

REACH OUT!



Hi. Welcome to your Reach Out! update

A newsletter for Slough's children looked after and care leavers

Newsletter produced September 2021

It is important that you are provided with different ways to share your thoughts feelings or wishes about the support and services you receive. Your update will tell you about how you can have your say and the different ways your voice has made a difference over the past year!

Reach Out! and Space2talk (Care Council Forums)

In Slough we have two forums (groups), Reach Out! is for young people looked after aged 11 to 16 and Space2talk is for care leavers aged 16 to 24. Don't worry if you are younger as there will be other activities for you to take part in.

The different groups help young people to express themselves about what is good or not so good about the services you receive. You share ideas about what could be done to make things better for all children looked after and care leavers but most importantly you chat about the things that matter to you!

Young people's views and feedback are shared with the managers at Slough Children First who are responsible for the services you receive.



CHAT



MAKE FRIENDS



SHARE IDEAS



TREATS

Young Advisors

If you attend Reach Out! and Space2talk you also get to meet with senior managers from Slough Borough Council and Slough Children First at something called the Reach Out! Panel. As a young advisor you talk directly with managers about what is important to all of Slough's children looked after and care leavers.

As a young advisor you are not only representing the views of other children and young people to your 'corporate parents' but you also give advice on how services could be made better.

As a young advisor you are also invited to each Corporate Parent Panel meeting. (see page 5)

EXPRESS YOURSELF in other ways >

Annual surveys

Each year we will ask you to share your views on the promises made to you in the Pledge to Children Looked After or Local Offer for Care Leavers. It is so important for you to take part and let us know how you feel to make sure we are getting things right.

My Review My Views

Your review is all about you and you can use your form before each of your review meetings. The form will help you to express your views, thoughts and feelings and it's an opportunity for you to write down any questions you may have. There are different forms for children and young people aged 4 to 17.

'In Our Shoes' Training

Young people created their own training called 'In Our Shoes' so professionals (like your social worker, IRO, carer) gain a better understanding of what it is like to be a child or young person in care.

Young Interviewers

It is important that we involve you in recruiting the right people who support and care for you such as your social workers, IROs or personal advisors.



Hi, I'm Sharon, your participation officer. Over the past 18 months we have continued to meet with children and young people by using MS Teams. This hasn't always been easy and we really want to start meeting again in-person (as well as virtually) so if you are interested in getting involved in any of these activities we would love to hear from you. You will find my details at the back of your newsletter. See you soon.

Stories

You told us...We listened!

Over the past year we have asked you to share your views, comments and ideas in lots of different ways. You have all been amazing and it's so important to hear from so many of you. It is also very important that we let you know how we have listened to your views.

You told us...

Young people initiated an idea to create a hamper for those young people who were moving into their own accommodation. The idea to create the moving-in hamper was to offer young people a starter pack to help them settle into their new home.

We listened...

Young people have helped to create the hampers which Personal Advisors are distributing to each of their young people as and when they move in to their own home.

You told us:

Not all of you were receiving your savings or were aware that you had savings.

We listened:

The Children Looked After and Support Services have written a clear policy that explains to your social workers and IROs what should be saved for you and how you will receive your savings. You will all be contacted to let you know about your savings.

Savings' will be discussed at each of your review meetings and at your last review (just before you turn 18) you will be given information about how to access them.

You told us...

Following the weekly catch-ups during the first lockdown young people decided they would like to continue to meet as a group.

We listened...

Young people and the participation officer worked together to form Space2talk, which brings together care experienced young people aged 16 - 24 to chat about the things that matter to them.

You told us...

Some of you have had a sudden change in social worker particularly in the last year of being a looked-after young person. You shared how this made you feel and the impact it can have on young people.

We listened...

We have now recruited permanent social workers. Your messages on the impact a change in social worker or personal advisor can have on you have been shared with staff at Slough Children First and we will continue to share your messages.

You told us...

When the Covid-19 national lockdown began in March 2020, young people involved in Reach Out! and the participation officer agreed that the group would continue to meet virtually. Then young people asked if we could meet up weekly for a catch-up and to keep in touch with one another.

We listened...

