

## Corporate Parenting Committee

MINUTES of the OPEN section of the Corporate Parenting Committee held on Wednesday 20 April 2022 at 2.00 pm at the Council Offices, 160 Tooley Street, London SE1 2QH

---

**PRESENT:** Councillor Jasmine Ali (Chair)  
Councillor Maggie Browning  
Councillor Stephanie Cryan  
Councillor Sunny Lambe

**NON-VOTING  
COOPTED  
MEMBERS** Dr Mark Kerr, subject matter expert

**OFFICERS  
PRESENT:** Alasdair Smith, Director of Children and Families  
Helen Woolgar, Assistant Director – Safeguarding and Care  
Dr Jenny Taylor, Head of Clinical Service  
Dr Stacy John-Legere, Designated Doctor for Looked after Children  
Michele Sault, Designated Nurse for Looked after Children  
Elspeth Plukrose, Child and Adolescent Psychotherapist  
Elaine Reid, Head of Service, Permanence and Resources  
Leval Houghton-James, Experienced Practitioner Youth Worker, Children's and Adults' Services  
Olivia Nation, Children's Rights Officer  
Young people and representatives from Speakerbox  
Steve Chaplin, Service Manager, Children and Adult's Services  
Michael Crowe, Service Development Manager, Children's and Adults' Services  
Khalida Khan, Interim Service Manager, LCS 16 plus Service  
Paula Thornton and Beverley Olamijulo, Constitutional

Team  
Poonam Patel, Departmental Coordinator, Children's and  
Adults Service.

## 1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Evelyn Akoto, Charlie Smith and Eliza Mann.

The committee expressed their thanks for all the hard work of Councillor Eliza Mann who had served on the committee for many years.

## 2. CONFIRMATION OF VOTING MEMBERS

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

## 3. NOTIFICATION OF ANY ITEMS OF BUSINESS WHICH THE CHAIR DEEMS URGENT

The chair gave notice of the following late item:

- Item 8: Corporate parenting committee annual committee report

Reasons for urgency and lateness will be specified in the relevant minutes.

## 4. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS

None were declared.

## 5. MINUTES

### RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 2 March 2022 be approved as a correct record and signed by the chair.

## 6. SEMI-INDEPENDENT ACCOMMODATION FOR CHILDREN IN CARE AND CARE LEAVERS

Helen Woolgar, assistant director - safeguarding and care, children and adults' services presented the report to committee highlighting key issues.

A number of queries/points were raised including:

- The issue of tenancies/trust for young people in semi-independent

accommodation. It was clarified that the housing provider for the accommodation provide licences/agreements

- While the 'good' providers were acknowledged concern was expressed with regard to the significant financial gains from this housing and the huge variability in terms of support for young people
- Officers referenced the need to look at other options. While much positive work has been achieved recently with the secondment of an officer from housing to work directly within the team, work will continue to understand the different options available
- Good outcomes and the link with education and health (good accommodation directly affects these areas)
- The impact of the difficult housing market discussed, including the cost of temporary accommodation and problem in finding housing within London
- Noted that the option for care leavers to bid for one bedroom accommodation (in addition to studio) to be added to the housing allocations policy
- The health and education contributions to the report noted.

#### **RESOLVED:**

That the report about children in care and care leavers living in semi-independent supported accommodation and the multi-agency support provided be noted.

#### **7. CARE LEAVER WORKSHOP: SEMI-INDEPENDENT ACCOMMODATION FOR CHILDREN IN CARE AND CARE LEAVERS**

The committee welcomed Olivia Nation, children's rights Officer, Leval Haughton-James, experienced practitioner youth worker with a number of young people who were able to provide details of their experiences and issues arising from living in semi-independent accommodation.

All present were asked to give their vision / key words for semi-independent accommodation for young people. A summary of the comments from the meeting are set out below:

- Secure and feel safe
- Independent control of own life and assistance with independence (including finance and day-to-day decisions)
- Someone to turn to that can be trusted
- Kitchen that works and is clean
- Support
- Some place to call home and can have friends visit
- Place to enable planning for future life
- Safe place and young person listened to
- To make your own mark and make possible changes to accommodation to enable this

- Privacy and chance to bond with other young people
- Place to be responsible for
- Place to feel happy and supported
- Ambience – proud to bring friends back home
- Place of safety, emotionally and good mental health
- Still feeling connected whilst learning to live independently – be part of a community that is respectful of the multi-faceted semi-independent accommodation.

Following on from these comments, three young people presented their experiences from semi-independent accommodation.

### **Young person 1 - Semi-independent accommodation**

- Lack of privacy and staff can check room without prior notice
- Issues of perceived favouritism amongst the staff enabling some young people to move to the next stage of semi-independent living quicker
- Experience of lack of support
- Trust issues with key workers and sometimes assumptions made without checking with the young person directly about issues that may arise
- Talked about meals on Sundays and recognition of key holiday events within the setting that was welcomed
- The impact of COVID-19 discussed and the fact that the communal lounge just re-opened. However, young people were still not allowed visits from their friends.

### **Young person 2 – Stand-alone accommodation**

- Staff welcoming and accommodation based over three floors and no major issues arising. Accommodation and space satisfactory
- No key worker session yet.

