

REACH OUT!

2019 Update



Hi. Welcome to your Reach Out! update

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

Wishing you all a very Happy New Year. Your Reach Out! update will tell you about all the different activities that have happened over the past year and the different ways your voice has made a difference!

Our Pledge to YOU!

We are going to start with an update about our Pledge.

Thank you to everyone who shared their views on the promises made in your Pledge and for your ideas on the new promises that should be made. All of your ideas helped the Reach Out! group to decide on the final list of promises that we (the Trust) and Slough

Borough Council should be making to all of you. We will be using lots of different ways again this year to check with you if we are keeping our promises.

We've shared the new promises with you below and you will receive a new Pledge card soon.

#promises

- We will make sure you know who your social worker, independent reviewing officer and learning advocates are and how to contact them. (NEW)
- We promise not to change your social worker unless it is absolutely necessary. If this happens we will tell you why. (NEW)
- We will help you to get the best educational outcomes and have a computer to help and support you with your education.
- We will make sure you have access to and are provided with the right advice and support to ensure you are physically and emotionally healthy.

#listening

- We will listen to you and involve you in the decisions and plans that are made about you and your future.
- We will listen if you have a complaint or would like to praise someone.
- We will support you to maintain positive relationships with your friends and family. If this is not possible we will tell you why. (NEW)
- We will ensure you receive the best advice and support about applying for college and university, applying for a job and for your future career.

#pledge

- We will help and support you to stay safe and feel safe. (New)
- We will help and support you to learn about how to budget, cook, clean and other independent living skills.
- We will help you to be involved in choosing your home and to know more about where you are moving to, including being able to visit your new carers before you move.
- We will offer you the support of an advocate or independent visitor because sometimes you may find it difficult to say what you want and you may want some support to put your views forward.

#yourcarewecare

- We will make sure you have the opportunity to take part in activities and hobbies of your choice.

Your Care... We Care

Young people helped us to create the survey and checked all of the questions to make sure they understood what we were asking you all and why! Members of Reach Out! also tested the form before we sent it to all of you to find out how well we:

share information with you?

support you with your education, employment or training.

support you to be healthy?

involve you in decisions?

We also wanted to find out how you feel about where you live, opportunities to do activities and keeping in touch with family and friends.

You told us you feel fit and healthy and you understand how to keep fit and healthy

You told us that you know the name of your social worker but some of you don't know the name of your IRO or learning advocate

You told us that you have someone to talk to. For most of you this was your carer, a friend or your teacher

You told us what activities and hobbies you take part in, however some of you told us you don't take part in any activities or hobbies

You told us that you feel happy and settled where you live and you feel safe

Some of you told us that you do not feel involved in the decisions made about where you live

Here are some of your ideas about how we can make things better?

We should meet up more with our social worker to get to know them

Social workers should take us out for a coffee, a meal or an activity to get to know us

Listen to our views more and support them more

Have counsellors that work within the Trust

When social workers visit us we want you to put your pen and notebook down so you can give us eye contact and we feel you are listening to us

Here are some of the comments you shared about your information packs?

"I like the note book that is provided as I can write all my worries and concerns"

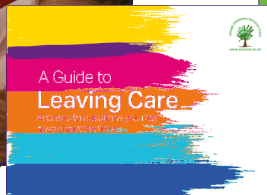
"The pack gives you information where you can go if you have any worries or what to do in times of stress"

"I really like the notebook as it is where I put my emotions"

"The pack tells us what foster care is about"

"Good information which is easy to read"

"I think having the numbers is particularly helpful as it makes me feel like if I need help I have someone to call"



Get in touch with Sharon, your participation officer, if you haven't received your pack or if you need a new note book 😊

We asked you to think about all of the support and care you have received, and let us know how many stars would you give us.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★	Amazing	1 of you awarded 5 stars
★ ★ ★ ★ ☆	Really good	9 of you awarded 4 stars
★ ★ ★ ☆ ☆	Good	8 of you awarded 3 stars
★ ★ ☆ ☆ ☆	Ok	7 of you awarded 2 stars
★ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆	Not good	1 of you awarded 1 star

Young people involved in Reach Out! made a short film to ensure that all of the staff at the Trust heard your important messages:

"We want to be involved in decisions that are made about us"

"It is important that social workers have a good sense of humour to make us laugh"

"We want to have a social worker that stays with us for a long time"

"You should talk to us more"

"Social workers make a huge difference to a child's life, they are very important to us"

"It isn't easy to open up to professionals and it takes time for us to share how we feel"



Children and young people who took part received a £10 gift card of their choice as a thank you for sharing their views and ideas. Thank you again to everyone who took part.

