

Item No.	Classification: Open	Date: September 4 2008	MEETING NAME Corporate Parenting Committee
Report title:		Care Matters Implementation	
Ward(s) or groups affected:		All	
From:		Assistant Director of Children's Specialist Services and Safeguarding	

RECOMMENDATION

1. To note the council's progress of implementing the Care Matters Agenda with regard to corporate parenting, family and parenting support, care placements, education, health and well being, transition to adulthood and practitioner support.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

2. The Care Matters white paper was launched in June 2007 following widespread consultation. While the care matters programme builds upon recent legislative frame work (Leaving care act 2002, Adoption and children act 2002, children act 2004) some changes will be necessary to help local partners deliver further improvements for children in care.
3. The required changes under care matters will be delivered through primary legislation in the Children and Young Person's Bill currently before parliament.
4. The government have introduced a temporary funding stream (Grant) over 3 years to assist local authorities implementing the considerable additional requirements containing care matters and the children and young person's bill.
5. Following the passing of the children and young persons bill the government will be issuing a range of formal "regulation and guidance" outlining the statutory support required for children in care. This will also be supported through the formal revision of the "National Minimum standards" applied to care settings (residential and foster care). It is expected that these will both be implemented during 2009 following a further period of consultation.
6. The guidance is intended to help support a step change in local practice to make the care matters vision a reality for each individual child in the care system. The main vision of the Children and Young Person's Bill is to:
 - Enable local authorities to establish social work practice pilots.
 - Strengthen the role of the independent reviewing officers (IRO)
 - Introduce a statutory duty for social workers to visit children in care.
 - Expand the provision of independent visitors
 - Place the role of the designated teacher on a statutory footing, reducing education placement disruption and facilitating access to higher education for care leavers.
 - Restrict the use of out of authority placements
 - Introduce a duty to appoint a personal advisor for all care leavers and ensure that their Pathway plan is regularly reviewed up to the age of 21 (25 if in higher

education).

- Improve support for family and friends carers to look after their children
 - Strengthen the inspection and supervision arrangements for children placed in residential settings.
7. The inspection framework used by Ofsted will be modified to undertake specific inspections relating to children in care, which will focus on the 5 every child matters outcomes and how the whole system is delivering effective cooperate parenting. Following Southwark's recent JAR inspection in April 08 it is not yet clear when Southwark will have its first CLA inspection. The Joint Area Review of Southwark services for children looked after rated the service as good.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

8. Although the Children and Young Persons Bill, statutory regulations and guidance and new national minimum standards will not become a requirement until early 2009, Southwark has begun a gradual implementation of many of the key areas for development outlined in the Care Matters White Paper. Under the headings set out in the White Paper, the following progress has been made.
9. **Chapter 1 – Corporate Parenting: Getting it right**
- The Corporate Parenting Committee was established as a formal committee under Southwark Council constitutional arrangements
 - A formal process established for a young persons representative group (Speakerbox) to meet with corporate parenting committee.
 - Agreed performance data set for presentation at committee
 - Delivery of annual report from independent reviewing officers
 - The Forward Plan enables lead officers to attend corporate parenting committee to demonstrate the quality and suitability of the services to meet the needs of children in care and achieve good outcomes
10. **Chapter 2 – Family and parenting support (Children on the edge of care)**
- The Implementation of the public law outline (Sept 07) has resulted in more effective interventions to families on the edge of care where Southwark is considering initiating care proceedings. Additional resources have been provided for family group conferences to enable families to develop their own solutions.
 - A review of early years services has been commissioned to look at how under 5 provision for families can be targeted at those families at most risk of coming into the care system.
 - The respite care system for children with disabilities (Short break care) has been expanded to meet increasing demand for support services
 - Southwark has revised it's Kinship care policy which clarifies and enhances support provided to friends and family undertaking care responsibilities.
 - The alternative to care team have continued to provide crisis support for families accessing resources provided through Southwark's parenting support strategy and youth offending early intervention services.
 - The headline rate for Southwark's looked after population has fallen from 600 in Aug 07 to 555 in Aug 08
11. **Chapter 3 – Care placements – A better experience for everyone**
- Southwark's fostering services have received very strong evaluations from Ofsted inspections
 - Southwark has reshaped it's contract with Shaftesbury young people to reduce

it's use of residential placements and increase continuity of care for young people leaving residential settings and moving into fostering or semi – independent arrangements

- A clear policy has been agreed with the independent reviewing officer team for concerns to be immediately brought to senior management attention if care plans are seen to be drifting.
- Southwark continues to have a very low incidence rate of children running away from public care, and is some indication of the quality of care currently being provided.
- Children specialist services have already implemented a minimum 6 weekly requirement for children in care being visited by their social workers(2005)
- A review of Southwark's commissioning strategy for children's placements is being undertaken(JAR action plan), to improve the quality and cost effectiveness of our commissioning.
- In July 08 82% of all Southwark's looked after children live within 20 miles of their home address and 69% within 7 miles. The White Paper proposes new restrictions on authorities who wish to place children out of borough, and this could have significant implications for inner London authorities like Southwark.

