

Corporate Parenting Committee

MINUTES of the virtual meeting of the Corporate Parenting Committee held on Wednesday 4 November 2020 at 2.00 pm

PRESENT: Councillor Jasmine Ali (Chair)
Councillor Evelyn Akoto
Councillor Maggie Browning
Councillor Sunny Lambe
Councillor Stephanie Cryan
Councillor Eliza Mann
Councillor Charlie Smith

**NON-VOTING
CO-OPTED
MEMBERS** Florence Emakpose
Mark Kerr
Tracy Harrison

YOUNG PEOPLE Sherean Seaton, Children's Rights Officer
Ganiyat S. Care Leaver

**OFFICER
SUPPORT:** Alasdair Smith, Director of Children and Families
Angela Brown, Nurse for Looked After Children
Steve Chaplin, Service Manager, Children and Adult's Services
Danny Edwards, Strategy and Partnerships Manager
Andrew Fowler, Head of Service, Children in Care and Care Leavers
Melanie Aarons Royal, Experienced Practitioner (EET).
Robert Newlands, Service Manager Quality Assurance Unit, Children's and Adults' Services
Tina Thorley, Youth Operations and Commissioning Manager
Jenny Taylor, Head of Clinical Service, Children's and Adults' Services
Khalida Khan, Interim Service Manager, Children's and Adults' Services
Paula Thornton, Beverley Olamijulo and Poonam Patel, Constitutional Team

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Dr. Stacey John-Legere.

2. CONFIRMATION OF VOTING MEMBERS

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

3. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR

The chair announced the election of vice-chair for the corporate parenting committee would be deferred until the next meeting.

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

No urgent items were identified.

5. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS

None were disclosed.

6. MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the minutes held on 8 July 2020 be approved as a correct record and signed by the chair.

7. FEEDBACK FROM INSPECTIONS OF CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE AND YOUTH OFFENDING SERVICES

Alasdair Smith, director of children and families provided feedback on the outcome of the Ofsted recent inspection particularly for children in care.

Alasdair outlined the following to the committee:

- Five HM inspectors that carried out the inspection in Southwark for about four days. They met with young people and staff members – looking into all

aspects of their work.

- He explained it was like a full inspection – the first one undertaken since the pandemic started. Alasdair said it was important to note the public had confidence in the services they provide for young people.
- The inspectors provided the council two weeks notice to notify the council about the visit. Within those two weeks, the inspectors examined data, audit and documents. There had been focus groups – which focussed on vulnerable children, mental health and public health.
- Overall the inspection was positive but with some improvements identified as required in specific areas. The report itself would be published on 30 November 2020 and would be available in the public domain. It was important for the public to know about the services the council provides for young people.
- The inspectors spoke officers and outlined their findings which included what young people and staff had said to the inspectors. Overall it was a positive inspection especially in relation to the children in care aspects, safe guarding at the front door, working with vulnerable children and working with multi-agencies.
- The inspectors stated there were a few areas of concern which they felt needed improvement around the child protection system (work prior to court) which required stronger oversight. However, they were genuinely happy with how the council were safe guarding children during the time of Covid-19. They did recognise the limitations initially to engage or connect with young people virtually.
- The inspectors felt that children continued to make progress in their education during lockdown whilst not being in school and being confined to their homes. Young people spoke about the experiences in this regard during the inspection.
- The inspectors recognised the challenges and difficulties around adolescence which was also a national problem. Particularly with young people that could not be looked after by their own families including the exploitation of young people outside the home. They come into the care system, which does not have solutions for them. Due to its challenges especially during Covid-19, it did put extra pressure on placement resources.
- Another area of improvement would be to intervene and do more to help the young people much earlier in the process. Another area that was highlighted was a stronger approach and support towards children with disabilities.

Officers acknowledged the points that were identified above.

Alasdair said one of the most recognised point raised about staff and their approach with working with children in care was that staff continued to hold out hope for children.

- The inspectors were very positive in what they saw in the leaving care service and the young people had more contact with care workers during Covid-19.
- It was noted that young people supported one another and supported referrals to people regarding training opportunities and employment.