How have your views made a difference?

To help us get things right we need to know from you what is going well and what could be better.

Over the past year we have asked you to share your views, comments and ideas in lots of ways. It has been amazing, and so important, to hear from so many of you.

You told us...

It was important and special that all children and young people looked after and care leavers should receive a birthday card from their social worker or personal advisor.

We listened...

All of you should have received a card from your social worker or personal advisor throughout the past year. We hope you enjoy receiving your cards.

You told us...

Some of you didn't know the name of your IRO or learning advocate.

We listened...

Young people came up with the idea for a 'Hello' postcard that social workers can give to their children and young people to ensure they know their name, what they do and how they can be contacted. 'Hello' postcards were then created for IROs and learning advocates to ensure you all know who they are and how you can contact them.

You told us...

Some of the promises in your Pledge should change and be things that are more important to you.

We listened...

A new set of promises have been made to you and all of our children and young people looked after. See page 1 to see the new promises.

You told us...

You want to have social workers that stay with you for a long time and you want your social workers to take you out so they can get to know you.

We listened...

In our Pledge, we have now promised to make sure your social worker spends time with you to get to know you and understand you. We have also promise not to change your social worker unless it is absolutely necessary. If this happens we will tell you why.



You told us...

Reach Out! wanted to have more opportunities to meet with other young people looked after from across Berkshire to share experiences and work together to improve the services you all receive.

We listened...

Members of Reach Out! have taken part in several activities that provided them with the opportunity to meet up with other young people, share experiences and have fun.

You told us...

Some of you have told us in your 'My Review...My Views' form that you either don't know what your care plan is. Some older children also have not received a copy of their care plan or pathway plan.

We listened...

When you complete a form, we will now be writing to you to let you know that we are listening to you. We will also be making sure you know what your plan is and that children receive a copy of their plan.

You told us...

To help you stay fit and healthy you would like to access free leisure activities. Some of you also felt that being able to swim is a life skill so all children looked after should know how to swim.

We listened...

Very soon you will be able to access a range of local leisure activities which includes swimming lessons as part of what we call the 'Leisure Offer' - you can find out more on page 7.

You told us...

You want to know more about why you are being looked after.

We listened...

We will make sure your social workers explain to you (even younger children) why you are being looked after.

My Foster Story

A group of children aged 5 to 12, (both children looked after and Slough foster carer's children) spent a busy two days making characters and writing a story to make an animation called 'My Foster Story'.

The animation shares a story of a younger child's memory and feelings of coming in to care.

Children received a special certificate and gift for all their hard work in making the animation.

Your animation will be shown to the adults (carers, social workers and IROs) who support and care for you and will help them to understand how some children feel when they come in to care.

It has also been shown on social media to help to promote the importance of foster carers.

Well done to all of the children who took part.



Animation Expressions



IN OUR SHOES

'In Our Shoes' is a workshop created and delivered by young people and Sharon, our participation officer.

Young people involved in Reach Out! told us that they wanted to get involved in training the professionals who support and care for Slough's children looked after.

So, they created 'In Our Shoes' 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 being looked after"*.

As well as running each session, young people have also made a short film to share their experiences of being looked after.

Young people delivered their first workshop to a group of Slough foster carers and it is now part of the Fostering Service's annual training programme, yay!

Here is what foster carers shared about the workshop:

"I enjoyed everything. It was engaging, powerful and very valuable"

"It was very thought provoking. Well done to the young people"

"It was outstanding, well done"

"So insightful"

As well as carers, young people will get involved in delivering 'In Our Shoes' to lots of others professionals including social workers, personal advisors and learning advocates.

Contact Sharon if you would like to get involved.



REACH OUT!

Opportunities

Being part of Reach Out! is not all about meetings. It also offers children and young people a chance to get involved in other activities such as interview panels, attending national events for children looked after and care leavers and fun projects.

Sharing ideas for a better health services

The CQC, which stands for Care Quality Commission, came to speak to the Reach Out! group to find out what they thought about the health services they receive. An inspector, called Becky, heard directly from the group. Here are some of the important things they shared:

- health appointments were not always 'private' when the foster carer and social worker were also present.
- having advanced notice of the questions asked during assessments would help young people prepare.
- we should have more choice about where our health assessments would take place or the gender of the clinician; school or home were not always the best place for them and one person suggested it might be a good idea to offer the option of a male clinician.
- Lynne, the specialist nurse, attends our Reach Out! meetings to find out how things could be improved for us. Lynne also knows and understands our needs.
- We like our health passports although feel that more specific details about their health could be included.

