

## Corporate Parenting Committee

MINUTES of the OPEN section of the Corporate Parenting Committee held on Wednesday 21 April 2021 at 2.00 pm. Online/ Virtual meeting.

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**PRESENT:** Councillor Jasmine Ali (Chair)  
Councillor Evelyn Akoto  
Councillor Maggie Browning  
Councillor Stephanie Cryan  
Councillor Sunny Lambe  
Councillor Charlie Smith

**NON-VOTING  
CO-OPTED  
MEMBERS:** Dr. Mark Kerr, Subject matter expert  
Rosamond Marshall, Foster carer  
Tracey Harrison, Critical friend of the local community

**YOUNG PEOPLE:** Ikesha (chair of Speakerbox) and Ryan

**OFFICER  
SUPPORT:** Alasdair Smith, Director of Children and Families  
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  
Angela Brown, Nurse, Looked after Children  
Andrew Fowler, Head of Service: Children In Care and Careleavers  
Steve Chaplin, Service Manager, Children and Adults  
Helen Woolgar, Assistant Director - Safeguarding and Care  
Kelly Henry, Head of Service Care & Permanence  
Michael Crowe, Service Development Manager  
Dechaun Malcolm, ReConnect Coordinator  
Genette Laws, Director of Commissioning  
Kalida Khan, Interim Service Manager LCS 16 plus service  
Leval Haughton- James, Experienced Practitioner Youth Worker  
Esther Kayode, Intern, Finance and Governance

Department  
Beverley Olamijulo, Constitutional Team  
Poonam Patel, Constitutional Team  
Paula Thornton, Constitutional Team

**1. APOLOGIES**

Apologies for lateness was received from Tracey Harrison.

**2. CONFIRMATION OF VOTING MEMBERS**

The members listed as presented 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 : Sufficiency Strategy (2018-22) Update

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

**4. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS**

None were declared.

**5. MINUTES**

**RESOLVED:**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 4 November 2020 be approved as a correct record and signed by the chair.

**6. ANNUAL REPORT ON THE HEALTH OF LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN (LAC): 2019-2020**

Dr. Stacy John-Legere, Designated Dr for Looked After Children (LAC), Southwark and Michele Sault, Designated Nurse for Safeguarding Children, Looked After Children & Care Leavers presented their annual report to the committee.

A copy of the slide presentation was included as Appendix 2 to the report.

The committee thanked Dr Stacy John-Legere and Michele Sault for their hard work in difficult circumstances of the pandemic.

The following issues were discussed:

- What the committee could further do to assist?
- Challenges relating to the secure estate and consequent restriction on contact. Dr Stacy John-Legere explained that within the secure estate health professionals would respond to the health issues arising and keep herself and Michele Sault (designated nurse) informed
- The use of video calls to assist contact. It was not always possible to facilitate video calls on secure estates. It was agreed that the chair or the leader should write to those places that were unable to facilitate or offer video links to ensure they were in place for all children and young people in care on secure estates
- In response to a question about the number of children or young people who had been ill with Covid-19, Dr Stacy John-Legere was able to explain that no children or young people had been seriously unwell and all cases had been managed on an individual basis
- Query in respect of knowledge of mental health issues prior to entering care. It was advised that previous mental and physical needs would be known and considered.

#### **RESOLVED:**

1. That the report be noted.
2. That updates provided via Southwark Borough Based Board (quarterly) and set out in the committee report be noted.
3. That the chair or the leader write to those places on the secure estate currently unable to facilitate or offer video links for children or young people (to assist contact) so that this option is available to all children and young people in care.

#### **7. MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE PRESENTATION**

Dr Jenny Taylor, head of clinical services undertook a presentation to committee on mental health issues for children and young people with the following points highlighted in the presentation:

- Looked after children four times more likely to experience challenges with their mental health problems compared to children living with birth families
- Outlining core challenges – not having their needs met in early years, experiencing trauma and at least one total break in attachment relationship
- Challenges to mental health that included:
  - Innate challenges – temperamental differences and vulnerabilities, neurodiversity
  - No replacement attachment bond formed

- Lack of as a story they can live with about themselves and birth family
- Further changes of placement
- Lack of family home to remain connected to when moving in to adult life
- Access to engaging flexible provision of specialist psychological and pharmacological interventions.
- Identified that there is a lot already being done in Southwark to try to reduce the challenges they face to having good mental health.

Summary of points raised by the committee following the presentation by Dr Jenny Taylor:

- Mental health challenges and what is required in policy terms to address. Explained that preventative work already being undertaken to keep families stronger. A focus of the preventative policy was to make use of and keep birth families connected for ongoing support
- Issues that some of the children and young people are not living in Southwark and concern that these do not fall through the safety net. Dr Jenny Taylor explained that there was desire to achieve a standard child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) service to alleviate differences in provision. Identified issues in respect of placements with significant geographical distance and the resource challenges that prevail. It was suggested that a briefing / paper to address these particular issues and variations that may occur be prepared
- National standards referenced but acknowledged that Southwark would offer over and above this standard.

**RESOLVED:**

1. That the presentation be noted and a copy be sent to members of the committee.
2. That a briefing / paper be developed in response to challenges of child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) provision for children and young people out of borough.

**8. SUFFICIENCY STRATEGY**

It was not possible to circulate this report five clear days in advance of the meeting. The chair agreed to consider this report as urgent because corporate parenting committee next meeting was not next meeting until 7 July 2021. In order to progress this strategy for its final year, and ensure that further input was received from the committee, the report needed to be considered at this meeting. The strategy addresses the adequate supply of high quality accommodation and support; and meet the needs of, and improve the outcomes for looked after children, young people, and children on the edge of care and as such needed to be progressed without delay.

