

<b>7 March 2013</b>		<b>ITEM 6</b>
<b>Corporate Parenting Committee</b>		
<b>Leisure Activities for looked after children</b>		
<b>Report of:</b> Paul Coke, Service Manager, Through Care Services		
<b>Wards and communities affected:</b> None	<b>Key Decision:</b> Non-key	
<b>Accountable Head of Service:</b> Barbara Foster, Head of Care and Targeted Outcomes		
<b>Accountable Director:</b> Jo Olsson, Corporate Director, People Services		
<b>This report is</b> Public		
<b>Purpose of Report:</b> To provide the Corporate Parenting Committee with information and an update as to the leisure activities provided for our looked after children.		

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This report provides information on the activities the Local Authority has provided to its looked after children and care leavers.

It provides evidence as to how we have addressed this issue which was highlighted in the Ofsted Report dated July 2012.

This report also addresses how we have achieved our target within the Department's Ofsted Action Plan.

This report and its contents are written from an officer perspective.

### **1. RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- 1.1 **Members are asked to consider this report to provide information that can be used as a measure to the Department's performance in respect to leisure activities and enable us to plan and develop services that will move the Department forward in this respect.**

## 2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND:

- 2.1 At the Corporate Parenting Committee held on the 10 July 2012 the Committee agreed to add to the agenda for September 2012, but was then postponed until March 2013, a report on the development of leisure activities for our looked after children.
- 2.2 In the Ofsted Inspection Report dated the 27<sup>th</sup> July 2012, the Inspection gave the Department a grading of 2 (Good) for the category of **Enjoying and achieving**.
- 2.3 Within this category the following comments were made *‘However the range of mainstream cultural and leisure options available is not wide enough for looked after children and care leavers to promote long term resilience through the development of new skills and social networks’*.
- 2.4 In order to address this, as part of the Department’s Ofsted Action Plan one of the actions was to increase the range of social and leisure activities for both our looked after children and care leavers.
- 2.5 Thurrock’s Pledge also makes the promise that it will aid all young people in accessing libraries, youth clubs and positive activities.
- 2.6 The Department will need to continue to address this area, especially with the new Ofsted Inspection of services for looked after children and care leavers, which comes into force on the 1 April 2013.
- 2.7 Within these new arrangements this area will be part of the structure that makes the judgement on **Outcomes for children and young people looked after and care leavers**.

## 3.0 PERFORMANCE:

- 3.1 Members will be interested in the specific activities arranged for our looked after children, which are as follows:
- In July/August (summer break) 2012, 20 looked after children aged 7-18 attended 3 or more of the planned activities. 5 looked after children aged 3-7 attended an activity with their carer.
  - The activities consisted of Grangewaters, a day at the beach, Thorpe Park, a day at the Olympic Park etc.
  - In October 2012 37 looked after children aged 7 – 18 enjoyed a day out at Thorpe Park
  - In November 2012, 7 looked after children aged 2-9 went bowling
  - The Through Care Service is currently organising further activities for the February half term, which consists of cooking, attending the Science Museum and a trip to Grangewaters.
  - There are activities booked for the Easter break, May break and the summer break 2013.

- All these activities are funded through either the team budgets or the Virtual School for Looked after Children and are organised by staff members of the Through Care Service
  - Oaktree Resource Centre regularly provides a targeted weekly “Youth Club” for Looked After Children
- 3.2 A number of meetings have taken place with Impulse Leisure to discuss the issue of engagement and participation at their leisure centres and how we can promote this.
- 3.3 At the last meeting with the management of Impulse Leisure Centre in October 2012, it was clear that there were a number of options open to us to explore further
- 3.4 The IRO’s have begun the analysis, and have identified a wide range of existing hobbies that the children and young people have engaged in, such as swimming lessons, guitar lessons, go-karting, cinema, Beavers, Guides and Scout clubs, drama groups, boxing clubs, trampolining and Army Cadets.
- 3.5 There are some young people, mostly those over the age of 16, who are not interested in engaging in the various activities offered to them, but there have been no complaints from any child or young person that they are not being offered these opportunities.
- 3.6 Once this analysis is completed further discussions could be had with Impulse Leisure as to whether we could design a service that is more tailored to the needs of this group of children/young people.
- 3.7 Impulse Leisure has provided a Positive Activities Programme for children aged between 11-15 years. This will provide them with a free Platinum membership, valid until the 31 March 2013.
- 3.8 It will provide exclusive use of their junior gym sessions, free swimming, junior aerobics and fun sessions on a Friday evening.

#### **4. IMPACT ON CORPORATE POLICIES, PRIORITIES, PERFORMANCE AND COMMUNITY IMPACT**

- 4.1 This area is highlighted within Corporate Plans as a target.

#### **5. IMPLICATIONS**

##### **5.1 Financial**

Implications verified by: **Michael Jones**  
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**mxjones@thurrock.gov.uk**

Within the payments made to foster carers and other carers, there is an element of finance that is for leisure activities.

Currently these activities are funded by the Department and the Virtual School.  
This will be reviewed on a yearly basis.

## 5.2 **Legal**

Implications verified by: Lindsey Marks  
Telephone and email: 01375 652054  
[Lindsey.marks@BDTLegal.org.uk](mailto:Lindsey.marks@BDTLegal.org.uk)

This report is for information and there are no legal implications arising from the report.

## 5.3 **Diversity and Equality**

Implications verified by: **Samson DeAlyn**  
Telephone and email: **01375-652472**  
**sdealyn@thurrock.gov.uk**

The Department acknowledges the protected characteristics of our children and young people that are looked after. These are identified and addressed within the individual care plans and pathway plans, in which it will be critical that due account is paid to the fact that many of our Looked After Children may lack the interpersonal skills and confidence to access universal leisure services without additional support.

## 5.4 **Other implications (where significant) – i.e. Section 17, Risk Assessment, Health Impact Assessment, Sustainability, IT, Environmental**

No implications

## 6. **CONCLUSION**

- 6.1 The Department has made some progress in this area, but more needs to be done
- 6.2 The council needs to be able to produce and provide data that enables the Department to evidence this area of work not just for our looked after children, but also our care leavers
- 6.3 As the work is undertaken by staff within the teams the Department has to also acknowledge the issue of capacity especially as the numbers of looked after children are increasing, which will inevitably mean that those entitled to leaving care services will increase.

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