All of the feedback will help the CQC understand what services are meeting the needs of children and young people and what could be improved.

Well done everyone who took part.

Young people helped recruit two new senior managers to the Trust

Young people have been busy helping the Trust to recruit an Assistant Director of Quality, Improvement, Practice and Performance and a Director of Operations.

It is so important that you are given opportunities to choose the right people who are responsible for making decisions about the services you receive. Young people spent two days interviewing candidates and received a gift voucher of their choice as a thank you for all their hard work.

Welcome to Brent Lumley our new Assistant Director and Parmjit Chahal our new Director.

If you are interested in being part of an interview panel we would love to hear from you.

Youth Loneliness

Two charities (Priority 1-54 and Vincent Dance Theatre) worked with Children in Care Councils from across the South East to explore what can cause youth loneliness and share ideas on solutions. Young people from Slough, Windsor & Maidenhead and Bracknell had the opportunity to share their thoughts on what youth loneliness looks like, how does it make young people feel and does social media make young people more or less lonely?

Young people were also asked "If you were in charge, what would you do to make young people feel less lonely in your school or community?" One idea Reach Out! shared was to "Redevelop the youth facilities in Slough as we used to have youth centers, youth bus and Slough Young People's Center"

All of the young people's ideas and thoughts will help to create a set of creative resources that will be used in schools and youth groups to explore the subject of youth loneliness with other young people and provide them with support. Well done Reach Out!



What do some of the words on this page mean?

Director and Assistant Director - these are people who are in charge of the services you receive as a child looked after or care leaver. They are also responsible for your social workers and personal advisors.

Candidates - candidates are new people that would like to come and work at the Trust. These are the people you interview.

Interview panel - this can be several people (*young people and adults*) that meet together to interview each candidate. When you take part in an interview panel you would ask candidates questions that would help you find out if they have the right skills and experience to do the job.

'Your Life, Your Care' Bright Spots survey

Thank you to all of you who took part in this survey. You shared lots of things that have helped understand what is good and what could be better...here are some of the similar things that you all shared.

What do you feel is good?

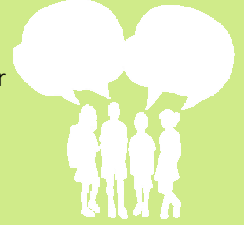
- ★ All of you know who your social worker is.
- ★ Nearly all of you trust your social worker.
- ★ All of you aged 8 to 18 know you can speak to your social worker on your own.
- ★ Nearly all of you aged 11 to 18 find it easy to get in touch with your social worker.

What do you feel could be better?

- ★ Some of you feel having a pet would make care better.
- ★ Some of you want to know more about why you are being looked after.
- ★ Some of you want to see your family more.
- ★ Some of you do not feel involved in the decisions that are made about you.

On page 4 of your newsletter you can read about how your views have been listened to. Remember to talk to your carer and social worker about things that are important to you such as wanting a pet or wanting to see your family members more - it is really important that you share how you feel.

If you feel that your views are not being listened to remember you can speak to your IRO. They are also here to listen to you and to support you!



Some great news...FREE leisure activities!

Young people have been involved in developing what we call a 'leisure offer' with the Trust and Slough Borough Council.

What do we mean when we say 'Leisure Offer'? Well...basically, young people felt that you should have access to a range of free or discounted leisure activities.

To help decide what activities should be offered, you had the opportunity to share with us what leisure activities you like. For children looked after the top activity was swimming and for care leavers it was using the gym.

Some children and young people had the opportunity to go swimming or ice-skating for free during the summer holidays. Young people also shared some feedback about why they didn't use their vouchers...

"The voucher would have been more useful if it had a free taster session for the gym"

"Didn't use my voucher for swimming as I can't swim"

"A lot of care leavers feel isolated, it is great that we've been given this voucher but I'm not going to go on my own. We need someone to go with"

One thing that was also important for some of you was learning to swim. It was felt that being able to swim is a life skill and all children looked after should be able to swim before they leave care.

We listened to all of your feedback and Reach Out! have had lots of talks with managers both at the Trust and Slough Borough Council to agree what activities should be in the Leisure Offer and we are very excited to share with you that.....