The youth offending service inspection:

- Alasdair reported that her majesty's inspectorate of probation chose Southwark as one of seven local authorities in the country to begin their inspection process after Covid-19. Southwark was considered as one of the local authorities with the best practice. The two best practices identified in Southwark was the risk assessment and impact around Covid-19. This was around mental health and isolation. A summary report highlighted the work of the seven local authorities.

The chair congratulated all the frontline workers and officers for all their hard work.

- Alasdair took questions from members of the committee about one of the challenges with planning with the process, reviewed time in getting the right quality of care and how to get the best from a young person. He advised a pathway plan was used. The pathway plan is a planning document used for care leavers and presented into the care system.

There was a further question about access to housing and independent living for young people and care leavers; the impact it had during Covid-19 which created many challenges for staff. Officers are still working on a housing solution for care leavers because of the overall reduction in housing lets. An identified solution could be to form partnerships with the private sector.

Action:

Officers present a report at the next meeting on the housing strategy and housing opportunities for children and young people.

Officers suggested a theme workshop on housing for young people at the next corporate parenting committee.

8. COVID - 19 LOCKDOWN UPDATE

Discussed in the workshops.

9. BLACK LIVES MATTERS (VERBAL UPDATE)

Alasdair presented with Powerpoint slides on Black Lives Matters which followed on from the last corporate parenting committee:

The committee were shown the divisional action plan around Southwark's stands together which related to a very important and open discussion from the last committee meeting which included previous conversations with young people along with Cllr Evelyn Akoto, Cllr Jasmine Ali (chair) and David Quirke-Thornton.

Alasdair said he was inspired by the words of Tracy Harrison at the last meeting. So it was important to listen and think about what would be the right approach and things to do to make a fundamental and sustainable change. Officers heard the passionate views of young people which the children and adult's services want to respond to and incorporate that in the action plan.

Alasdair referred to Action 8 of the plan; the directorate's divisional management group (DMT) seem to be a predominantly white management group which he felt should change to make senior management more diverse and reflective of the borough which was recently highlighted at a recent cabinet meeting. Officers plan to enter into dialogue with the Stephen Lawrence Trust to address this.

The **four main action points** that were raised by young people:

- Review to take place on the assessment and learning development of foster carers concerning the needs of young black people in care (a conversation that was held during the young people's speaker box).

It was noted the foster carers have been reviewing this issue. Reference was also mentioned about a recent story telling event on Zoom which was attended by 20 foster carers and coordinated by Oliva (Children's rights coordinator) and spoke about an author of a book on how we love our hair. It addressed the topic of how to care for black afro hair.

Lessons were learnt for both white and black foster carers. Some young people spoke up about their experiences with their hair.

The plan is to repeat these sort of workshops with children and independent foster carers so everyone involved could learn from such events.

- A bespoke education programme for Southwark social workers. Speaker Box stated that their social workers did not know enough about black history and young people's issues. A practitioner's forum had debated this as an issue which should not just include social workers but others as well. It was noted the programme still required some development.
- Efficiency strategy: Noted that this strategy would be explored at a future meeting. One of the issues being reviewed was around residential care.

Southwark had recently joined an organisation called the commissioning alliance (known previously as the West London alliance) which comprises of about ten local authorities commissioned together to look at residential care, foster care and independent placements. They are currently looking at the council's data so the needs of those in care or placements are better met. Also looked at the recruitment of black foster carers.

- The Speaker Box raised the issue of the education system – they felt it lacked proper understanding of black history and how it was promoted and developed. The council had worked with the head of history at St Michael's and youth offending service agreed to help with these programmes (which was still in its early stages of development).

It was noted this would be incorporated around the council's plan as well.

Southwark Stands Together

The chair gave feedback on the Southwark Stands together as part of the response to black lives matter all cabinet members chaired a sub-group and discussed topics on education proposed curriculum on black history. Issues around stop and search and opportunities on employment and training.

Southwark opened the first beauty parade for Black, Asian, Afro and Caribbean hair. The community hub is a place where hair is done and an encouraging environment with a café and bar with a community meeting space. The proposal would be to invest in some neighbourhood funding for this project.

