

4 October 2016		ITEM: 6
Corporate Parenting Committee		
External Placement Survey with the Children in Care Council		
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: Non-key	
Report of: Children in Care Council and Natalie Carter (Open Door)		
Accountable Head of Service: Andrew Carter, Children`s Social Care		
Accountable Director: Rory Patterson, Corporate Director of Children`s Services		
This report is Public		

Executive Summary

This report informs members of the committee of the conclusions from the external (outside of Thurrock) placements survey carried out by young people within the Children in Care Council.

1. Recommendation(s)

- 1.1 Corporate Parenting Committee to continue to monitor external placements annually through the children in care council survey.**
- 1.2 Young people`s requests should be dealt with promptly; being placed out of the borough should not directly impact on the time taken to make decisions.**
- 1.3 To make young people aware that they may need to move back to Thurrock in the future especially once they turn 18 and provide appropriate advocacy and support.**
- 1.4 CICC to send regular newsletter /updates to those young people placed out of the borough to make them feel included within the support on offer to Thurrock looked after children.**

2. Introduction and Background

- 2.1 A request was made by the Corporate Parenting Committee for the children in care council with the support of Natalie Carter from Open Door to find out about the views of young people who are placed outside of Thurrock. The**

committee would like to know how they are feeling about being placed away from Thurrock and to make sure they are receiving the care that other young people would receive living in Thurrock.

- 2.2 The children in care council met in June 2016 to formulate questions to ask those young people placed outside of Thurrock. They agreed due to time scales and it would be a telephone survey.
- 2.3 The Independent Reviewing Officers were asked to provide telephone numbers of those young people who are in external placements. The children in care council identified this would be the most independent approach. 25 young people's details were given to the CICC.
- 2.4 The CICC with support from Natalie Carter tried to make contact with 25 young people to take part in the out of borough survey.
- 2.5 16 young people responded and they were happy to answer all 6 questions.
- 2.6 The longest distance a young person who took part in the survey placed in an external placement lived 150 miles away from Thurrock.

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

3.1 Contact with a social worker or other professional from Thurrock council

The young people were asked if they have contact with a social worker or other professional from Thurrock council, all 16 young people responded to say that they were visited by their social worker about once a month. A few young people mentioned they were visited every few months and one young person said they were visited by a different social worker each time as they had at least 5 social workers since being in care.

3.2 Young people were asked if they would like to move back to Thurrock in the future

	Yes	No	Maybe
Number of young people	5	4	7

Young people overall who are placed out of borough have mixed feelings about moving back to Thurrock.

3.3 Accessing services / activities where you live

Young people were asked if they accessed any services or took part in any activities in the area they currently live in. 11 young people responded saying yes they took part in activities and accessed services. 3 of these young people mentioned that they access a counselling service. 5 of the 16 who

took part in the survey said that they do not access any services or activities where they live.

3.4 Contact with family members

Young people were asked if they felt living outside of Thurrock affects them having contact with their family members.

	Yes	No	No contact with family
Number of young people	5	8	3

The 5 young people who responded contact was affected made the following comments:

`it makes me feel sad`.

`i did not get to see my family much and this made my relationship difficult with them`.

`hard`.

I had restricted contact with my family`.

` harder to have contact with family because it needed to be supported contact`.

3.5 Young people asked if they are happy living outside of Thurrock?

	Yes	No	Sometimes
Number of young people	12	3	1

The 3 young people who replied they are not happy living outside of Thurrock felt that they had no choice in being moved away at the time and would like to move back to Thurrock in the future. 1 out the 3 young people feel that contact arrangements are affected, the others are happy with contact and this has not been affected in anyway. All 3 young people feel safe where they are placed.

3.6 Safe

Those young people who took part in the survey were asked: Do you feel safe? Every young person answered this question with a 'yes, I do feel safe'. They all responded with a prompt answer. This shows that even though young people are placed outside of the borough and this can be as far as 150 miles away they did not feel their safety was compromised. The young people answered this question with confidence even though some young people explained during the survey that they found it difficult living away from the family.

This potentially shows that out of borough placements are chosen carefully, allowing young people to feel secure and safe a long way from home.

3.7 Further comments from young people

Young people who took part in the survey were asked at the end if there were any further comments they would like to share with the Corporate Parenting Committee. 6 young people made comments and were happy for these to be shared.

- `I would like to have stayed in the area I was moved to as I felt settled there. Due to my circumstances I had to move back to Thurrock to receive the support from the council. I have tried to move councils but this is very difficult`.
- I felt that social care did not put enough effort into my care. Things took a long time to happen whenever I asked for something. Examples of this was my pupil premium, visits to my family always took a long time to plan and some of my general issues were never dealt with`.
- Not enough information was given to me about moving placements and I was not informed this was going to happen until the time it took place. I found this quite daunting when miles away from my home town. I think young people need to be kept informed when they are being moved away`.
- Since I have been in foster care I have lived just outside Thurrock and have easy access even though I am placed outside of Thurrock.
- I get frustrated when my carers have to ask my social worker if I can do things. Most people who live with parents are allowed to make decisions why cant my foster carer. A decision can sometimes take along time and this stops me doing things that I want to do.
- It annoys me that I can not see my friends and family whenever want, travelling to Thurrock takes most of the day`.

4. Reasons for Recommendation

- 4.1 To ensure that young people placed of outside of Thurrock are not disadvantaged by being outside of the borough.
- 4.2 To monitor the support young people receive in maintaining contact with their family (significant individuals).
- 4.3 That Children's Social Care provide a clear plan to those young people living outside of the borough as to how and when they will see their family. Supporting them to maintain family relationships where possible.
- 4.4 Young people's requests should be dealt with promptly; being placed out of the borough should not directly impact on the time taken to make decisions. There should not be a delay in communicating these decisions to the young

person and they should not be denied any opportunity a young person would be given living in Thurrock.

4.5 Foster Carers to have clear and appropriate 'delegated authority' to make the day to day decisions for young people who they care for.

4.6 To ensure that young people are consulted and feel able to shape their own care plans including regarding decisions to move back to Thurrock or stay in another area post 18.

4.7 To ensure that young people outside of Thurrock are able to benefit from Staying Put where this is the right option for them and have advocacy when needed to express their wishes and feelings.

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

5.1 This report is the findings of the Children in Care Council and is based on a survey of a cohort of Looked After Children living in placements outside of the borough of Thurrock.

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

6.1 N/A

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Kay Goodacre**
Finance Manager
Children and Adults

The financial impact of placements outside the borough will mainly be on social work time in terms of distance. The cost of placements will be dependent upon the type of placement the children/young people reside in.

Increasing the supply and availability of low in-house foster placements will be financially more cost effective and assist in promoting better outcomes for young people. Some young people will continue to require specialist placements that are not available within the borough.

7.2 Legal

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

Thurrock Council has a legal obligation to promote contact and the welfare of looked after children wherever they are placed.

7.3 **Diversity and Equality**

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

It is important when placing children/young people outside of the authority that they are able to access and be part of their communities and that the placement is able to address their religious, cultural, gender, linguistic, sexual orientation and any needs arising out of a disability or special need.

It would be useful for any future survey to explore how young people feel their needs arising out of diversity and equality are being met.

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

The placements and the agencies that manage the placements should all be aware of issues such as health and safety, their responsibility under the Crime and Disorder legislation etc, and ensure they have policies and procedures that reflect their work

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**

- Appendix 1- Questions for the young people

Report Author:

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Open Door

Children in Care Council