

5 September 2013		ITEM 6
Corporate Parenting Committee		
Participation and the Voice of Children and Young People		
Report of: Paul Coke, Service Manager, Through Care Services		
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: Non - Key	
Accountable Head of Service: Barbara Foster, Head of Service, Care and Targeted Outcomes		
Accountable Director: Carmel Littleton, Director of Children's Services		
This report is Public		
Purpose of Report: To inform the Committee as to how the Department engages with its children and young people, and how they participate in the development of services		

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides information as to the work currently undertaken in respect to how the Department involves and participates with its children and young people in the development of services and gathers their views within the legal framework.

- 1. RECOMMENDATIONS:**
 - 1.1 Further work to be undertaken with Team Managers and IRO's in ensuring children and young people have their documentation such as birth certificates and passports**
 - 1.2 Continued development of the work of the Participation and Engagement Champion's Group**
 - 1.3 Ensure all staff are aware of the new Ofsted Inspection Framework for looked after children and care leavers**
- 2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND:**
 - 2.1 Legal Context**

- 2.1.1 The Children Act 1989, section 22 makes it a duty for the local authority to ascertain the wishes and feelings of the child/young person before making a decision.
- 2.1.2 The Children and Young Persons Act 2008 makes it a duty for the IRO to ensure that the wishes and feelings of the child/young person is ascertained and given consideration by the local authority.
- 2.1.3 The IRO also has a number of other responsibilities such as promoting the voice of children and young people and monitoring the activity of the local authority as a corporate parent, through its care planning processes.
- 2.1.4 The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 12. This requires adults to take into consideration the views of the child/young person when making decisions.
- 2.2 The Corporate Parenting Committee within their current work plan have requested a report on how the Department engages with its children and young people, and how they participate in the development of services.
- 2.3 The Department invited LILAC (Leading Improvements Looked After Children) in 2011/12 to inspect our services. This was undertaken by experienced young people who had been in care in respect to engaging and participation of children and young people. They inspected the Department on 7 standards.
- 2.4 The Department was successful in this inspection and achieved the 7 standards
- 2.5 LILAC is no more, but there were a number of recommendations within their report that required follow up and it was viewed that as this was an important and integral part of the Department's work a new group evolved known as the Participation and Engagement Champions' Group, which is multi-disciplinary and chaired by a Service Manager.
- 2.6 The new Ofsted Inspection Framework is very clear that the voice of the children and young people is an integral part of their way of gathering information and ensuring their voices are listened to.
- 2.7 A piece of work was undertaken by a Team Manager responsible for leading on participation in January 2013, where he produced a discussion document for the Department to consider.

3. WORK UNDERTAKEN:

3.1 Children in Care Council (CiCC)

- 3.1.1 The CiCC was created in 2009 to support the improvement of outcomes for looked after children and those leaving care, and to act as a forum where they can be consulted on issues that affect the standard of care they receive.
- 3.1.2 The CiCC is facilitated by Open Door, with one of its main tasks to monitor the implementation of Thurrock Council's Pledge to all looked after children.

- 3.1.3 In May 2013, the CiCC reviewed the promises made by the local authority in respect to the Pledge (Appendix 1)
- 3.1.4 The Local Authority has taken on board the comments made by the CiCC and has been working with agencies such as Impulse Leisure in developing different ways to engage and encourage young people to involve themselves in keeping healthy and fit
- 3.1.5 The Local Authority has put on activities throughout the school holidays for all young people who are looked after and have left care, and have worked in partnership with Open Door around providing these activities.
- 3.1.6 The Local Authority is committed in ensuring children and young people have the required documentation when leaving care, such as birth certificates and passports
- 3.1.7 The Service Manager has completed an audit of the looked after population in respect to birth certificates and passports at the beginning of August 2013 with the result being:

	BIRTH CERTIFICATE	PASSPORT
YES	164 – 45.5%	106 – 29.4%
NO	158 – 44%	223 – 62.0%
APPLIED FOR	15 – 4.1%	10 – 2.8%
ON FILE	3 – 0.9%	N/A
HELD BY PARENTS	20 – 5.5%	21 – 6.0%

- 3.1.8 There is a tracking system through the case transfer process that enables the Department to identify those children and young people who do not have these documents and it would be expected that the IRO through the review process would also raise this issue.
- 3.1.9 It is clear we need to do more about this to ensure our young people have the documents once they are in our care.
- 3.1.10 A further theme throughout this feedback is the role of the social worker and the need for the Department to bring more issues to the CiCC for their feedback and views

3.2 Participation and Engagement Champions’ Group

3.2.1 The Action Plan for this group is as follows:

- To increase the numbers attending the CiCC
- Involve young people in the recruitment process
- Establish a clear system for seeking feedback about young people’s experience of leaving the care system

- Improve the quality of the use of feedback boxes prior to reviews
- Review feedback from previous activities and review for future activities

3.2.2 The Group has meetings booked up to December 2013.

3.3 Participation Discussion Document

3.3.1 This document made a number of recommendations such as having a dedicated participation officer for looked after children, keeping an updated list of all looked after children, monitoring the outcomes of the CiCC, ensuring good links are maintained and maintaining and updating the looked after children's website.

3.3.2 The majority of the recommendations have been discussed and implemented, in that the Team Manager responsible for participation is also the lead within the Department for the commissioning of Open Door and its current service level agreement in respect to the CiCC.

3.3.3 The Department has agreed to provide a list of all looked after children and their placement address to Open Door on a quarterly basis.

3.3.4 Unfortunately the Department has not been able to consider employing a participation officer due to the financial constraints within the Council as a whole.

4. **CONSULTATION (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)**

Not applicable

5. **IMPACT ON CORPORATE POLICIES, PRIORITIES, PERFORMANCE AND COMMUNITY IMPACT**

6. **IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 **Financial**

Implications verified by: **Sean Clark**
Telephone and email: **01375 652010**
sclark@thurrock.gov.uk

Any costs arising from this report will be met through existing budgets.

6.2 **Legal**

Implications verified by: **Lindsey Marks**
Telephone and email: **01375 652054**
Lindsey.Marks@BDTLegal.org.uk

There are no legal implications directly arising from this report.

6.3 **Diversity and Equality**

Implications verified by: **Samson De'Alyn**
Telephone and email: **01375 652 472**
sdealyn@thurrock.gov.uk

There are no diversity and equality implications directly arising from this report

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

Not applicable

7. **CONCLUSION**

- 7.1 The participation and voices of children and young people is integral to the work and development of services for those that are looked after and have left care.
- 7.2 It is therefore important we build on the work we are already doing, but also that this becomes a common theme and is evidenced through the work undertaken with our looked after children and care leavers.
- 7.3 This is encompassed within the new Ofsted framework for the Inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers.

BACKGROUND PAPERS USED IN PREPARING THIS REPORT:

- Participation Discussion Document

APPENDICES TO THIS REPORT:

- Pledge Feedback from CiCC members – Appendix 1

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