Alasdair Smith, director, children and families presented this report to the committee.

Genette Laws, director of commissioning was also present to provide input to this report on current provision, confirming that a report was due to cabinet in July 2021 on a semi-independent offer; continuing to work closely with housing colleagues in respect of affordable housing and other related issues.

Summary of issues discussed on this report:

- Councillor Stephanie Cryan, cabinet member for council housing confirmed that the housing allocations policy was being currently reviewed and provided a link for input to a consultation
- Rent guarantor provision. Confirmed that this was being undertaken informally currently and consideration being given to a more formal process to take further.

**RESOLVED:**

1. That the progress of the Children Looked After and Care Leavers Sufficiency Strategy 2018-2022 be noted.
2. That the plans for the final year of the strategy and the approach to renewing the strategy from 2022 be noted.
3. That the sufficiency strategy be reviewed again at a future meeting of the corporate parenting committee.

**9. CORPORATE PARENTING COMMITTEE - WORK PLAN 2020-21**

It was agreed to consider the work plan at the next committee meeting on 2020-21, which would set out a draft programme for the new municipal 2021-22 year.

**10. EXPERIENCES OF LOCK DOWN AND COVID-19 FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE**

Leval Haughton-James, youth practitioner opened this part of the meeting by introducing Iksha and Ryan to hear their experiences of lockdown.

Leval undertook a slide presentation to the committee outlining the practical and emotional support given by Speakerbox. The presentation included the following key points:

- Group participation post and during Covid-19
- Sessions included gym, meals, physical activities, cinema, theatre, work experience opportunities and networking

- Since March 2020 group sessions have been provided by various online platforms (including Christmas and Easter)
- 54 young people have received EiD celebration cards
- Christmas gifts for careleavers
- 20 young people received Easter gift hampers.

Group work activities to support young people during the Covid-19 pandemic included:

- Zumba classes
- Weekly check-ins
- Exercising at home via zoom
- Weekly newsletter and
- Quiz nights plus much more.

Lessons learned – adapting to change

- The transition from face to face activities to online sessions has been challenging
- Decreased number of young people participating over the course of time (Zoom burnout)
- Reducing social isolation by staying connected
- Restrictions beyond Speakerbox's control that limited accessing young people in prisons.

Key points raised by young people via Speakerbox:

- Keen to plan activities and events to relieve stress
- More professional support needed due to poor relationships with family for transition into independent with money management, more encouragement to save, budgeting advice. Help to develop shopping and cooking skills
- Want to be consulted about housing options so their views and experiences could be captured.

Confirmed participation opportunities will continue in various forms (online, newsletters, group and face-to-face contact including also developing a newsletter to increase communication with young people in custody.

Forward plan for group work in place as follows:

- Care leavers parents group, based in a children's centre
- Independent hub group for 21+
- 'My Yard' – managing home, administration and managing within budget
- Mindfulness
- Pride and belonging
- Cooking club
- Unaccompanied young people's drop in

- Walk and running social group.

Ikesha and Ryan were able to provide an insight to their experiences/observation of lockdown highlighting the following issues:

- Speakerbox represented a consistent presence and support for children and young people during lockdown
- Common themes / experiences for children and young people in lockdown relating to employment/training, housing and mental wellbeing
- The emotional impact of lockdown and other events at that time relating to Black Lives Matters and the killing of George Floyd. All these impacts were overwhelming and could compound/contribute to any unresolved trauma for young people
- Housing issues and being confined to a small space at this time to live, work and relax and difficulties arising
- Impact on the lack of one-to-one contact for young people and isolation from family and friends
- Mental health implications
- Leaving care support (housing, grants, emotional support). Housing can be difficult and reference to the invaluable support given by the children participation rights officer throughout this time on such matters
- How accessed and utilised therapies including self-referral
- Talking to young people and how important this has proved to gain information and knowledge on financial and practical matters they are facing.

In conclusion, to this presentation it was explained that many positive plans and events were planned for the future, including a summer barbeque and physical exercise (which was considered vital for mental health wellbeing).

Summary of discussion and points raised in response to this presentation by Leval, Ikesha and Ryan:

- The committee expressed their thanks to Speakerbox and their support to children and young people
- Transitioning to adulthood and what more can be done? Leval responded and addressed issues relating to housing, bills, council tax, paye and managing money. Referenced contact with a former care leaver who needed some support but was unaware was able to still ask for help; advice and support will be offered if approached by a care leaver. Suggested that this be more widely advertised to young people/care leavers so that they are aware
- Importance of information sharing amongst young people and received on a level they can understand and relate to
- Ikesha raised the importance of checking if young people are okay. Focus needs to be on individual and holistic needs and checking up on daily care
- Exploring opportunities for volunteering and other avenues, especially for

those young people not in education, employment or training (NEET)

- Support for young people coming out of lockdown and extra support for those who have been custody (especially with regard to housing). More help getting into work after being in custody
- Suggested further work / letter be written in respect of the point made about young people coming out of custody and challenges faced with housing and other day to day issues
- Secure estate – consideration to putting together an enhanced programme for resettlement with the multiple agencies. Worth exploring, what it needs to look like, beyond basic statutory provisions
- Making a list of what it means to be in care and how this relates to university, housing allocation and semi-independent living and letting young people know the information that can be obtained
- The chair expressed the need for a catch-up/piece of work between now and next meeting on Covid-19 and additional support for young people (including above bullet point).

The committee expressed their thanks for the amazing contribution of these young people and their presentations.

The meeting ended at 5.15 pm.

**CHAIR:**

**DATED:**