

**Report for Corporate Parenting Group regarding the Open Day held for Councillors and senior managers on January 28<sup>th</sup> entitled “The Journey of a child through Care”.**

Over the last three years a number of training courses have been run for Councillors in respect to their role as Corporate Parents for Looked after Children in Southend. This has been run at two levels. Level one being a general overview of their role and responsibilities and how they can best meet these and Level two being for those Councillors who have direct responsibility for children’s services, to give a more detailed understanding of their role and how through corporate groups such as People’s Scrutiny, they can ask relevant questions of Officers to ensure that the best interests of Looked after Children are being monitored and met.

It was agreed that an Open Event showing “the journey of a child through care” would support Councillors in understanding the system under which they hold their role and responsibilities and would be more accessible to some Councillors who had been unable to attend the formal training sessions.

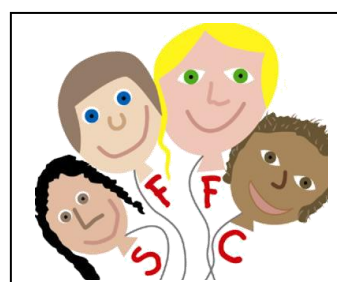
All attendees were given a sheet showing several possible case studies to support them in asking relevant questions of each team. (appendix 1)

On entering the session, the first table showed the work of the First Contact Team – the front door of Children’s services.



This enabled those visiting the event to talk with staff about the initial response that is received when the public or partner agencies make contact with Southend Children’s Services. Alongside this team were the Children with Disabilities Team who are potentially the first port of call for issues relating to disability across the Borough.

Having seen the access points to mainstream services, the next table gave information about Fostering services in the Borough and the work of the Southend Foster Families Council



## Appendix 4



Visitors were told about the fostering process and how young people in Southend are supported through what can be a very traumatic process. *(They did try to recruit new carers in the process !!)*

The journey continued showing people our partner agencies who support us with our looked after children. This included health services who undertake LAC medicals; the Virtual School and NYAS, our young people's advocacy service.



Those who attended spent considerable time asking questions and making sense of how the system joins together to ensure that the voice of the child is heard and that they are always encouraged and supported to achieve the best of their potential.

To follow the journey further we had presentations from the Marigold and Allan Cole Centre's. Marigold gave information about the work undertaken with children and families including parenting assessments; keep safe work, Cognitive Behavioural Therapy; Risk Assessments; Theraplay; Parent child game interventions; Back together programmes; Look at me programme; Life story work and the Thames-Valley Partners Programme.

Information was also available about the Allan Cole Centre, now an accredited children's centre, and offering safe and assessed contact both for the Local Authority and more recently available for purchase by external agencies and the courts.



## Appendix 4

We were able to show next the reviewing office service. Visitors were able to begin to understand how this independent service fits into the mainstream work, whilst ensuring that the voice of the child is clearly heard in decision making processes.



Their presentation showed a kitchen table where everybody can sit together to ensure clear planning for those young people in care. It evidenced those people invited to the child's review and ways in which information is gained from all parties.

Having looked at the initial journey for young people in care, the event finished with a number of tables showing ways in which young people might leave the care system. This included the Care Management 16+ Team (leaving care) who showed the work that undertake with young people not only up until the age of 18 but through to at least 21 and sometimes until 25yrs of age.

The team talked about the success that Southend have had in encouraging and supporting care leavers to attend University and the range of opportunities such as apprenticeships and Higher Education that are made available, along with other creative opportunities for those less academic but with talents and interests.



Other presentations included information in respect of Residence Orders and Special Guardianship orders. These options allow for children to live permanently with usually extended family members in a safe and secure environment. Staff also took the opportunity to promote the issue of Private Fostering. Many visitors were surprised to realise what this actually is and that it has nothing to do with private fostering agencies! They explained that Private fostering is where a child under the age of 16 years is cared for, for more than 28 days with somebody who is not a close relative. There were lots of questions for the workers on this table.

## Appendix 4

The last table of the main presentation showed the ultimate permanent way in which some children leave care, through adoption.



Staff at this presentation, were able to show the work undertaken to find adoptive families for children in Southend. How we hardly ever give up and have successfully found adopters for some severely disabled children and recently placed a sibling group of three together. Information was given on post adoption services and how these have grown over the past few years with Southend's innovative SPARKLES group for new adopters to develop attachment at an early stage along with adult tracing services and other interventions to support all those whose lives have been affected by adoption.

*We did find the team also trying to recruit adopters from those who attended!!*

Before people left they were given information about Southend Corporate Parenting Group. Booklets and presentations were given about their role as a Corporate Parent and ways in which they can promote the needs of Southend's looked after Children.

Feedback from the event was very positive:

*Just wanted to say a big thank you to you and the teams for the corporate parenting event today.  
Having the teams showcase their work and engage in conversations about the work they do for the young people of our borough made a real impact.  
I was very impressed by the passion and commitment of all the staff I spoke to and I came away with a real sense that the lives of our more vulnerable young people are made all the richer for the dedicated workers we have looking out for them.  
Great stuff – hope to see more of it!*

## Appendix 4



*Dear both I thought the corporate parenting session was really great and informative.  
Can you pass on my thanks to all your staff who worked so hard to put it together and of course for the fantastic work they do on a daily basis to look after our children  
Thank you*

This was a very successful event and promoted not only the Corporate Parenting Group but also Children's services as a whole. It gave visitors a much clearer understanding of the "Journey of a child through care" and their role and responsibility in this.

Diane Keens  
Group Manager  
Placements & Resources  
4.1.14

## Appendix 4

### Appendix 1

*Below are 6 brief case studies, please speak with people at each of the tables to see what, if any involvement they might have with you if you were one of these children. What might your journey be through care?*

#### **Case study 1**

I am a 6 year old girl and my mum and dad both drink heavily and are unable to look after me. I rarely go to school and there is never any food in my house. The heating doesn't work and nobody ever remembers to do any washing. The school have been so concerned that they contacted First Contact and I am now today going into care.

#### **Case study 2**

I am 11 year old and am a wheelchair user. My parents really struggle to look after me now that I am getting bigger. They are always arguing and I feel very unhappy.

#### **Case study 3**

I am a new born baby and my mum is 17 years old. She doesn't feel able to be a parent yet and asked that I be placed for adoption. I left hospital and went straight to foster carers.

#### **Case study 4**

I am 2yrs old, have a black eye and a bruised arm and face because I tried to stop my parents from fighting. The police came and helped me and I am now in the police station. My parents have both been arrested but the police cannot talk to them yet as they have taken drugs and have been drinking too much to be interviewed.

#### **Case study 5**

I am 16.5 years old and am very angry. My parents want me to be in by 11pm and to go to school, but I am not going to. I had a fight with them last night, smashed the windows and now they are saying that I cannot go home.

#### **Case study 6**

I am 17 and am on a full care order. I have finished school and am ready to leave my foster carers home and become more independent.