12. **Chapter 4 – Delivering a first class education**

- Review of early years provision is being undertaken to ensure children are better prepared for school.
- Southwark reviewed it's admissions criteria for children in care to Southwark schools in 2006, and this places children in care as the highest admission priority
- In Sept 07 and 08 all year 6 children obtained their first choice of secondary school
- 100% of all children experiencing school placement disruption during the academic year were allocated a new school within 20 working days
- The British Association for Adoption and Fostering has piloted a project to develop training modules for foster carers to promote education achievement
- Allocation of care matters grant to purchase additional tutoring for pupils who are falling behind
- Review of database system to develop attainment tracking reports for early identification of children falling behind

13. **Chapter 5 – Promoting health and well being**

- Over 90% of looked after children are regularly having annual health and dental checks
- The introduction of targeted screening for teenage pregnancy and substance misuse to reduce rates among children in care.
- All new looked after children are seen by specialist health team at Sunshine House
- The service has secured funding for a teenage pregnancy nurse and designated nurse to intervene with young people who are at risk of teenage pregnancy or are refusing health interventions/assessments
- Joint funded carelink team (CAMHS) providing targeted mental health interventions and training for foster carers to promote placement stability
- Agreement reached for specialist health advisors (Sunshine house)to input health records directly into CareFirst (child's electronic social care record).
- Delivery of free leisure centre membership in partnership with Fusion
- Delegated budgets to fostering services to promote hobbies and sport
- The strength of integrated health services and support to young people recognised in JAR inspection

14. **Chapter 6 – Transition to adulthood**

- All care leavers have an allocated personal advisor to provide ongoing support after they leave care, and ensure they access education, training and employment.
- The service now enables young people to remain in foster placements beyond their 18th birthday to complete A-level/college studies
- The service has reviewed the University policy whereby all young people receive a grant of £3k regardless of other grant/employment income (Care matters recommends £2000)
- Implementation of recommendation that £100 per year is placed in the child's trust fund by Southwark
- Restructuring of children specialist services in April 07 which established a single service for adolescent and aftercare whereby the service supports young people from the age of 13 through to 21 (24 if in further education)
- Southwark has developed a multi agency panel involving adult services (Transitions panel) who facilitate care leavers accessing required services. Transitions manager appointed for children with disabilities June 08
- Close partnership with Southwark works, Connections and Southwark's apprenticeship programmes to support young people obtaining employment
- Proposal to develop mentoring programme for care leavers delivered by senior managers in Southwark council
- 100% of care leavers wishing to live in Southwark are awarded their own Southwark tenancy

15. **Chapter 7 – The role of the practitioner**

- The CLA service have about 90% permanent staff and one of the lowest social work turnover rates in London
- The job description and grading of the independent reviewing officer has been enhanced in line with the new government expectations to place them on an equal grading with team managers
- Southwark's performance for young people participating in their statutory reviews (96%) and review timeliness (95%) is strong
- Care matters funding to be used to expand the independent visitors scheme
- Implementation of mentoring programme for looked after children.

16. Many of the best practiced principles and initiatives laid out in care matters were already being implemented by Southwark's children's services. It is clear however that the government are expecting strong leadership within the system to continuously drive up the standards and outcomes. The strengthened performance framework and comprehensive area assessment (CAA) will be introduced from April 09. The DCSF will be producing an implementation timetable for all components of Care matters and associated guidance dating for April 09 – March 2011.

17. Southwark's Area Based Grant (ABG) allocation for 08/09 included £395k for Care Matters. It is to assist Southwark in meeting the additional requirements contained in care matters. There are a number of specific recommendations within Care Matters which will certainly incur significant additional expenditure namely: placements beyond 18, university support, child trust funds, education/tutors support and alternatives to care activity including family group conferences. Until the guidance and minimum standards are published it is unclear as to what extent resource demand may produce significant challenges for implementation. The ABG allocation has been set out until March 2011 in parallel with the proposed implementation program (mentioned above).

CONSULTATION

18. The care matters agenda was widely consulted across England and Wales by the DCSF. Specific changes to provision of policy in Southwark to implement care matters have been brought to the corporate parenting committee and discussed with Speakerbox.

SUPPLEMENTARY ADVICE FROM OTHER OFFICERS

Director of Legal and Democratic Services

19. None supplied.

Finance Director

20. None supplied.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
Care Matters White paper	http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/publications/timeforchange/	Chris Saunders 020 7525 1007

AUDIT TRAIL

Lead Officer	Rory Patterson Assistant Director: Specialist Services and Safeguarding		
Report Author	Chris Saunders Head of CLA Services		
Version	Final		
Dated	August 22 2008		
Key Decision?	No		
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / EXECUTIVE MEMBER			
	Officer Title	Comments Sought	Comments included
	Director of Legal and Democratic Services	Yes	Yes/No
	Finance Director	No	No
	Executive Member	Yes	Yes/No
	Date final report sent to Constitutional/Community Council/Scrutiny Team		August 22 2008