

COUNCIL ASSEMBLY
(ORDINARY MEETING)
WEDNESDAY 16 OCTOBER
QUESTIONS ON REPORTS

ITEM 7.1: CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S PLAN 2013-2016

1. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES FROM COUNCILLOR CATHERINE BOWMAN

Southwark has been named as one of the councils placing more than 80% of children in care in 'far-flung' care homes [more than 20 miles away]. What is the explanation for this approach?

RESPONSE

Southwark Council takes the care of our looked after children extremely seriously and we are very vigilant about monitoring their care.

We have one of the largest populations of looked after children in London and in fact the actual number of children referred to in the report as being placed far from the borough is just 10 children, or about 2% of our entire looked after children population. The vast majority of Southwark children are put in family placements either in, or close to the borough, and for the few that are moved further afield there are very good reasons for doing so. Some have very complex needs which require specialist placements which are not available nearby, while others are moved for their own personal safety. We only use homes that are rated as Outstanding or Good by Ofsted and every decision we take is in the best interests of the child involved.

The figures used by the DfE to create this report are 12 Southwark children in care homes, 10 of these are outside London (hence the 80%). This represents 2% of our entire looked after children population which currently stands at 567 children.

SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES FROM COUNCILLOR CATHERINE BOWMAN

Thank you Mr Mayor. I thank the cabinet member for her response, but I would just ask if she would be willing – you may recall at the last corporate parenting meeting we watched a video which was not actually about children being placed out of the borough but it focused on a number of children from Southwark who were in a home in the Lake District, and there was one teenage boy in particular who had been there, I think, five years and he is about 50 now, and he did not get to see his mum who lived in Southwark, and that was quite concerning to all of the committee members. And I wondered, bearing in mind that the answer says there were 10 children being in this position, would you bring a report back to the next corporate parenting committee meeting that gives us details of why it is that those children have been placed out of borough and whether or not it might be possible to review the arrangements?

RESPONSE

Thank you Mr Mayor, and thank you Councillor Bowman. Funnily enough today I had my agenda planning meeting for corporate parenting committee on 4 November, so one of the items was actually discussing what came from the last corporate parenting committee, and this very item is on the agenda, I can assure you of that. And what we will have is a presentation from the assistant director at the meeting and we will talk about the 10 young people who he reported back on today. I am reassured why the reason they are out of the borough is because of safety reasons etc, etc but I am happy to share that with you and other members of the corporate parenting committee and we have agreed today to do that.