Slough's children looked after and care leavers now have FREE access to a range of leisure activities that will not only be lots of fun but will keep you healthy. Information will be sent to you all very soon 😊

This is an amazing achievement and shows how your views can make a change for all of Slough's children looked after and care leavers.

Well done everyone.



BERKSHIRE CICC ACTIVITY DAY

Members of Reach Out! took part in a joint activity day with 30 other young people who are members of children in care councils from Windsor & Maidenhead, Wokingham, Reading, Bracknell and West Berkshire.

Young people had requested an opportunity to meet with other children in care councils to share their experiences and find out what decisions and projects they get involved in in their areas.

Young people took part in some fun activities to share their views and thoughts about myths of being in care as well as a steel pan workshop and a digital workshop run by Three Mobile.

Two members of our Reach Out! group also gave a presentation about Slough's children in care council to all of the young people who took part in the day and they were amazing!



★ Children Looked After Celebration Evening ★

Last year we all came together for your very special evening of celebrations.

What a night! Young people from Reach Out! helped to host the evening and shared with everyone what they have achieved over the past year.

Ashley John-Baptiste, BBC Journalist, shared his experiences of growing up in care and what he has achieved.



The Reach Out! group also gave awards to those young people that had reached out and helped another person in their lives.



We had the privilege of listening to three of you sing and you were all absolutely amazing. One young person also gave an amazing speech on her experiences as a child in care and why we all came together to celebrate your achievements.

Cllr Sadiq was right, we should be getting your autograph now because one day we believe in our hearts that you will be famous!

Children and young people received Star Awards in recognition of their achievements in sports, education and the arts. Young people also received awards for the superb work that they had done in their local community.

You were all amazing and everyone was so proud of you. Here are a few things that people shared...

“Each performance was truly amazing. We are so proud of each and everyone one of you”



“So many very talented children and young people and it is not until you meet them and see how inspirational they are that you truly can begin to know how amazing these children really are”



“What an evening, the audience could not clap and cheer loud enough to show their appreciation of how amazing the children were”



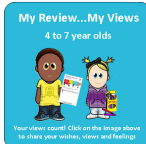
My Review...My Views

As well as attending your Child Looked After review, don't forget that you can also share your views using your My Review...My Views on-line form.

Go to your age group below to find out more about the form you can use!

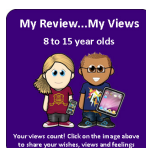
Aged 4 to 7...

A paper form has been created for children aged 4 to 7 as you've told us that you find it easier to express how you are feeling through drawings. You will receive your form in the post before your Looked After Review to give you plenty of time to go through it and share how you feel.



Aged 8 to 15...

You all have the opportunity to use the on-line My Review...My Views form to share how you are feeling. We have listened to you and improved the form by asking more relevant questions and reduced the number of questions so it takes less time to complete.



Before your next Looked After Review meeting you will receive a set of instructions on how to use the form which also includes your own unique 'username' and details about how to log on to the form.

The format for your username is: initials/month of birth/year of birth i.e. ssdecember2009.

50 children aged 4 to 17 shared their views, thoughts and feelings last year using their My Review...My Views form!

Aged 16 and 17...

With help of young people involved in the Reach Out! 13+ group we have created a form for you. The new form asks you questions that are more relevant and appropriate for your age.



All of the forms are now available on our website www.scstrust.co.uk/your-service/my-voice/

Please remember to complete your form at least one week before each of your review meetings.

Did you know...

When you click 'finish' at the end of your form, it is sent to your Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) so they know how you are feeling before each of your review meetings.

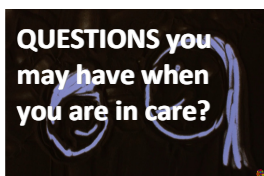
If you have comments or feedback about any of the forms or if you need help with your form please get in touch with Sharon.

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 find the animations on the Trust's website or you can ask your carer, social carer, or IRO to show them to you.

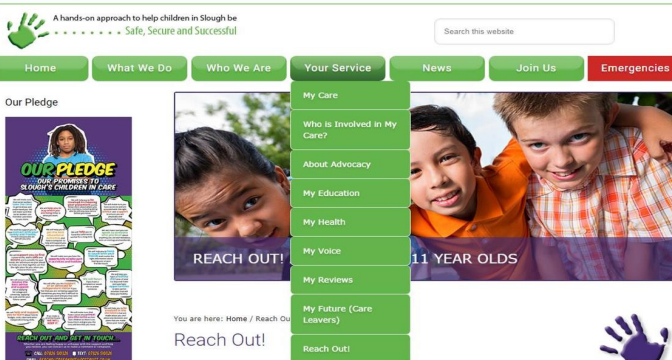


Some of you have told us that you didn't know about the animations - don't forget to visit the Trust's website to check them out!

