

3 March 2016		ITEM: 8
Corporate Parenting Committee		
Children in Care Pledge Update		
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: Non-key	
Report of: Paul Coke, Service Manager, Through Care Service and Natalie Carter, Open Door		
Accountable Head of Service: Andrew Carter, Head of Care and Targeted Outcomes		
Accountable Director: David Archibald, Interim Corporate Director of Children's Services		
This report is Public		

Executive Summary

This report provides information about Thurrock's Pledge.

1. Recommendation(s)

That members:

- 1.1 Support the amended Pledge.**
- 1.2 Agree that the Pledge is monitored and reviewed by the Children in Care Council (CiCC) on a yearly basis and a report provided to the Committee.**
- 1.3 Agree that a review of the Pledge's content by the CiCC will take place every two years.**

2. Introduction and Background

- 2.1 The Pledge is a requirement directed by the Government in their documents, 'Care Matters: Transforming the Lives of Children and Young People in Care', October 2006 and 'Time for Change' published in June 2007.**
- 2.2 These documents require local authorities to adopt a pledge that should be developed by the Children in Care Council, which in turn should then be**

adopted by the local authority as a key communication tool that develops partnership working with the children and young people, plus a tool for challenge.

- 2.3 The Children in Care Council, along with the Department, have reviewed the current Pledge and made amendments which were approved in June 2015.
- 2.4 The amended Pledge consists of promises made to young people in the care of Thurrock Council. It is an agreement between the children/young people and Thurrock Council who, as corporate parents, are represented by Councillors, the Chief Executive, the Director and Head of Services and other officers.
- 2.5 These promises cover a number of aspects of a child/young person's life which will enable them to reach their full potential.
- 2.6 The Pledge applies to all children and young people who are looked after and have left care by Thurrock Council regardless of where they are placed.
- 2.7 The promises are categorised into the five outcomes that were previously used within the Care Matters Agenda and Ofsted reports:
 - Health
 - Stay Safe
 - Enjoying and Achieving
 - Making a positive contribution
 - Economic well-being
- 2.8 The amendments to the Pledge are as follows:
 - social workers will visit at least twelve times a year and give you the opportunity to meet with them independently during this visit (Amendment 1)
 - giving you access to life story work in conjunction with Thurrock's life story policy including a book/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 (Amendment 2)
 - social workers should give young people their contact details such as email, mobile number and/or office number (Amendment 3)
 - Respect your privacy when possible (Amendment 4)
 - We will seek your views about contact arrangements and support you in attending family contacts (Amendment 5)
 - Supporting you in opening a bank account/savings account (Amendment 6)
 - Providing you with identification such as passport, birth certificate or alternative identification available to you (Amendment 7)

- Supporting you to have access to your files (Amendment 8)

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

- 3.1 The Pledge is an integral part of how the local authority and the children and young people of Thurrock work together in improving services and outcomes for young people, plus a mechanism for challenge where appropriate.
- 3.2 The Pledge has now been updated to reflect the current climate and view of the Children in Care Council.
- 3.3 The Children in Care Council's view is that the Pledge may not fulfil everyone's needs. All young people who spend time in the care system will have a different experience of being in care.
- 3.4 The Children in Care Council would like all young people in Thurrock's care system to feel happy, safe and secure and that they are given the same opportunities of other young people within the borough.
- 3.5 The Children in Care Council will send a short survey to looked after young people aged 8 – 18 asking key questions about the Pledge. This will allow the Children in Care Council to gather information and measure the impact the Pledge has on those in Thurrock's care. The Children in Care Council will also obtain permission to raise issues that may arise from the survey if there are areas where the Pledge is not being kept. This survey will be completed between the months of April 2016 – June 2016.
- 3.6 The Children in Care Council would like to publicise the key elements of the Pledge document by producing a short video clip/film during 2016. This will better inform young people. Using a visual aid will accompany the pledge booklet and allow the key elements to be focused on. The video clip will be available for all professionals to use and will be incorporated into social worker/foster care training, which will include induction.

4. Reasons for Recommendation

- 4.1 The Pledge is a key tool which the children and young people can use to challenge and judge the services provided by the local authority.
- 4.2 It is a duty and responsibility for the local authority to ensure it has an up to date Pledge that all children and young people who are looked after are aware of and have access to.

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

- 5.1 None

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

6.1 The Council's responsibilities for looked after children and care leavers are unique and sit at the heart of all priorities.

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Kay Goodacre**
Finance Manager

The local authority will fund the printing of the Pledge through our Communications Department. It will then be disseminated to all looked after children.

7.2 Legal

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

As part of the local authority's statutory requirements, a Pledge needs to be available to all looked after children and young people. The Pledge needs to be readily available and accessible to all.

7.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Natalie Warren**
Community Development and Equality Manager

The Pledge is an important part of how the Council and the children and young people of Thurrock work together to improve services and outcomes for young people. As the Pledge is a document for all our looked after children and young people, it will be made widely available including on relevant websites. In addition, it can be made available in different languages and for those that are visually impaired upon request.

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

Not applicable.

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):

- N/A/

9. Appendices to the report

Appendix 1 - The Pledge

Report Author:

Paul Coke

Service Manager, Through Care Service

Children's Services