

Corporate Parenting Committee

Wednesday 16 July 2025

2.00 pm

Ground floor meeting rooms GO2B and C, 160 Tooley Street, London
SE1 2QH

Supplemental Agenda No.1

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Date: 10 July 2025

Meeting Name:	Corporate Parenting Committee
Date:	16 July 2025
Report title:	Southwark Homes for Southwark Children – Programme Update
Ward(s) or groups affected:	All
Classification:	Open
Reason for lateness (if applicable):	Paragraphs contained within the report
From:	Helen Woolgar – Assistant Director for Safeguarding & Corporate Parenting

RECOMMENDATION

1. The Committee note the contents of the update

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

2. The Southwark Homes for Southwark Children programme is the council's corporate parenting improvement programme. It aims to deliver the priorities of the Corporate Parenting Strategy and associated activity to ensure a high quality and sufficiency of care for children looked after by the local authority and care leavers.
3. The programme includes projects and workstreams across the full breadth of support and opportunity for our children and young people.
4. The programme is overseen by the Southwark Homes for Southwark Children Board, chaired by the Assistant Director for Safeguarding & Corporate Parenting. With a number of sub-groups and task and finish arrangements established to carry forward individual areas within the programme.
5. This report provides the Corporate Parenting Committee with an oversight update on the delivery of the programme.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

6. The programme currently has 20 individual projects or improvement activities being delivered across the following area, matched to the Corporate Parenting Strategy priorities:
 - Developing the Kinship Care local offer
 - Children's Residential Development
 - The whole council approach to corporate parenting
 - Foster carer sufficiency

Kinship Care Local Offer

7. Kinship Care: Statutory guidance for local authorities (October 2024)¹ (the Guidance) sets out a requirement for each local authority to publish information about the services in their area for children in kinship care and their families, and their approach towards meeting the needs of children in these arrangements.
8. This was previously referred to as a local family and friends care policy but has been redefined as the 'Kinship Local Offer.'
9. The Guidance requires local authorities to cover all forms of "kinship care" defined as *any situation in which a child is being raised in the care of a friend or family member who is not their parent, either temporarily or longer term*. This includes informal and formal kinship care, special guardianships, Child Arrangement Order, adoption by a friend or family member, and private fostering.
10. Work has been undertaken with the council's web team to map new content for the council's website that goes beyond the previous arrangements which were largely confined to the hosting of the policy document. Instead the new page is modelled on the Local Offer for SEND and Start for Life webpages and acts as a single point of reference for Kinship Carers, ensuring that there is easy links through to relevant other content for carers to navigate to in an accessible manner.
11. In the last 6-months there has been a range of engagement with kinship carers, primarily focussed on our priority to further strengthen our special guardianship offer, but with thematic findings that speak to the wider development needs of our kinship care local offer.
12. The main themes from that engagement were:
 - The importance of continuous, consistent support
 - The positive impact just one good worker can make
 - Drift and delay in the review of support plans
 - Lack of information and confusion about rights and entitlements
 - Worries surrounding adolescence and SEND
13. The first phase of this project has been the immediate updating and repurposing of the existing Family and Friend policy as the Kinship Local Offer, followed by a further work through co-production and consolidation to meet the expectations of the holistic future offer. The programme team is working in partnership with carers to develop a more comprehensive kinship local offer with a view to publication by the end of the calendar year.

Children's Residential Development

14. The council successfully secured matched capital funding from the Department for Education to invest in the redevelopment of two properties as Residential Children's Homes.

15. Works at our first home has been completed and the provision was successfully registered by Ofsted on 4 June 2025. The first council run children's home in Southwark for almost 2 decades is now open and a number of children have been identified for transition into the home.
16. The second home is currently undergoing refurbishment and is scheduled to be open towards the middle of next year.

The whole council approach to corporate parenting

17. The focus of the programme in this area are developing a whole council employability pathway for children in care and care leavers, and the development of the Care Leaver's Hub.
18. The council's chief officer team have recently committed to the delivery of a new employability pathway with a substantive update to be presented to the Corporate Parenting Committee in July.
19. The Care Leaver's Hub is the open access facility providing a range of drop-in and scheduled support to care leavers. Staff by Personal Advisors and Children's Rights Officers, the Hub now has a rolling programme of support across a number of areas for our young people, including:
 - Mental health support
 - Housing support
 - Employment and financial support
 - Life skills
20. The Hub continues to be developed with increasing cross council engagement to further enrich the offer to care leavers in the hub.

Foster carer sufficiency

21. The approach to foster carer sufficiency improvement is multifaceted and includes improvements in internal performance management of the foster care service, development of improved marketing materials and recruitment approaches, improving the offer to foster carers, and understanding opportunities to support foster carers housing options.
22. There has been a comprehensive and cross-council approach to increasing the visibility of foster care opportunities. New marketing assets are now deployed throughout council buildings and across the borough.
23. Working closely with the communications teams the service has trialled and significantly scaled up promotion of foster care across all council social media channels. This has successfully driven up enquiries about foster care, however, this has not as yet realised the level of conversion to approved carers as anticipated. The communications and recruitment strategy is under review by the Southwark Homes Board.

Reason for lateness

24. The report is submitted with less than five working days before the committee, due to an administrative error.

Reason for urgency

25. The report is listed on the committee's workplan for the 16 July meeting which cannot wait until the next committee in October 2025.

APPENDICES

No.	Title
None	

AUDIT TRAIL

Lead Officer	Helen Woolgar, Assistant Director for Safeguarding & Corporate Parenting		
Report Author	Michael Crowe, Assistant Director for Transformation & Operations		
Version	Final		
Dated	4 July 2025		
Key Decision?	No		
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER			
Officer Title		Comments Sought	Comments Included
Assistant Chief Executive, Governance and Assurance		No	No
Strategic Director, Resources		No	No
Cabinet Member		No	No
Date final report sent to Constitutional Team			10 July 2025

CORPORATE PARENTING DISTRIBUTION LIST (OPEN)**MUNICIPAL YEAR 2025-26**

NOTE: Original held by Constitutional Team; all amendments/queries to
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Name	No of copies	Name	No of copies
Membership		Paula Thornton/Beverley Olamijulo	5
Councillor Jasmine Ali (Chair)	1		
Councillor Natasha Ennin	1	Total:	9
Councillor Mohammed Deen	1		
Councillor Maria Linforth-Hall	1	Dated: 8 July 2025	
Councillor Emily Hickson	1		
Councillor Charlie Smith	1		
Electronic versions (No hard copy)			
Councillor Sarah King			
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