Care and Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking/Trafficked Children

### 1. Recommendation(s)

- 1.1 To support the ongoing development of the programme to enable Care Leavers to transition into EET.**
- 1.2 To recommend the activities continue to be delivered by representatives cross directorate, as well as making use of external agencies/services.**

### 2. Introduction and Background

#### 2.1 Local Policy Context

The outline proposals within this report link with the Council's corporate priorities:-

- 1. Create a place for learning & opportunity

#### **National Policy:**

According to the National Audit Office (NAH) the system for supporting young people leaving foster or residential care in England to live successful independent lives is not working effectively.

The cost of not moving into adulthood successfully is likely to be high to both care leavers and the public. The principal outcome measure is the number of care leavers not in education, employment or training (NEET). In 2013-14, 41% of 19-year-old care leavers were NEET compared with only 15% of their age peers. According to the NAO, the lifetime cost of the current cohort of 19-year-old care leavers being NEET would be around £240 million or £150 million more than if they had the same NEET rate as other 19-year-olds.

Reports in 2016 'Keep on Caring: Supporting Young People from Care to Independence' (July 2016), 'Evaluation of Better by Design: A Report for Achieving for Children' (July 2016) and 'Supporting Care Leavers to thrive: Everyone's Business' (October 2016) suggest that there needs to be a more collaborative and joined up, effective approach when supporting Looked After Children into positive destinations.

'Too often services are not joined up, meaning that care leavers do not get the whole spectrum of support they need at the right time and, in the worst cases, one bit of the system can act in a way that undermines the work that another part of the system is providing' (Timpson E. ,MP, 2016)

Furthermore, the Department for Education is currently reviewing the role of Personal Adviser to maximise contact time between them and the young people as well as reviewing the knowledge and skills that is required to perform the role effectively.

#### **Local Arrangements:**

In May 2011, the Learning & Skills team secured funding to create a pilot to enable vulnerable young people to access apprenticeship opportunities. Thurrock Council's decision was to focus on Care leavers, (aged 18-24 years). A personalised programme of support was created to improve skills and abilities before work experience and an apprenticeship. The pilot ran for a year, was successful and during this pilot phase was embedded across a range of services.

Over the past 5 years, the model has changed and in June 2015, representatives from 5 different teams, within Thurrock Council, formed a strategy group to increase the number of Care leavers into EET. The group defined the purpose of the work as:

Improving access of care leavers into EET so they can benefit from the significant regeneration programme underway in Thurrock.

This work directly contributes to the Child Poverty strategy and national strategies to reduce reliance on the benefits system and ensure that the service continues to address local inequities.

#### **Progress to date:**

February 2017 figures show that 20.2% of Care leavers (aged 17-21 years) are NEET. This is a significant improvement since July 2016 when 30.8% NEET figure was recorded. These successes are due to a range of factors, and are outlined below:-

The opportunity to extend the former Diversity in Apprenticeship review group to include staff from different teams which is an effective mechanism for progress checks, understanding the challenges, identifying/engaging further services etc.

Planning for care leavers has been significantly improved with joint visits, faster progression and increased expertise/contacts for the care leaver ongoing. Qualified Personal Advisers from Inspire - Careers have direct experience of care leavers and work closely with colleagues from other service areas to support young people into EET. The service recognises the challenges that are faced by this group and as a result each experience triggers cross directorate conversation, reallocation of resource, and different approaches to enable access into EET.

Developing this strategic approach has sharpened the focus on the suitability of every programme on offer and whether it will be accessible by care leavers and how we secure their engagement. We continue to consult with care leavers in the development of Inspire.

There has been a number of individualised programmes generated to re-engage those looked after young people who are not yet ready for full time commitment with education on a five day per week basis. The Department for Education has recognised this characteristic of looked after young people and is encouraging local authorities to re-engage these vulnerable young people in bite sized programmes, individually tailored to their needs with a clear progression to more substantial training and education in the future. This has had the most positive effect on the NEET figures for looked after children.

There is increased awareness, amongst teams outside of children's services of the need to create positive employer encounters for care leavers. As a result, many are willing to create work experience placements, along with constructive feedback to this group to enable targeted support.

The senior management team is committed to creating an environment where care leavers can experience 6 months employment to develop useful skills in the workplace. In May 2014, Thurrock Council reviewed its pay policy to provide national minimum wage rates to apprentices whose performance is satisfactory after 6 months employment. For an 18-20 year old, this almost doubled their salary. We have created a useful resource to support apprentices to manage their low income, which has been written with care leavers in mind.

### **Specialised Support:**

The service includes a Careers Adviser who specialises in support for teenage parents. There are effective mechanisms in place for care leavers accessing appropriate services utilising the children centres and the programmes that they offer.

In addition there is an adult programme that targets parents for education into employment. Care leavers are encouraged to join the programme that provides English and Maths refreshers, skills workshops and volunteering opportunities to build confidence to lead to employment

The Careers and Enterprise Company funding secured in Thurrock is already creating ideas/plans for different types of employer encounters that may appeal to care leavers (such as World at Work days, mock interviews, work shadowing for building skills and citizenship).

We are working with National Collaborative Outreach Programme (NCOP) to increase entry into HE for young people in nine wards in Thurrock by providing access to individualised support, advice and guidance as well as workshops and summer schools. This programme starts in January 2017 and focuses on care leavers.

We have formed a partnership with UCL (in its second year) to enable a small cohort of gifted students, including gifted care leavers, to access 'Thurrock UCL Summer Challenge', an innovative outreach programme delivering skills for entry into a Russell Group University.

We are working with high profile, local key priority sector employers that are actively contributing to Thurrock's regeneration programme to create opportunities for local young people including care leavers. The Royal Opera House, Port of Tilbury, London Gateway, Intu, Park Inn, Wates, Keepmoat are adept at securing funding that translates into the delivery of workplace skills.

The successful funding application for the Youth Employment Initiative enables additional capacity to tackle some of the challenges and extend targets for care leavers to set up their own business.

There are two innovative programmes in addition to Diversity into Apprenticeships programme, both run by two personal advisers from Inspire Careers. The first programme (in its second year) is within the Duke of Edinburgh framework where personal advisers have been working with a cohort of looked after or care leavers young people. The group currently consists of 8 boys (aged 15 and 19 years) working towards completing a Bronze Duke of Edinburgh award meeting weekly on Thursday evenings at the Inspire Youth Hub. The four areas of the awards being worked on are expedition, physical, skill and volunteering. The programme is designed to broaden the young people's outlook on life and the opportunities available to them increasing their self-esteem and promoting their engagement in EET. The outcomes of this programme is significant re-engagement with the eight most vulnerable looked after young people which provides a positive

destination and takes them off the NEET register as a re-engagement programme.

The second programme, Independent Living Skills programme, aims to assist young people's transition into becoming independent adults who are actively engaged with local communities. This programme will be delivered in partnership with Inspire Careers and the Leaving & Aftercare Team and meets a developmental need identified in the recent OFSTED inspection.

Inspire Personal Advisers have prepared a scheme of work and accompanying lesson plans, activities and teaching materials. Weekly sessions will focus on practical issues facing young people leaving care, such as accommodation, managing bank accounts, food shopping and budgeting. There is a focus on EET and on the support available to care leavers in this area, such as discretionary housing payments. Activities deal with real life scenarios and should help to equip participants with some of the knowledge and skills they will need to avoid or overcome potential barriers to entering or remaining in EET. The aim of the programme is to build up independent living skills of the looked after young people, increasing their confidence and preparing them for the world of independence and employment.

### **3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options**

#### **3.1 The Challenges:**

Tracking care leavers across directorate, where services have responsibility for different age ranges (Inspire Careers 16-19 years, After Care 17-21 years, Virtual School 4-18 years, Employability & Skills 16-24 years) and two unconnected databases is time consuming.

There are fewer low entry level courses available, roll on roll off in Thurrock. A direct result of changes in Government funding/strategic decisions by delivery partners where the most vulnerable young people are high risk for college success rates.

Young people's bursaries are processed by FE/HE providers. South Essex College is removing the cost of transport and food at source whether or not the care leaver accesses these. This has resulted in weekly payments to students of £7 (£30+ in 2014/15).

