

DRAFT

Corporate Parenting Committee

MINUTES of the OPEN section of the Corporate Parenting Committee held on Wednesday 8 July 2020 at 2.00 pm. Online/virtual meeting

PRESENT:	Councillor Jasmine Ali (Chair) Councillor Bill Williams (Vice-chair) Councillor Evelyn Akoto Councillor Maggie Browning Councillor Sunny Lambe Councillor Eliza Mann Councillor Charlie Smith
NON-VOTING CO-OPTED MEMBERS:	Francis Turkson Mark Kerr Tracey Harrison
YOUNG PEOPLE	Olivia Nation, Children's Rights and Participation officer in attendance with a number of young people
OFFICER SUPPORT:	David Quirke-Thornton, Strategic Director of Children's and Adults Services Alasdair Smith, Director of Children and Families Dr Stacy John-Legere, Designated Dr for Looked After Children Dr Dolly Agrawal, Dr for Looked After Children Angela Brown, Nurse for Looked After Children Andrew Fowler, Head of Service, Children in Care and Care Leavers Leval Houghton-James, Children's and Adult Services Helen Woolgar, Assistant Director - Safeguarding and Care, Children's and Adults' Services Michele Sault, CCG Khalida Khan, Interim Service Manager, Children's and Adults' Services Kelly Henry, Head of Service Permanence, Children's and Adults' Services Usha Singh, Virtual Head Teachers Neil Gordon-Orr, Strategic Manager, Education Access Paula Thornton, Beverley Olamijulo and Poonam Patel,

Constitutional Team

1. APOLOGIES

No apologies for absence were received.

2. CONFIRMATION OF VOTING MEMBERS

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

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

There were none.

4. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS

None were declared.

5. CORPORATE PARENTING STRATEGY REVIEW

The director of children & families introduced the report and explained the need for a new corporate parenting strategy review and welcomed the attendance of young people at this committee meeting to begin the process. Additionally, the director explained the impact of the Black Lives Matters (BLM) movement and Bright Spots and how these would also feed into this strategy review.

Arising from the report and presentation by the director of children and families the following points were made:

- Query on the timeframe and the importance to ensure that the strategy deals with the emerging issues and changed landscape (Covid-19 pandemic and BLM)
- Mental health and wellbeing challenges
- Comment on the resilience of local authority children services and work undertaken with foster care placements, which has shown a real demonstration of commitment in these challenging times
- The planned 'refresh' of the Council's Plan to respond to BLM and COVID-19
- Big task to ensure that no-one slips through the net
- Concern about the economic and social mobility impact on children and young people; intervention remains key in terms of education and training and that these result in actual jobs and ongoing learning. Important to focus on how to bridge the gap between education and training. The 'old style' apprenticeships previously provided a basis for good training and resulting to jobs but the future is not clear.
- Good opportunity to align council and clinical care commissioning (CCG) objectives and the chance to think about joint priorities
- Issue of ensuring break-out plans/health and support discussed at the health and wellbeing board and to involve more public involvement on these issues via the board (to be more public facing)
- Concern about the absence of children and young people from the main strategic plan.

Important discussions to be had to ensure that children and young people are better reflected in these strategic plans (including the council and the NHS). Need to apply co-production in the design of strategies to ensure that their voice is clear and reflected

- Access of children and young people to services and addressing their difficulties
- Child mental health, difficult to find in the plan

The director of children and families concluded by welcoming the involvement of all partners, children and young people and the community in taking this strategy forward, which will take time. Continuing commitment to ensure that the strategy is owned by this partnership and joint working to continue.

RESOLVED:

1. That the contents of the report be noted.
2. That the schedule for delivery of the new corporate parenting strategy be developed (a summary of the main issues raised set out above).

6. ANNUAL VIRTUAL HEADTEACHER'S REPORT

The virtual headteacher presented the annual report to the committee and actions taken following lockdown, with regard to the practical support and health and wellbeing including the following measures to provide support and bridge the gaps:

- Early release of funding and opportunity for all to request funding in respect of immediate need
- Provision of home tuition to supplement teaching provided by their school (feedback received that most have engaged with this provision)
- Laptops bought and delivered in two days
- Children transition at primary / secondary level support
- Every looked after child has allocated personal adviser (and support to be individual to that child)
- Strong focus to keep children motivated and engaged.

The following queries were raised:

- Access of children not attending schools to the internet / laptops
- Issue of children returning to school in September and concern by foster parents and social distancing measures in place: challenge for schools to plan accordingly. Some may chose not to return to school in September and the difficulties in policing. Strong advice is needed to ensure children go back to school
- Concerns raised by young people on funding. Some in a catch 22 situation; if at university unable to claim support because of student grants and getting jobs difficult in the COVID-19 climate, with ensuing financial pressures which puts these young people at a disadvantage
- Young people asked about the support available for care leavers to stay in education (officers responded that dependent on income and funding available dependent on financial need/circumstances)
- Query on why local authorities have not extended care leaving age to 25 (some may withdraw/drop out and return to education hence need for extended age range)

- Data and achievement levels at different ages (why some of the younger children do not to achieve as well as the older children). Explained probably as part of their care experience (also not in care long) and as their care progresses the correct support package is put in place
- Explore how many apprenticeships/traineeships provided to care leavers in Southwark
- Request for a short pre-meeting to be set up with including the chair, Alasdair Smith, Tracey Harrison, Mark Kerr, Danny Edwards, Councillor Stephanie Cryan in respect of education, employment and training. Young people to also be involved in this pre-meeting, with a view also have a workshop by the end of August.

