

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD - 21st July 2014

Title of paper:	LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN REVIEW PARTICIPATION	
Director(s)/ Corporate Director(s):	Alison Michalska – Corporate Director for Children & Adults Helen Blackman – Director for Children’s Social Care	Wards affected: ALL
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Other colleagues who have provided input:	Elise Darragh 0115 8764844	
Date of consultation with Portfolio Holder(s) (if relevant)	1st July 2014	
Relevant Council Plan Strategic Priority:		
Cutting unemployment by a quarter		<input type="checkbox"/>
Cut crime and anti-social behaviour		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Ensure more school leavers get a job, training or further education than any other City		<input type="checkbox"/>
Your neighbourhood as clean as the City Centre		<input type="checkbox"/>
Help keep your energy bills down		<input type="checkbox"/>
Good access to public transport		<input type="checkbox"/>
Nottingham has a good mix of housing		<input type="checkbox"/>
Nottingham is a good place to do business, invest and create jobs		<input type="checkbox"/>
Nottingham offers a wide range of leisure activities, parks and sporting events		<input type="checkbox"/>
Support early intervention activities		<input type="checkbox"/>
Deliver effective, value for money services to our citizens		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Summary of issues (including benefits to citizens/service users):		
<p>The report sets out the current position in relation to the participation of children in their looked after reviews and notes that there continues to be improved performance and has assisted in children and young people having a voice in such processes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children and young people have been contacting their Independent Reviewing Officer [IRO] between meetings. • IROs have continued to speak with children and Young people before meetings • IROs, despite the impact of caseloads, have seen a few young people between meetings. • ‘Your IRO’ leaflet has been available for children and young people • There is IRO representation at the Children in Care Council. This offers an additional forum for children in care to share their experiences with an IRO and for this to be fed back to the team. • Policy and procedure developed with regard to young people classed as being in care by virtue of being remanded <p>Information is presented in relation to suggested ways for continued improvement in performance</p>		
Recommendation(s):		
1	The Board are asked to note the current levels of performance in relation to children and young people participation	
2	The Board are asked to note the suggested improvements in relation to performance	

1. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

It is important for there to be continued performance in relation to participation, and creating and using other media to encourage this.

IRO caseloads have impacted upon the IROs ability to see the child between reviews – reduction in caseloads would ensure that the service became more IRO handbook compliant

2. BACKGROUND (INCLUDING OUTCOMES OF CONSULTATION)

2.1 This report gives a detailed analysis in respect of the participation of Children in Care within their Looked After Reviews.

For the purpose of this report participation refers to the definition of PAF C63 which is:

‘ The number of children and young people (aged 4 years and above) who communicated their views specifically for each of their statutory reviews as a percentage of the number of children and young people who had been looked after at 31st March for more than 4 weeks (i.e. more than 28 days inclusive of 31st March)

2.2 There are a range of ways in which children and young people participate and they have a choice about these options.

Participation within the performance indicator covers this range:

- * Attended and spoke for self
- * Attended, conveyed views symbolically
- * Attended, views represented by advocate or IRO
- * Not attended, views represented by 3rd party
- * Not attended, written views conveyed

[see appendix 1 for a detailed breakdown]

2.3 In the report presented to Corporate Parenting Board dated 3rd June 2013 the following measures were proposed to be developed:

- Reduction in IRO caseloads so that they are compliant with statutory guidance. This will then allow IRO to see more children and young people between looked after reviews
- Distribution of ‘Your IRO leaflet’ to children and young people in care. A draft of this leaflet was raised with the Children in Care Council and their suggested amendments noted
- Development of protocols for young people remanded by youth justice courts within the Legal Aid, Sentencing Punishment of Offender Act 2012 resulting in this cohort of children being classed as children looked after.

2.4 Although two additional posts were added [recruited November 2013] demand has also increased. The recent Ofsted inspection report commented that the high caseloads limited the IROs capacity to use their independent challenge and to see children and young people between reviews. On 31st March there were 560 children in care, and 479 children subject to child protection plans.

In order to address this there has been a further increase in staffing capacity, which in turn has resulted in lower caseloads, allowing IROs the capacity to arrange to see children between reviews.

The purpose of visiting children is not only a statutory requirement but facilitates a good relationship and offers young people the chance to raise concerns

- 2.5 The 'Your IRO' leaflet has been shared with children and young people, particularly for older children when they first become accommodated.
- 2.6 There is a robust process in place for young people placed at YOI, including a detailed detention placement plan that focuses on assisting the young person to look at ways to prevent reoffending. One YOI commented on how useful the detention plan was and that not other local authority provided them with one.
- 2.7 In order to ensure continued improvement it was proposed that alongside the measures currently in place the following should also be developed:
- * Recruitment of staff to reduce caseloads
 - * Continue to develop ways to engage children and young people making use of other media
 - * Split functions within the IRO team, having IROs dedicated to looked after children and ensuring that the service is IRO compliant.
- 2.8 In order to ensure continued improvement it was proposed that alongside the measures currently in place the following should also be developed:
- * Further recruitment of staff to reduce caseloads
 - * Continue to develop ways to engage children and young people making use of other media
 - * Split functions within the IRO team, having IROs dedicated to looked after children and ensuring that the service is IRO Handbook compliant
- 2.9 The current percentage of young people participating in their review is higher than last year. 95.5% participated in 2013-14 compared to 92.6% in 2012-13.

3. OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED IN MAKING RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 None

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS (INCLUDING VALUE FOR MONEY/VAT)

- 4.1 Children's views in relation to their looked after plans are critical in ensuring delivery of the plan within an appropriate timeframe. This will prevent children from drifting within the care system leading to improved outcomes and increased value for money and ensures children experience services as meaningful.

5. RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES (INCLUDING LEGAL IMPLICATIONS AND CRIME AND DISORDER ACT IMPLICATIONS)

- 5.1 Participation of Children in Care in their care planning process ensures that the views of our most vulnerable children and young people are listened to. It also enables them to develop skills necessary to contribute to the wider community when they reach independence.

6. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Has the equality impact been assessed?

Not needed (report does not contain proposals or financial decisions)

No

Yes – Equality Impact Assessment attached

Due regard should be given to the equality implications identified in the EIA.

7. LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS OTHER THAN PUBLISHED WORKS OR THOSE DISCLOSING CONFIDENTIAL OR EXEMPT INFORMATION

7.1 None

8. PUBLISHED DOCUMENTS REFERRED TO IN COMPILING THIS REPORT

8.1 None

Appendix 1