Weekly catch-ups were arranged. The group met up on Zoom to stay connected and to see how everyone was doing. The group shared suggestions for movies or series to watch, shared tips for cooking and shared our worries and thoughts about the future and what we needed support with.



We also asked you...

“ Would you use a closed Facebook group? ”

The Leaving Care service wanted to find out your thoughts on whether they should create a closed Facebook group for young people aged 16 and over.

You told us that using social media is the best way to connect with young people and share information on opportunities.

We are hoping that the group will be available for young people soon as it will offer many opportunities to update you about the different services and support available, events and other opportunities.

“ What help and support would you want from your Personal Advisor? ”

If you are 16 or 17 you will now have a personal advisor (PA) as well as your social worker. The Leaving Care Manager and two personal advisors attended the Space2talk forum to ask young people what type of help and support they would have wanted from a PA at this age.

Young people's feedback has helped to create some guidelines for your social workers and PAs which sets out what the role of the PA is and the role of the social worker so that both professional can be clear with their young person around their role and responsibilities.

“ If you've had an advocate or independent visitor how have they helped you? ”

If you have had an advocate or independent visitor (sometimes shortened to IV) you each were invited to tell us what you thought about them. It is important that you are able to share your views and opinions with us in this way as it helps us to know whether we are providing you with a good advocacy and IV service. A very small number of you did tell us how you felt and shared that having an IV has been good, that your IV knew you well and it was good to go out and do activities together.

“ How can we encourage more of you to get involved in things like Reach Out! and share their views, ideas and opinions? ”

During the summer holidays those of you aged 11 - 16 had the opportunity to take part in a 45 minute on-line group chat with our participation officer. As a thank you for your time and sharing your ideas you each would receive a £10 voucher.

A HUGE thank you to the young person who did join the chat. We really like your idea of using on-line polls or surveys that are short and instant when we have future questions to ask each of you such as 'is there anything you would change about...' or 'how do you feel about ...'

Young interviewers

Young people have helped Slough Children First to recruit a new head of service for children looked after, care leavers and children with disabilities. Reshma Bessesar is the Head of Service and is responsible for all of your social workers and personal advisors and the care and support you receive.

Some of you have been busy helping Slough Children First and Slough Borough Council to recruit an Executive Director who will be responsible for all of the children's social care services and education services.

If you are interested in volunteering to be on a young interviewers panel we would love to hear from you.

Young people met with Ofsted

Ofsted inspectors met with some of you to find out how you had coped during the lockdowns and to hear about the support you received with things like home-learning and how your social workers kept in touch with you. After meeting with you, Ofsted shared '*young people have been well supported throughout the lockdown period*' '*early in the pandemic, concerted effort was made to ensure that children continued to be seen by their social workers and PAs.*'

A huge THANK YOU to each and everyone one of you for giving up your time to get involved!

THANK YOU!

OUR PLEDGE

OUR PROMISES TO SLOUGH'S CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER



Earlier this year you were all invited to take part in a short survey to tell us and all your 'corporate parents' whether you thought we are keeping our promises to you. Nineteen of you took part and your feedback has

Are we keeping our promises? Here is what you have told us!

You all told us you:

- You are able to take part in activities or hobbies of your choice.
- You have a computer or laptop to support you with your education and learning and have Wi-Fi at home.
- You know who your social worker is and how to contact them.
- You eat a healthy diet.
- You feel we support you to keep in touch with or to see your family.
- You feel we support you to keep yourself safe and you feel safe in the area that you live in.

18 of you told us:

- You take part in activities that keep you fit and eat a healthy diet.
- You have someone who you trust to talk to when you are worried or upset about things.
- You feel we involve you in decisions that are made about you and your future.

17 of you told us:

- You have been provided with advice and support to help you stay emotionally healthy.
- You know how to make a complaint about something you are not happy with or compliment someone in your life who supports you.
- You know how to contact your independent reviewing officer.
- You feel we support you to keep in touch with

16 of you told us:

- You feel we support you to have a good education.
- You know who your Independent Reviewing Officer is.
- You get to learn independent living skills where you live such as cooking, cleaning, using public transport, spending/saving money.
- You feel your current social worker understands you.