Officers explained the low level of funding provided by government in this area and the further difficulties ahead in the COVID-19 pandemic. Explained issue of apprenticeships a key target in the council plan.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Virtual Head teacher's report for Southwark Looked After Children be noted.
2. That the comments provided at the committee and summarised above be noted.
3. Request for a short pre-meeting to be set up with including the chair, Alasdair, Tracey Harrison, Mark Kerr, Danny Edwards, Councillor Stephanie Cryan in respect of education, employment and training. Young people to also be involved in this pre-meeting with a view also have a workshop by the end of August.

7. REPORT ON THE RESPONSE TO LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN, CARE LEAVERS AND FOSTER CARERS DURING COVID-19

Officers outlined a number of key highlights:

- Bespoke risk assessment for every child
- Risk assessments for foster carers and extra funding available
- Social worker increased contact with children and conversations around supporting distancing COVID-19 measures
- Description of some practical examples of support offered for families and children
- Importance of support and guidance from the designated looked after doctor and health professionals (fast track of testing where necessary)
- Increase of personal allowances to cover data and Wi-Fi
- Also payment of £10 per week of allowance to children in custody to enable continued contact

Summary of issues / questions raised:

General

- Dr. Stacy John-Legere outlined the measures in place for looked after children in respect of shielding to provide support and guidance
- Mental health sessions delivered via zoom / Microsoft Teams and identification of continuing therapies

- Dr. Dolly Agrawal referred to recovery plan in line with Royal College guidelines including triage system, PPE, video and face-to-face assessments
- Disproportionate impact on children and care leavers and looking at business and how local authority can support, give information and provide an opportunity for concerns to be raised.

Issues raised by young people present:

- A young person was able to communicate his experience of living through COVID-19 talking about the feeling of isolation and the severe impact on mental and physical health; the effect of panic buying which served to further exacerbate these feelings of isolation. This young person moved from another city where studying at university to London and had to find a home; other young people were able to move in with their families with support and help
- Concern expressed about the greater impact for black, Asian and minority ethnic group young (BAME people and query what support has been given (including the increased risk of death amongst this group). Officers outlined the individual assessment/support provided and regular newsletter
- Identified issues arising through their employment if PPE not provided (officers responded by confirming employers responsible for PPE) but if not responding to let officers know so that they can work to mitigate any negative impacts for the young person
- Example of trying to get to work by bus in a time where use of public transport discouraged (no parents to offer a lift) and being late for work; bills still have to be paid and rent so no option but to go to work
- Query raised about support for care leavers whom are asylum seekers. Officers advised policy in place to deal with this recognised vulnerable group
- How care leavers are receiving support for education and training. It was explained that a workshop would shortly be taking place to deal with these issues and identify the best pathway for support
- Query if the support referred to previously would be withdrawn following COVID-19 (for example £10 allowance for phone). Confirmed that this financial support would not continue but the helpline would carry on and other support would remain
- Issues of laptops raised and what young people receiving.

RESOLVED:

That the response of children's services to looked after children, care leavers and foster carers during COVID19 be noted.

8. BLACK LIVES MATTER (DISCUSSION)

Councillor Jasmine Ali opened the discussion by referencing the work being undertaken by Southwark Stands Together (Member / officer working group) chaired by Councillor Johnson Situ. It was explained that the Black Lives Matters (BLM) issues are being examined in order to formulate recommendations.

Summary of issues / discussion raised:

- Young people referred to a meeting held on 17 June and were keen to hear what actions were progressed and the latest position of those actions

- Issue of training in respect of racism and black history needed to be looked at in more detail with training providers. This was an issue highlighted by a number of young people on 17 June
- Responding to the needs of young people (culturally and practically in terms of understanding the basic wellbeing from food to hair care), was echoed by the young people present. This may involve plans/actions when talking to foster carers and social workers in advance of a placement
- Frustration by young people at their perceived 'lack of progress' since 17 June. It was explained that the process will involve engagements and work is being undertaken 'behind the scenes' to deal with the issues raised through continued discussions
- Different communication channels to inform training, development and policies
- A young person was able to speak of their experiences as a young black carer and the feeling that black parents were more likely to be blamed for neglect
- Emphasis on the need to address issues using these experiences and the importance of a loving family for children
- Ensure statements and intentions are meaningful and that organisations were not jumping on the 'band wagon' or churning out statements with no clear plan of action. Important to monitor and ensure objectives achieved in a considered manner
- A workshop to take place early August and come with proposals/ideas and to feed into work of Southwark Stands Together member/officer working group
- The designated nurse for children in care acknowledged the learning that needs to take place and the need to continue to listen and ask questions. Learning will be taken back to her work area from these discussions
- Issue of help to get into employment and jobs (also discussion under the virtual head teacher's annual report) to be further discussed at a workshop to be set up
- Positive black history in education, including the Windrush; not always victims and negative. Also something to be addressed in the home setting (and for young people to not just find out through social media and other external sources).

Councillor Jasmine Ali concluded discussions by reminding the committee of the planned workshop in August to discuss all these issues and bring a number of recommendations together.

RESOLVED:

That a workshop to take place early August and to come with proposals/ideas and to feed into work of Southwark Stands Together member/officer working group.

9. CORPORATE PARENTING COMMITTEE - WORK PLAN 2020-21

RESOLVED:

1. That the corporate parenting committee agree the approach and work plan as set out the report.
2. That the following 4 November 2020 draft agenda be agreed as follows:
 - Update on corporate parenting strategy / council plan
 - Update on Black Lives Matter and COVID-19 (including feedback from workshop in August)
 - Fostering and Adoption reports

- Sufficiency strategy.
3. The need to re-visit work undertaken previous in workshops on housing ar accommodation support and needs for young people.

The meeting ended at 5.10 pm.

CHAIR:

DATED: