

Corporate Parenting Committee

MINUTES of the OPEN section of the Corporate Parenting Committee held on Tuesday 25 April 2017 at 2.00 pm at the Council Offices, 160 Tooley Street, London SE1 2QH

PRESENT: Councillor Victoria Mills (Chair)
Councillor Evelyn Akoto
Councillor Jasmine Ali
Councillor Eliza Mann
Councillor Kath Whittam
Councillor Kieron Williams
Florence Emakpose (Co-opted Member)

OFFICER SUPPORT: Alasdair Smith, Director of Children and Families
Rachel Flagg, Head of Joint Commissioning for Children and Young People, CCG
April Bald, Assistant Director Children's Safeguarding, Children's and Adults' Services
Simon Mitchell, Senior Commissioning Manager, Children's and Adults' Services
Paula Thornton, Constitutional Team

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Stacy John-Legere, Designated Doctor for Looked After Children.

2. CONFIRMATION OF VOTING MEMBERS

The members listed as presented were confirmed as the voting members of the meeting.

3. NOTIFICATION OF ANY ITEMS OF BUSINESS WHICH THE CHAIR DEEMS URGENT

No urgent items were identified.

4. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS

No disclosures or dispensations were made.

5. MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 1 March 2017 be approved as a correct record and signed by the chair.

6. CHILD PROTECTION PLAN INCREASES

The committee received an update on the child protection plan increase in numbers from the council's assistant director children's safeguarding, children's and adults' services.

The following key issues were identified to account for the increase in figures from April 2016 to September (when numbers started to decline) as follows:

- Some children of families at this time in the process of court proceedings were not on a 'plan' and the practice and processes were changed in part attributing for an increase in figures
- Increase of children in the older age group, youth violence and the issue of child sexual exploitation (CSE) on a plan
- Increase in number of re-registrations. This may have been due to a change of circumstances of the child and their family
- Cases going to court that did not result in orders requested or a breakdown in the special guardianship order (SGO)
- Step down from case too early
- Pre-birth work.

In addition to adjustment to practice and processes that resulted in an increase, the council have put in place the following:

- A robust system with more quality assurance. Some of these measures have included a support and challenge panel chaired by the head of social work improvement and quality assurance.
- A legal panel (consistent chairing and decision making)
- Workforce development. How social work and partners can constructively challenge and work with families.

Following on this presentation the following key issues were raised by members of the committee:

- Re-registrations. Looking at support and what more can be done to assist families and extended families
- Monitoring of re-registrations
- Looking at possible appeals if legal decisions are not in line with council recommendations

- Officer confirmed work being done on special guardianship orders and strengthening
- Queries raised in respect of support to special guardianship orders (and if similar to support offered to fostering placements)
- Issues of the threshold for physical punishment discussed and cultural factors.

RESOLVED:

1. That the position statement on the increases in the number of child protection plans as detailed in paragraphs 4 and 5 of the report be noted.
2. That the verbal update provided at the committee accounting for increases as updated at the meeting and summarised above be noted.
3. That the committee receives a report in one year which should also reflect and focus on adolescent numbers (illustrated by the journey of adolescent children in and out of care).
4. That scrutiny may wish to consider looking at early help work at the end of the process.
5. That with regard to special guardianship orders (SGOs) that the committee look at this issue generally and what support is offered to children and families.

7. GAINING INDEPENDENCE: TRANSFORMING SUPPORT AND HOUSING FOR SOUTHWARK LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN/CARE LEAVERS AND YOUNG PEOPLE AT RISK OF HOMELESSNESS AGED OVER 16 YEARS

Officers presented a report to committee that was being considered by cabinet 9 May 2017.

The following comments/questions were submitted in response to this strategy by the members of the committee:

- How young people have been involved and the main things they have asked to be included in the strategy
- Housing benefit/universal credit and impact of cap on the strategy
- Importance of local accommodation for young people
- Welcomed the creation of a high level document and queried how going to be monitored
- Request for high level briefing
- Importance of a document that is easy to read and understand; setting out certain standards
- Tenancy and lower level mental health support. Include as part of commissioning process going forward.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

8. PRESENTATION ON SUFFICIENCY

The head of joint commissioning for children and young people, clinical commissioning (CCG) presented an outline of the sufficiency strategy and the arrangements that the local authority must take to provide accommodation within their area for every child they look after. The process of updating the strategy that has previously ran from 2014 to 2017 is beginning and comments were being sought to commence this work.

The committee provided the following feedback/comments:

- Felt that the strategic vision should document that children will do better if placed in Southwark. The outcomes are significantly improved if remain within the borough
- Child centred focus as a starting point
- The data should reflect percentage of children for safety or other reasons that need to remain out of borough. A breakdown of what these other reasons are and figures
- Clear about challenge ahead. How many foster carers would need to be recruited to place children locally
- The residential option. The need for this option to be researched and considered as part of the evidence gathering process
- Issue of foster care homes and accommodation issues (properties not being large enough to foster). Issue of adaptations to properties also discussed.
- London living rent linked to foster carers (cabinet member for children services to also look at)
- Possibility raised of foster carers being added to key worker housing list. Cabinet member for children services to discuss with cabinet member for regeneration and homes)
- Need a strategic and detailed look at adolescent children and more complex cases
- Different types of accommodations and work with other boroughs
- Further work in focus groups (outside of Tooley Street) suggested
- Building on 16+ accommodation work as indicated in the initial outline.

RESOLVED:

That the committee receive a report back on progress on the strategy to its July meeting (setting out key proposals and the local offer).

9. CORPORATE PARENTING COMMITTEE - WORK PLAN 2017-18

RESOLVED:

1. That the report be noted.
2. That the following be added to the work plan:
 - April 2018. Update report on child protection plan increases (including focus on adolescent numbers, illustrated by their journey in and out of care)
 - That the committee look at special guardianship orders generally and what support can be offered to children and families
 - Report back on sufficiency strategy to July meeting.

3. That the items 10 July meeting agenda be determined by the chair in consultation with the committee.

Draft July agenda

- Sufficiency strategy
- Report back on Ofsted report
- Other items to be confirmed in consultation with Councillor Mills and Alisdair Smith.

The meeting ended at 4.20 pm.

CHAIR:

DATED: