

Item No. 9.	Classification: Open	Date: 23 February 2016	Meeting Name: Corporate Parenting Committee
Report title:		Update on Care Service Response to Issues Raised by Speakerbox	
Ward(s) or groups affected:		All	
From:		Director, Children's Social Care	

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the corporate parenting committee notes the issues and concerns raised by Speakerbox at its meeting with corporate parenting committee on 27 October 2016.
2. That the corporate parenting committee notes the action taken by the service in response to the concerns and continues to monitor progress through its termly meetings with Speakerbox.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

3. The corporate parenting committee meets termly with Speakerbox so that members can hear from young people in care and care leavers what the most important issues were for them. These are usually facilitated by the Children's Rights Officer and attended by key officers responsible for services for children in care and care leavers.
4. On 9 February 2016 the cabinet agreed the Children in care and Care Leavers Strategy 2016-19. The first priority of this is "children and young people have a say and their voice is heard".
5. This report covers the key themes from the last meeting on 27 October 2016 that Speakerbox shared with members and the response of the care service to date.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

6. The first theme was family, particularly sibling contact.

"sometimes we just want to see our siblings and no one else from the family."

"in LAC Reviews we should get to decide how much we want to see our siblings."

7. The care service has shared these issues at a service day for all managers and social workers on 23 November 2015. Groups of social workers and managers worked in small groups to consider how they would take the issues back to work in their social work practice. A workshop on sibling contact has been planned with the principal social worker for children on 11 March 2016 on this specific issue with a commitment to undertake 2 further workshops in 2016. Siblings Together, an organisation dedicated to promoting contact with siblings

in care through holidays or weekend events, has been invited to meet with the Care Service management group with the intention of promoting this as a more flexible fun way where siblings can spend more time together.

8. On 10 December 2015 a meeting took place between the manager of the Contact Service and Speakerbox to consider how the contact rooms could be more suited to older children. It was explained how the rooms need to be suited to young children and babies as the majority of contact is between them and their parents. The décor is also important for helping parents to settle into contact with babies/toddlers. It is rare that children older than 10 years old use the rooms and when they do they are more likely to have their own agenda for contact. It was agreed that more activities for older children would be made available including consideration of electronic games (Wii for example) This is especially important where sibling groups are having contact. Any such activities must contribute to the contact experience not distract from it. These things do need to be stored separately games and activities for small children as it is recognised they are more vulnerable to damage and need replacing. .
9. It should be emphasised that sibling contact should be assessed as being in a child's best interests and there is a duty upon the social workers to promote such contact.
10. The second theme was communication between social workers, personal advisors and young people. The area of privacy was a particular concern.

"right to privacy."

"location where we meet....consider location."

11. The care service has shared these issues at the Service Day on 23 November 2015 as set out above. A short film is being commissioned with the purpose of engaging social workers and personal advisors on the importance of privacy and relationships to use as a tool to influence them to think more about the impact on children and young people and be used as a regular part of induction. The care service is eagerly awaiting the refreshed Golden Rules set by children in care for how social workers work with them. Promoting these and measuring our care service against these rules is seen as a very important way to improve how we work in this area.
12. The third theme was placements. Particularly the standards and training of foster carers and how they are monitored.

"standards for foster carers."

"importance who you are living with."

13. The fostering service has renewed its programme on recruiting, training and supervising foster carers. It has expanded its approach to therapeutic caregiving by training staff and social workers in Empathic Behaviour Management and Theraplay. It has also adopted the Secure Base Model which was shared with Speakerbox on 6 October 2015. This incorporates family membership as a key expectation of how carers look after children. Plans are to be made to offer some more workshops on the model to young people. The

model has been shared with one young person prior to her placement, to help her understand what she could expect from her carer. Young people have been involved in foster care training and there are plans to invite further participation in foster carers' pre- and post-approval training.

14. The fostering service has updated the children's guides which are given to young people when they become looked after which makes clear what children expect from carers. The service has also developed some tools for seeking young people's views about their placements, in consultation with Speakerbox.
15. The recruitment and assessment of foster carers was brought back in-house in May 2015 to increase the quality and expectations of the kind of care that children and young people should experience. All foster carers are independently reviewed every year and there has been renewed emphasis in the fostering service on the quality of those reviews and how the child's voice is a key part of it. Complaints by young people about standards of care have been followed up quickly and the outcomes fed back to the young people
16. The fostering service has established a full time social work role dedicated to making placements with children and our foster carers to improve our matching including developing principles of choice for young people and support from the start of a placement to promote placement stability.

Community impact statement

17. Southwark is committed to ensuring children's voices are heard whatever part of the community they are from. The council has a dedicated Children's Rights Team committed to making this voice heard.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
None		

APPENDICES

No.	Title
None	

AUDIT TRAIL

Lead Officer	Rory Patterson, Director Children's Social Care	
Report Author	Jackie Cook, Head Of Social Work Improvement And Quality Assurance, Children's and Adults' Services	
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Key Decision?	No	
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER		
Officer Title	Comments sought	Comments included
Director of Law and Democracy	No	No
Strategic Director of Finance and Governance	No	No
Cabinet Member	No	No
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