10. WORKSHOP - EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Andrew Fowler, head of service, children in care and care leavers introduced the item and the presenters; Steve Chaplin, service manager, children and adult's services and Melanie Aarons Royal, experienced practitioner (EET).

In addition to the presentation there were power point slides.

Summary of the presentation:

What is the impact of Covid?

- **Education**
Exam results
Teaching (lockdown/self isolating)
- **Employment**
More competition and fewer opportunities
Level 2 apprenticeships phased out

- **Training**
Social distancing affecting practical skills learning

What does Southwark have in place for its care leavers

Universal offer

- Education and training providers
- JCP Youth Obligation
- Employment
- Southwark Internship & Apprenticeship Schemes
- Weekly panel for young people not in education or training
- EET newsletter
- Weekly EET drop ins (Reach Out, Drop In)

Specialist offer

- Expanded LCS careers service
- Partnership with St. Giles and twin training through Southwark works
- Care leaver covenant
- Developing partnership with DWP and drop in service
- Partnership working with local economy team

What is in the offer for care leavers

- Support for college and further education
- College enrolment and retention
- Support while in university
- Employment support
- Direct referral
- Work placements
- Apprenticeship bursary
- Job start support

The meeting broke out into workshops for 15 minutes to discuss the key questions below:

- What more can be offered to care leavers from corporate parents across the council?
- How can we improve the mental health offer for 18+ young people?
- How can we expand the mentoring scheme to help our care leavers sustain eet?

The meeting resumed at 4.05 pm.

Feedback on workshops to assist with the EET action plan and any follow up actions:

Workshop 1

Tracy Harrison in conjunction with Ganiyat, provided feedback on workshop 1 - key issues that came out of the workshop were communication, empathy, understanding and connectivity. These were some of the main things Ganiyat would want as a care leaver in terms of helping her on the path. She specifically called out Melanie and said the relationship she had with her and her style of working with young care leavers was excellent. This helped Ganiyat to move forward on her way to employment. Other matters discussed were preparations for interviews, mentoring, partnerships with local organisations such as Tideway and the Shad. Also looked at what more the council could do both in terms of opportunities for young people as well as mentoring across each of the departments to help and show a pathway into employment.

Workshop 2

Cllr Stephanie Cryan provided feedback on workshop and said they took the first question which was what more can be offered to care leavers from corporate parents across the council? Cllr Cryan said there were some great ideas that came out of the workshop which they felt it was not just about work experience but creating opportunities like volunteering opportunities being available in the voluntary sector. Francis highlighted an idea about compiling a list of organisations that provide volunteering and work experience opportunities, which could be linked with care leavers.

Potentially linking the young advisors and care leavers to offer their expertise and experiences around that. Another point of discussion was how people navigate around the system. How the staff youth team could mentor young people during covid and providing that consistent support. Other issues discussed was navigating around the system – in order to explain what is an apprenticeship or an internship and work experience when mentoring a young person.

Workshop 3

Mark Kerr provided feedback on workshop 3. They looked at how to improve mental health amongst young people. The points highlighted were that young people should feel that they are being listened to and valued. There should be strong listening skills, co-production of care plans and how we would move forward with this.

People working and speaking with young people should be open and transparent with them. Another point was the service improvement and those working with care leavers should be informed of strategy service development and co-producing what it should look like.

Looking at training, apprenticeships and employment for opportunities for care

leavers and to address the mental health needs of young people that sometimes tend to fluctuate. Making sure that services are fully accessible to young people.

The chair stated the council would reaffirm their commitment on this.

A young care leaver addressed the meeting to highlight the amazing work the council were doing in regards to supporting and caring for young people.

11. CORPORATE PARENTING COMMITTEE - WORK PLAN 2020-21

RESOLVED:

1. That the committee reviewed and identified items for consideration in the work plan.
2. That the corporate parenting committee agreed the approach and work plan as set out in the report.
3. That the draft agenda for the next meeting on 3 March 2021 be agreed as follows:

Children in care

- Children in Care Annual Health Report 2020-21
- Foster and Adoption Service Annual Reports 2019 – 20
- Corporate parenting strategy
- Sufficiency strategy.

Care Leavers

Workshop theme: **Housing**

The meeting ended at 3.57 pm

CHAIR:

DATED: