

Corporate Parenting Committee

MINUTES of the OPEN section of the Corporate Parenting Committee held on Wednesday 6 November 2019 at 2.00 pm at the Council Offices, 160 Tooley Street, London SE1 2QH

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

**NON-VOTING CO-
OPTED MEMBERS** Florence Emakpose
Francis Turkson
Mark Kerr
Rosamond Marshall

**OFFICER
SUPPORT:** Alasdair Smith, Director of Children and Families
Andrew Fowler, Head of Service, Children in Care and Care Leavers
Helen Woolgar, Assistant Director - Safeguarding and Care, Children's and Adults' Services
Sian Brown, Experienced Practitioner (Housing), Children's and Adults' Services
Khalida Khan, Interim Service Manager, Children's and Adults' Services
Kate Mayes, Independent Reviewing Officer
Ian Swift, Housing Solutions Manager
Sean Backhurst, Service Development Manager, Housing and Modernisation
Kelly Henry, Head of Service Permanence, Children's and Adults' Services
Usha Singh, Virtual Head Teachers
Suley Muhidin, Community Projects Officer
Neil Goron-Orr, Strategic Manager, Education Access
Amanda Chandler, Catch 22
Poonam Patel, Departmental Coordinator, Children's & Adult's Services, Children's and Adults' Services

Paula Thornton, Constitutional Officer

OTHER SUPPORT: Ian Congreve, Salvation Army
Ann Adesoye, Oasis Community Housing
Susanna Daus, Adopt London South Regional Adoption Agency

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Bill Williams, Dr. Stacey John-Legere and Kevin Fenton.

2. CONFIRMATION OF VOTING MEMBERS

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

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE CHAIR

The chair was pleased to announce that Southwark Council had received the 'Fostering Friendly' award at the Fostering Network's annual Fostering Excellence Awards.

The Fostering Excellence Awards are the UK's most prestigious foster care awards. They celebrate outstanding achievement in fostering and recognise those who make exceptional contributions to foster care every day.

3. APPOINTMENT OF NON-VOTING CO-OPTED MEMBERS

RESOLVED:

That the following co-opted non-voting members be appointed:

Name	Role
Francis Turkson (for the November meeting on housing)	Representative of Speakerbox
Nicky	Representative from Southwark's frontline workforce
Mark Kerr	Subject matter expert
Professor Kevin Fenton	Critical friend from an area outside children and adults service department
Tracey Harrison	A critical friend from the local community
Rosamond Marshall	A foster carer

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 2019 be approved as a correct record and signed by the chair.

ORDER OF ITEMS

The chair agreed to vary the order of items so that the workshop session was taken at the beginning of the meeting.

7. EXCLUSION OF LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN

The Southwark Virtual School Head presented her report to the committee.

The following points/questions were raised:

- Internal exclusions. The virtual school head explained issues relating to this and the 'stigma' than can be created within the school for the students. Work takes places with many different schools to tackle internal and external exclusions, with focus on schools where this seems to happen repeatedly
- Measures in place include daily attendance monitoring, monthly attendance panels and close contact with personal advisers
- Southwark Inclusive Learning Service (SILS) and conference of head teachers due to take place that will be dealing with this issue
- Mental health issues general and alexithymia diagnosis (when cannot express how feel), which can arise from childhood trauma; an issue to be considered in this area
- Query on basis or reasons for fixed term exclusions. Explained as a tool for teaching staff to ensure students are well behaved and 'afraid' to be excluded
- Based on the view that no child should be excluded what can be done to support and mitigate students in this situation ?
- Query on work with schools and best way to support the young person who may be in danger and to ensure their needs are met
- Role of intervention and counselling for children discussed to avoid and mitigate to avoid exclusions. The virtual head teacher was able to explain the funding limitations for this ongoing support, but confirmed the joint working and funding between the different agencies to facilitate when required
- A foster carer was able to share their experience of working closely with the school

when these issues arose and the positive results that this intervention brought.

RESOLVED:

1. That the report from Southwark Virtual School in response to the request for an overview of the work of Southwark Virtual School, including data in relation to fixed term and permanent exclusions of Children in Care of London Borough of Southwark be noted.
2. That a further report back be received after the next Southwark Virtual school annual report order to monitor the data for exclusions.

8. ADOPTION SERVICE ANNUAL REPORT 2018-19

The assistant director - safeguarding and care, children's and adults' services highlighted key issues on the annual adoption service report.

Susannah Daus was introduced, head of service, Adopt London South Regional Adoption and gave a brief outline of the remit of the Agency and plans to the committee.

RESOLVED:

That the annual report of Southwark Adoption Service 2018-19 be accepted.

9. FOSTERING SERVICE ANNUAL REPORT 2018-19

The head of service permanence, children's and adults' services presented the annual report to the committee highlighting that some of the key challenges related to matching older children and young people into permanence.