The key priority growth sectors are focused on business development. Their staffing structure is very lean which makes investing sufficient time, to care leavers in the workplace, very challenging, however the work of the employer engagement team has continued to support local employers in the recruitment and ongoing development of care Leavers into work experience and apprenticeships.

Despite this effective, targeted approach, care leavers remain a vulnerable cohort. The service recently prepared a case study detailing the

support/interventions provided over a 4 month period to one local care leaver to explore where further modifications should be made, so improvements can be made to the number of Care leavers into EET and break the patterns of negative behaviour.

JobCentre Plus do not formally recognise regular engagement/training by this group as 'preparation for work' which means that care leavers must participate in JCP courses for benefits to continue. The sometimes haphazard lives of care leavers often results in stop start payment of benefits. Support by the Corporate Parent is time consuming and causes delays in other work/positive progress.

#### **4. Reasons for Recommendation**

- 4.1 To ensure we fulfil our corporate role and responsibility to our young people and help engage the young people back into employment, education or training, whilst taking advantage of Thurrock's regeneration opportunities.

#### **5. Consultation (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)**

- 5.1 Children's Overview and Scrutiny Committee

#### **6. Impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance and community impact**

- 6.1 This report contributes to the following corporate priorities:  
- Create a great place for learning and opportunity

#### **7. Implications**

##### **7.1 Financial**

Implications verified by: **Jo Freeman**  
**Management Accountant**

This report has no financial implications, but recognises the realignment of services to support young people in the care of the Local Authority.

##### **7.2 Legal**

Implications verified by: **Lindsey Marks**  
**Principal Solicitor Children's Safeguarding**

The Committee is asked to note the report content under the remit of the Committee's terms of reference and powers.

### 7.3 **Diversity and Equality**

Implications verified by: **Becky Price**  
**Community Development Officer**

Supporting our young people in our care is a key strategic priority for Thurrock Council, we ensure that we can utilise our powers to positively discriminate in supporting young care leavers into education employment or training. Where possible we actively promote the recruitment of care leavers recognising the need to provide additional support to the children in the Local Authority's care. We actively seek the views of young people to shape the programmes on offer and continue to utilise partnership approaches to secure positive outcomes.

### 7.4 **Other implications** (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder)

- None.

### 8. **Background papers used in preparing the report** (including their location on the Council's website or identification whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

- None.

### 9. **Appendices to the report**

- None.

#### **Report Author:**

Michele Lucas  
Strategic Lead Learning & Skills  
Learning & Skills

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**Corporate Parenting Committee  
Work Programme  
2016/17**

Dates of Meetings: ~~5 July 2016, 4 October 2016~~, 10 January 2017, 9 March 2017

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Lead Officer</b>	<b>Requested by Officer/Member</b>
<b>5 July 2016</b>		
Placement Updates of Care Packages	Paul Coke / Andrew Carter	Members
Passports and Bank Accounts held by Looked After Children	Paul Coke	Members
Health of Looked After Children	Andrew Carter	Members
Ofsted Report	Andrew Carter	Members
<b>4 October 2016</b>		
Improvement of iMPower Work	Paul Coke / Andrew Carter	Members
Annual Report for Independent Review Officers	Neale Laurie	Members
Recent External Placement Survey with Children in Care	Natalie Carter	Members
<b>10 January 2017</b>		
Placement Updates of Care Packages	Paul Coke / Andrew Carter	Members
James Serious Case Review	Andrew Carter	Members
Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health Service	Sue Green	Members
Independent Review Officer Feedback	Neale Laurie	Members

Updated: October 2016

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Performance Dashboard	Andrew Carter	Members
Educational Attainments and Academic Reports of Looked After Children and Care Leavers	Keeley Pullen	Members
<b>9 March 2017</b>		
Placement Updates of Care Packages	Paul Coke / Andrew Carter	Members
Update on Ofsted Action Plan	Andrew Carter	Members
The Children In Care Pledge	Paul Coke / Natalie Carter	Members
Care Leavers in Employment	Michelle Lucas	Members
Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health Service	Paula McCullough	Members