Visit www.scstrust.co.uk and then click 'Your Service' and then 'My Care'

Don't forget to check out the 'Your Service' section on the Trust's website

www.scstrust.co.uk



You will find lots of other useful information!

REACH OUT!

Get involved

Reach Out! is the name chosen by children and young people for your Children in Care Council in Slough.

Become a member of a Reach Out!

You can attend a Reach Out! forum from the age of 11. Don't worry if you are younger as there will be other activities that you too can get involved in.

Young people meet up regularly, during the evenings and school holidays, in The Chat Room at St Martin's Place in Slough to look at what is good or not so good about the services you receive.

The groups also discuss issues (young people call these 'Hot Topics') that are affecting children looked after or care leavers and share ideas on what could be done to make things better for you all.

REACH OUT!

Extra

Being part of Reach Out! is not all about meetings You can get involved in other fun activities such as:

Interviews - you get to be on interview panels to recruit people who want to work for the Trust. This could be for new social workers, IROs, personal advisors or managers.

Training staff and carers - you can be involved in training those that care and support you such as foster carers and social workers.

Projects - you can get involved in projects like creating animations.

Consultations - you can get involved in different consultations with teams across children's services where we need your expert advice on, for example, how to improve resources (booklets, leaflets) for new children and young people coming in to care.

Volunteering - being a member of Reach Out! is volunteering but there are other events and activities young people have volunteered at such as your celebration event. Older young people have volunteered at different events to help the Trust to recruit new foster carers. One young person was the 'voice-over' for a radio advert and was an absolute star.

National events - you get the opportunity to meet up with other young people from across the UK at events such as the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Looked After Young People.

You don't need to be involved in a Reach Out! forum to take part in these extra opportunities.

Being a member of Reach Out! means you also get to represent the views of Slough's children looked after and care leavers at something called the 'Joint Parent Panel' which is sometimes shortened to JPP.

The Joint Parent Panel is a group of top managers from the Trust, Slough Borough Council as well as elected council members whose job it is to make important decisions about the services for children looked after and care leavers.

Young people share what the Trust and Slough Borough Council are doing well and what it could improve or change for all children looked after and care leavers.

By getting involved you have the opportunity to:

- ✓ Have a say on the issues that matter to you, be listened to and make a difference.
- ✓ Meet the professionals who can make a change.
- ✓ Get involved in different groups, forums and other activities like interviewing staff, making films and animations.
- ✓ Help Slough Children's Services Trust make services better for your future.
- ✓ Make new friends and have fun.

REACH OUT!

Rewards

- ★ You go out together for meals and other fun activities like bowling.
- ★ We celebrate each others birthdays and have cake. You'll also receive a card and gift voucher.
- ★ When you take part in extra activities such as interview panels you will receive a gift voucher.
- ★ Each year you receive a certificate and gift voucher to say thank you for all your hard work and commitment to Reach Out!
- ★ You build your confidence and self-esteem, teamwork, communication skills and learn lots of new skills that will help you in your future.
- ★ Being part of Reach Out! is a voluntary role and therefore will look great on your CV and college, university or job applications.
- ★ You also get to make some great new friends.



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

You can:

- ✓ attend a Reach Out! forum.
- ✓ be involved using Skype, Facetime or WhatsApp video call.
- ✓ get involved in the Reach Out! Extra activities (interview panels, workshops).
- ✓ share your views by emailing Sharon with any questions, views or comments you have about the services you receive.

To find out more:

- ✓ check out your 'A Helping Hands' or 'Leaving Care' information pack.
- ✓ check out the 'Reach Out!' section on the Trust's website www.scstrust.co.uk/reach-out
- ✓ if you are 13+ and have Instagram you can follow reachout_cicc to keep up to date with what young people have been up to. (In order to protect your privacy, we will not follow you back)

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

Call/text/WhatsApp 07776 461845

Email sharon.stephenson@scstrust.co.uk

Thank you and a big well done to all of you who have got involved in a Reach Out! group, interview panels and all of the other events that have take place this year.

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@scstrust.co.uk



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.

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