14 of you told us:

- Your social worker spends time with you to get to know you.

13 of you told us:

- You feel our social worker spends time with you to get to know you.
- You are provided with good careers advice. (Ages 13—17)
- You now know your Learning Advocate is and how to contact them.

12 of you told us:

- You were told why your social worker was changing if it has changed in the past year.

11 of you told us:

- You knew about the Pledge and the promises we make to you before taking part in the survey.
- You have been offered an advocate.

6 of you told us you have moved home in the past year:

- 3 of you felt involved in choosing where you would live.
- 4 of you were told you about your new carers and your new home before moving there.
- 3 of you were able to visit your new home before you moved.

A big thank you to all of you who took part.

To make sure we are getting things right we need to hear your views!

Well done to the young person whose name was selected in the prize draw to win a £20 Amazon voucher.

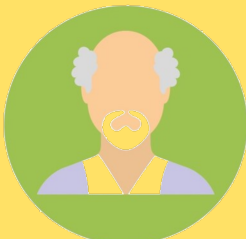
Did you know...

All local authorities in England have a Pledge. The Pledge is a set of 'promises' made to children looked after and care leavers and should cover the services and support children and young people should expect to receive from their corporate parents.

What is a 'corporate parent' and what does it mean?

When you are in care the local authority acts in place of your parents. They care for you and do all of the things for you that your parents would. However, it is not one person who is responsible for this, but the whole of Slough Borough Council, Slough Children First, every Slough councillor and other services that support you such as health.

There are Corporate Parenting Panels in most areas, and many have children and young people helping them. Here are some examples of who your 'corporate parents' are:



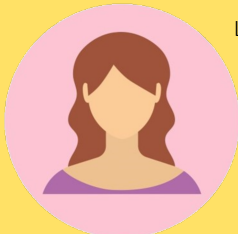
Local councillors



Specialist nurse



Directors and managers



Designated teachers



Learning advocates



Housing officers



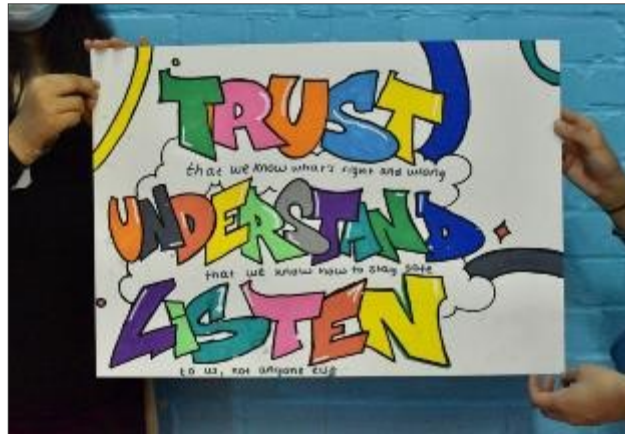
Social Workers and Personal Advisors

MY ONLINE WORLD

During the school summer holiday young people from across Berkshire took part in a joint activity day where they shared what they like doing on-line, what things make young people feel happy, what they most like or dislike about the internet.

Everything expressed through out the day will help to create a training course foster carers that will help them to better understand the digital lives of children and teenagers they care for.

When asked 'what could carers do to make it easier for a child or teenager to talk about what they do or problems they may have on-line' young people said 'to trust, understand and listen to us'.



TRUST
UNDERSTAND
LISTEN



New backpacks

In June Slough Children First received a donation of some amazing new backpacks from a charity called Comfort Cases.

Each bag is packed if filled with a cosy new pair of pyjamas, a stuffed animal to hug, a toothbrush, soap and other special things to help children when they first go to live with their new foster family.

The backpacks are for children to help them when moving to their new foster family.

Your social workers can tell you more about them and how to get one.



Would you like to help train your social workers, IROs, personal advisors and learning advocates?

You will learn lots of new skills, be supported by our participation officer throughout every activity and receive a certificate for your achievements in delivering the training.

'In Our Shoes' is a workshop created and delivered by young people and our participation officer. Young people created the workshop to "help adults gain a better understanding of who we are, what is important to us and to hear directly from us about our experiences of growing up in care".

Contact Sharon if you would like to get involved.
(Details are at the back of your update)



My Review...My Views

My Review...My Views are a set of forms that help you and all of our children and young people looked after to express how you are feeling about anything to do with your life.

There are different forms for children aged 4 to 7, 8 to 15 and one for young people aged 16 and 17.

Young people told us why they use their form...

"I found the form useful as my IRO will then have some information that I would like to share at my review meeting. I would also include in my form anything I wouldn't want to personally talk about"

"My form was quite easy to complete, the questions were also easy to follow and answer"

You can use your form to ask your social worker or IRO any questions you may have.



You can share how you are feeling about anything that is important to you.



You can access your form anytime of the day using a phone, tablet or laptop.



You can find your forms on our website

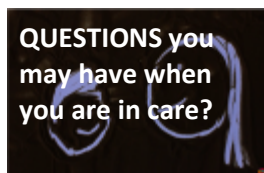
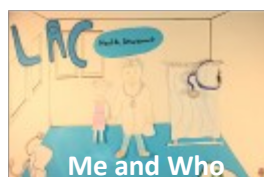
www.sloughchildrenfirst.co.uk then click **YOUR SERVICE** then **MY VOICE**

Animations

Don't forget to watch these amazing animations made by some of Slough's children and young people looked after.

The animations were created to explain more about the different adults who are there to help and care for you.

You can watch each animation on Slough Children First's website (on the My Care page) or you can ask your carer, social carer, or IRO to show them to you.



Don't forget to check out the 'Your Service' section on Slough Children First website



You will find lots of other useful information!

We hope you've enjoyed your update. You too can get involved in lots of different ways.

To find out more:

- ✓ check out your 'A Helping Hands' or 'Leaving Care' information pack.
- ✓ check out the 'Reach Out!' section on our website www.sloughchildrenfirst.co.uk/reach-out

Contact Sharon Stephenson, your participation officer in the following ways:

Call/text/WhatsApp 07591 990111

Email sharon.stephenson@sloughchildrenfirst.co.uk

Thank you and a big well done to all of you who have shared your views in some way and got involved in any of the activities over the past year.

**Do you feel you can't say what you want?
Do you feel like no one will listen to you?**

This can be hard so an **ADVOCATE** could help you.

What is an advocate?

- They listen to you and understand what you are saying.
- They help you get your wishes and feelings heard.
- They make sure that everyone hears what you are saying.

Any child or young person who needs support to represent their views can have an advocate.

Have you thought about whether you would like an independent visitor?

Independent visitors (sometimes also called an IV) are adult volunteers who give their time freely each month to visit a specific child or young person who is looked after. An IV is an independent person who is not paid to visit you. The aim of the independent visitor is to build and develop a trusting and positive relationship with you by providing support for you with any issues you may be finding difficult in your life.

Care Leavers Offer

Our **Care Leaver Local Offer** tells you about the different services, including entitlements, that are here to help and support you. To find out more visit:

www.sloughchildrenfirst/care-leaver-local-offer/

HOUSING HEALTH WELLBEING
EDUCATION EMPLOYMENT



Let Us know

Ragena Khan is the Trust's Complaints Manager.

Whether you are feeling happy or unhappy with the help we are giving you, you should let Ragena know.

As well as listening to you and supporting you with your complaint, Ragena would also love to hear about all the good ways you are supported by the people that care for you (carers, social workers, IROs).

Contact Ragena by:

Calling: 01753 875825

Email: complaints@sloughchildrenfirst.co.uk



You will plan, budget and agree each monthly visit together, so you will know when your IV will be coming to see you next and what activity or hobby you will be doing. An IV could:

- Support you in developing your skills and interests.
- Help you to become more confident.
- Someone who will support you to build a trusting friendship.
- Help you with school/college projects.
- Someone to go out and have some fun with.
- Support you to attend your CLA Review if you wanted them to.

"I like going out with her. We have been swimming, to the cinema and ice skating. I kept falling over but it was fun"

"I have a good time with my IV. He has helped me to develop my interests"

To find out about having an advocate or an IV please speak to your social worker or independent reviewing officer.

You can also contact the NYAS helpline on 0808 808 1001

