

Briefing Note to Corporate Parenting Committee in regard to
Actions from the Ofsted Inspection of Safeguarding & Looked After Children
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There are three particular actions from the Ofsted SLAC Inspection which are especially relevant to the Corporate Parenting Committee:

- *“Increase the range of social and leisure activities for looked after children and care leavers to enable them to explore available options and create friendships and social networks to build resilience for the future”*
- *“Ensure review reports are distributed within set time scales”*
- *“NHS South Essex, the Council and North East London NHS Foundation Trust should ensure that there is effective communication and service cohesion between the looked after children health team and specialist child and adolescent mental health and substance misuse services facilitating the delivery of good outcomes for individual children”*

The Inspection Action Plan is attached for information and progress on the above points are as follows:

1. Social and Leisure Activities

The primary source of support for children to develop their interests is the placement where they live and a local, personal lifestyle is the ideal for every child. However, all children who are looked after benefit from meeting and knowing others in similar situations and there are some children who can only cope with a more sheltered and managed activity. Both these needs are met by our Oaktree Resource Centre, coupled with the social work teams also contributing some time to leisure activities which are specifically for looked after children. This time when children and their social workers are together in more relaxed situations has additional benefits in children getting to know their social worker and feeling more relaxed and able to confide in them. Likewise, social workers can see and assess the ‘whole child’ instead of concentrating only on their difficulties. In these aspects, Thurrock performs well and there is also an element of relieving and supporting foster carers when they are busy and under pressure. Sample activities for the half term break are also attached. However, Inspectors were concerned that we do not have privileged access to local sport facilities for our looked after children and young people and since the Inspection, the Service Manager for Through Care Services has initiated contact with Impulse Leisure to discuss this. Progress has been hindered by Impulse Leisure’s availability.

2. Distribution of Review Reports

Unfortunately, the Inspection took place when we had already recognised and acknowledged that there was room for improvement in terms of the distribution of Review Reports which was due, in part, to a sad level of serious illness within the team, coupled with a rising number of looked after children creating more review requirements. There is still a lower level of administrative support than is needed, despite replacement staff covering this work. We are now achieving an 80% distribution within time scales but recognise that anything less than 100% is undesirable.

3. Children in Care Council (CICC) Engaging in Health Care

The Through Care Team Manager who leads on health issues has attended the CICC with the Looked After Children's Nurse and the Nurse for Sexual Health on 25th September 2012 which was well received and will continue.

An interview session was led by the CICC about the experience of review of health assessment and from this we are exploring the possibility of providing more options/choice about the venue of review health assessments without impacting on the completion of the assessments within timescales.

The meeting also discussed other areas which included smoking and smoking cessation and the older children/young people appeared interested in issues relating to consent, confidentiality and information sharing.

Officers will be guided by the meeting as to how updates are to be delivered.

Barbara Foster
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