### **Young person 3 – semi-independent**

- Initially placed in in accommodation which was a temporary placement for two weeks that materialised to one and half years
- Trust issues with key workers and favouritism
- Because unhappy was constantly getting into fights and problems at placement
- Maintenance issues with accommodation (hole in ceiling from a leak)
- Not a place felt happy to bring friends back to which meant spending more times at friends' houses
- Eventually did get removed from placement for behaviour issues and also suffered an undiagnosed mental health illness
- Need to recognise anxiety issues of young people in this setting and a valid reason why may not wish to participate in certain activities (like cooking and other group activities)
- Experience and training for staff at these setting dealing with young people with

mental health

- Rent very expensive (£400 per week referenced in this case) so the young person at the beginning of their career will often find themselves going into debt to pay this sum. If on universal credit, the rent would be covered but the issue of financial support for young people when paying this amount of rent flagged as an issue to be looked at
- Request for more background checks on key workers and clear boundaries to be set in this housing
- Issue of pets raised. Accommodation did not allow pets (and one young person had to give up a pet) but a staff member regularly brought their dogs into the placement which was felt to be unfair.

### **Summary of issues discussed from these contributions:**

- Rooms checks flagged and what agreements are in place for these to happen to help protect the privacy of young people. Noted responsibility to protect young people from harm but hoped that that some permission / boundaries could be set to protect young people and ensure privacy
- Suggestion of residents groups in the housing setting / forums within the home to raise issues
- Housing allocation and issues raised by young people having to chase key workers for update on their housing position and not always receiving updates on these applications. The committee queried why young people were not making their applications in their own right with the support of staff to enable
- The designated doctor and mental health professionals responded by reinforcing the importance of achieving a good home setting to support young people with their mental health.

The committee expressed their thanks to all the young people who had given details of their experiences to the committee.

### **PROPOSALS BY THE COMMITTEE AND KEY ACTION POINTS ARISING FOR INVESTIGATION:**

- Shared quality accommodation and the need to look at procuring this provision for young people to help them move onto the next stage in their lives
- Look at agreements and solutions / ideas to protect the privacy of young people in response to issues raised as part of their presentation to the committee. Work to be undertaken and to come back to committee with proposals
- Staffing issues raised and need to set boundaries
- Review of support plan in place currently (end to end review)
- The view that young people should be able to submit their own housing applications with the support from staff
- Concern that young people in some housing settings not allowed visitors currently should be looked into
- Reference to young inspectors and their use in respect of some of the issues/concerns identified

- Why young people are being 'penalised' for getting a job and then incurring large rent costs and often going into debt. Seems to serve as a disincentive to finding a job
- Report to committee on progress / update to issues raised.

## **8. CORPORATE PARENTING COMMITTEE ANNUAL SUMMARY**

The report had not been circulated five clear days in advance of the meeting. The chair agreed to accept this item as urgent so that the committee could be provided with the most current information on delivery of services and outcomes for children in care and care leavers, so that it can hold services accountable for work to improve the lives of our children and young people, and direct the ongoing delivery of the corporate parenting strategy. The status and outcomes present a year end statement to members and supports the effective direction of the future work plan of the committee.

Alasdair Smith, director, children and families gave introduced the key issues arising from the report.

### **RESOLVED:**

1. That the content of the annual summary presentation at Appendix 1 of the report be noted.
2. That the work plan, include a yearly report on children with disabilities.

## **9. ANNUAL REPORT ON THE HEALTH OF LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN (LAC): 2020-2021**

Dr Stacey John-Legere provided an update to the committee on the annual health report for looked after children 2020-21. Recent updates were set out at Appendix 3 of the report.

The annual report addressed the general health needs of looked after children with a deep dive on mental health.

Dr Stacey John-Legere also addressed the key updates set out in Appendix 3 of the report. Reference was also made to the Somerset judgement, which affects children in care to a less extent, but impacts adoption.

Dr Jenny Taylor, head of clinical Service, Michele Sault, designated nurse for looked after children and Elspeth Plukrose, child and adolescent psychotherapist also provided input to this presentation.

Summary of points arising:

- Impact on demand of services arising from the pandemic including how health and development affected
- Query in respect of provision when child / young person placed out of borough. Explained that a high level of support is provided in these circumstances but will depend on provision at that locality
- Look at areas of deprivation for inclusion on the work plan for 2022-23.

**RESOLVED:**

That the content of the annual summary presentation at Appendix 1 and the update set out at Appendix 3 be noted.

**10. CORPORATE PARENTING COMMITTEE - WORK PLAN 2022-23**

**RESOLVED:**

1. That the work plan for 2022-23 be noted and the following draft agenda for July 2022 corporate parenting committee as follows:

**6 July 2022**

*Children in care*

- Adoption report
- Virtual Head Teacher Annual Report 2020 – 2021
- Sufficiency Strategy
- Report back on workshop on semi-independent living and issues raised.

*Care Leavers*

Workshop theme: To be agreed.

2. That the work plan, include:
  - a yearly report on children with disabilities as discussed under item 8 above
  - a look at areas of deprivation for inclusion on the work plan for 2022-23 as referenced under item 9 above.

The meeting ended at 4.30pm.

**CHAIR:**

**DATED:**