Queries/summary of main issues raised:

- Payment issue raised to foster carers and whether this had been reduced. The officer explained that overall there had be no decrease and would look at the wording used in the annual report to make this position clear
- Issue of more challenging cases and increase of adolescents and the fact that this trend likely to continue
- Issue raised by foster carer and difficulties raised by accommodation and the number of children that can be fostered. It was explained that regardless of tenure (in this case housing association) work can be done to liaise with the housing provider to look at what the council can do to help by providing an additional room by modifications via capital monies.

RESOLVED:

1. That the corporate parenting committee notes the annual report of Southwark Fostering Service 2018-19.
2. That officers look at the wording in the annual report to make clear that there is no decrease in foster payments.

10. CORPORATE PARENTING COMMITTEE - WORK PLAN 2019-20

RESOLVED:

1. That work plan as set out in the report be noted and agreed.
2. That an extra 30 minute time is allocated to meetings of the committee going forward, view of the workshop approach being used.

11. WORKSHOP THEME: HOUSING

Southwark Care leavers, working collaboratively to achieve our goals

Preparing for independent living and housing presentation

The committee heard a presentation from officers from children's and adults department, housing and modernisation, partner organisations and users of the service covering the following issues:

- Care leaver (18+) accommodation options
- The local offer for Southwark care leavers
- Stories from the service
- Feedback from young people
- Story of a young person
- 16+ Support and Resettlement Services
- Issues
- Solution and providers: The Salvation Army and Depaul - Oasis Community Housing
- Outline of the new services
- Next steps.

Summary of contributions:

- The committee heard from an experienced practitioner (housing), children's and adults' services and her work with young people and care leavers. The officer outlined the work that was taken to flag up young people who were care leavers and work undertaken with those who were on probation. Officers seek to establish the release dates and work with relevant partner organisations to put in place the necessary support providing examples of success stories
- A care leaver (now working in housing solutions) was able to provide an insight to some of the practical and financial challenges faced by young people leaving care and the overwhelming sense of responsibility when moving to your own independent accommodation. Other issues that might present themselves like mental health, alcohol issues and drugs add to this responsibility and may impact the management of their tenancy. He felt that greater awareness was required to understand care leavers and the challenges they face and asked that they were not pre-judged. The care leaver expressed his support from the corporate parenting committee and councillors
- Housing and modernisation officers expressed the progress and work being made to date, stating that there was always room for improvement, outlining details of the two new providers: The Salvation Army and Oasis Community Housing

- The Salvation Army outlined their work and some success stories of young people that have turned their lives around with support. The officer outlined the different demands that are faced by the service
- Oasis Community Housing also provided an insight to their work to the committee, expressing the view that homelessness has no place in society. The organisation outlined some of the practical measures and support in place to aid the transition to independent living with all the necessary skills.

Workshop and discussion - summary of issues raised:

- Peer mentoring groups and if used to help young people sustain their tenancies
- Young people in custody and query about support and whether this was ongoing. Officers responded and confirmed that part of the support is directed by their own feedback and needs, so that support offered is co-designed. Also explained that young people have advisors. Reference to Brightspots and the intention to revisit the outreach offer in March/April 2020
- The committee acknowledged the inspirational stories of care leavers and the first hand experiences of their transition to independent living
- Reference to county lines. Officers advised that this would probably warrant a separate slot
- Query as to whether care leavers have been checked properly to live alone and provided with support (also addressing lifestyles issues). Reference to the work undertaken by the experienced practitioner (housing), children's and adults' services to mitigate negative factors. Officers will continue to develop ways of improving this support
- Head of housing solutions explained that officers from children and adults services are co-located with housing so that joint assessments can be undertaken. The preference for looked after children leaving care would be to get a band 2 assessment to safeguard their future
- Query raised in respect of 'pocket living' accommodation on the Old Kent Road. The officer explained that this has to be set against the current £95.18 per week housing benefit payment for accommodation and the severe housing shortage
- Concern that young people are helped with cooking skills and other practical issues for day-to-day living. Oasis Community Housing were able to provide examples of good practice that operate to assist young people, including onsite cooking classes
- Mental health issues and what support and care offered in this regard for care leavers. Reference to work undertaken by the designated doctor and nurse for looked after children
- Helping young care leavers into employment and commending the young person who addressed the meeting about his experience. He now works in housing services and how this can be translated to other organisations/employers for care leavers
- Duality of role and how can avoid gaps and duplication in the provision of services and ways of common assessment. This was seen as a real opportunity to increase contracts for those who bridge the gap in supported housing. The identification of one key worker could play some part in this process, so that the young people can build their trust in this relationship, which will pay dividends in the provision of services and support. In essence a representative confirmed it would be advantageous to cut down on the number of people involved in the process and for solid relationships to be built
- Raised when discussing annual fostering care report, but applicable to this part of the meeting "issue raised by foster carer and difficulties raised by accommodation and the number of children can be fostered. It was explained that regardless of tenure (in this case housing association) work can be done to liaise with the housing provider to look

at what the council can do to help by providing an additional room by modifications via capital monies.”

The meeting ended at 4.25pm.

CHAIR:

DATED: