

Corporate Parenting Committee

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

PRESENT: Councillor Jasmine Ali (Chair)
Councillor Naima Ali
Councillor Rachel Bentley
Councillor Esme Dobson
Councillor Natasha Ennin
Councillor Darren Merrill
Councillor Charlie Smith (Vice-chair)

**NON VOTING
COOPTED
MEMBER:** Dr Mark Kerr, subject matter expert

**OFFICER
SUPPORT:** Alasdair Smith, Director of Children Service
Helen Woolgar, Assistant Director – Safeguarding and Care
Elaine Reid, Head of Service: Permanence and Resources
Dr Jenny Taylor, Head of Clinical Service
Dr Stacy John-Legere, Designated Doctor for Looked after Children
Joy Edwards, Designated Nurse for Looked after Children
Dechaun Malcolm, Children’s Rights and Participation Officer
Young people and representatives from Speakerbox
Clare Ryan, Service Manager, Looked after Children, Children and Adult’s Services
Khalida Khan, Interim Service Manager, LCS 16 plus Service
Jane Tilton, Recruitment Manager, Children’s and Adults Services
Usha Singh, Virtual Headteacher
Louise Neilan, Head of External Affairs, Chief Executive’s

Paula Thornton and Beverley Olamijulo, Constitutional Team
Poonam Patel, Departmental Coordinator, Children's and Adults Service.

1. APOLOGIES

All members were present.

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 identified an item of late and urgent business as set out below:

- Item 9: Children Looked after and Care Leaver Sufficiency Strategy 2023-25

However, it was agreed that this item should be considered at the next meeting of the committee, so was deferred.

4. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS

None were declared.

5. MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 6 July 2022 be approved as a correct record and signed by the chair.

6. FOSTERING WORKSHOP

The committee heard representations from a front line foster care manager and staff who provided an overview of staying put for the council. In foster care, a staying put arrangement is slightly different to a foster placement in that the young person staying put is no longer a looked after child. They are a young adult and care leaver. Staying put provides support to a care leaver and they are allocated a

personal adviser.

Four case studies were outlined which provided evidence of staying put for Southwark, demonstrating continuity of care in a nurturing and care environment. In addition, some of the key points highlighted in these cases included:

- Young person felt part of their carers family
- Aspirational, many were attending university and other educational courses
- One in full time employment
- Positive sense of identity and heritage and proud of their background
- Close and trusting bond with their carers and feeling family is their own
- Independence and developing positive household routines (cooking and household chores to help with independence)
- Staying put provides a guarantee to support the young person in education.

Questions arising from presentation

- What happens to those not doing so well and how to understand the challenges and barriers that prevail. It was explained that if young person resides outside of Southwark, normal residence applies and they could apply to local housing within Southwark.
- Important to ensure that a pathway and long-term plan is in place for the young person to overcome any challenges.
- The option of supported lodgings indicated for those young people who would like to stay put but are unable to do so.
- An officer raised the issue of the funding gap for staying put and the challenges for Southwark.

It was agreed that the copies of the case studies should be circulated to members of the committee. The committee heard representations from a front line foster care manager and staff who provided an overview of staying put for the council. In foster care, a staying put arrangement is slightly different to a foster placement in that the young person staying put were no longer a looked after child. They are a young adult and care leaver. Staying put provides support to a care leaver and they are allocated a personal adviser.

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It was agreed that the copies of the case studies should be circulated to members of the committee.

7. FOSTERING SERVICE ANNUAL REPORT 2021-22

Officers presented the report to committee and highlighted key points including the work undertaken by foster carers in the extremely challenging pandemic. A summary of the issues included:

- Challenges facing foster carers in the context of the prevailing cost of living crisis
- Ageing foster carer population
- Therapeutic approach to fostering, backed up with adequate training
- Working closely with placements to identify complex needs and provide support/training
- Emphasis on foster carer being part of a professional network
- View that long-term placements are equivalent to adoption
- Measures in place to deal with issues that may arise. For example, reasons behind a child /or young person persistently going missing
- Social worker and foster carer working in partnership to resolve issues
- Training and development offer outlined with some courses being offered in person.

Councillor Jasmine Ali expressed her thanks on behalf of the committee to foster carers for all their hard work and dedication.

Questions arising from presentation

- Therapeutic support and understanding of childhood adverse experiences and support for teenagers. Link between foster care training and support for these experiences in order to provide love, support and building resilience to empower foster carers to achieve balance. It was explained that twenty-four hour support was also available for foster carers
- Query relating to not completing training, support and development (TSD) in timescale and what this means. The outstanding not completed in timescale were reviewed and subject of a workshop monthly and review by officers
- Special guardianships and whether possible to consider extending the training programme offer. It was stated that this group of people are an essential part of the community and important that they are supported, especially in the challenges of the cost of living crisis currently; concern for young people and the support provided to their families. It was explained that a legislative framework guides foster care and adoption training and support. It was agreed to receive a report on special guardianship to a future corporate parenting committee
- Query relating to the increase in numbers for the 16 years plus age group and if any particular factors contributing, like the cost of living crisis.

Recruitment

The committee received input from the manager of foster care recruitment and the manager of the council's press team about initiatives and efforts in respect of foster care recruitment.

Advertising currently planned with the use of animation and the voices of young people with a launch planned to take to the community. Regular roll out of adverts and newsletters continue.

As soon as queries are received, contact is made immediately but challenges will prevail and the council work with the foster carers to support.

Efforts outlined to try and reach all parts of the community and including leaflet drops and articles in Southwark Life. All ideas and suggestions welcomed.

Issue of housing raised and the need for a spare room and impact on recruitment. Explained that housing allocation policy has limited resources. Councillor Merrill, cabinet member for council homes and homelessness explained that the housing allocation policy was currently being reviewed.

RESOLVED:

1. That the 2021-22 annual report of Southwark fostering service be noted.
2. That a report on special guardianship be received to a future meeting of the committee.

8. SPEAKERBOX VERBAL UPDATE

The children's rights & participation officer was in attendance with a number of young people who were members of Speakerbox to give the committee an update. It was explained that Speakerbox going through a very busy time with an increased participation level at 25% with the following highlighted:

- A poem on identity that was read to the committee by the young person who had written
- Creation of opportunities for those in care and making clear that they are not alone
- Working with the age group 5 – 25 with the idea to get the conversation going, regardless of age.

The young people each presented their achievements and experiences of Speakerbox to the committee including:

- Auditioning for a place on television show
- Writing a poem on identity as described above
- Drama groups and other creative efforts that help young people come together and develop confidence through teamwork
- Participation in a photography workshop, a further example of how involvement provide results, with the young people coming away from the experience positive and upskilled
- One young person explained that they have gone from being a previously 'quiet' person to one that has more confidence and able to have conversations and develop their character and resilience
- New skills learned on a drama project (lighting, camera and leadership) which has lead to the 'best version of 'myself' has quoted by the young person
- Speakerbox has helped her to reach her goals
- Given them freedom, education and goals.

A photography exhibition is planned in the New Year with the prints being on sale at the South London Gallery. All members of the committee are invited to attend, with the proceeds going to investment in the Speakerbox website with the aim of being interactive. Not all young people felt comfortable with making a phone call and the improved website will provide online interaction and support.

The launch of new film is also planned in the New Year from Speakerbox.

Speakerbox have a number of key events happening and would welcome the attendance of members of the committee to support their work. The children's rights & participation officer to provide details and location for members of the committee. The children's rights and participation officer was in attendance with a number of young people who were members of Speakerbox to give the committee an update. It was explained that Speakerbox were going through a very busy time with an increased participation level at 25% with the following highlighted:

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9. CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER AND CARE LEAVER SUFFICIENCY STRATEGY 2023-2026

This item was deferred until the next meeting of the committee.

10. INDEPENDENT REVIEWING OFFICERS (IRO) ANNUAL REPORT 2021-22

This item was deferred until the next meeting of the committee.

11. CORPORATE PARENTING COMMITTEE WORK PLAN 2022-23

RESOLVED:

1. That the work plan as set out in the report be subject to review and agreement with Councillor Jasmine Ali and Alasdair Smith (director of children service) in respect of the March and April 2023 meetings.
2. That the current work plan as set out that will be subject to review (as set out above) be noted as follows:

1 March 2023 – draft subject to review

Children in care

- Children Looked After and Care Leaver Sufficiency Strategy 2023-2026
- IRO report
- Ofsted report update for committee
- Children with disabilities
- Housing issues for young people / semi-independent accommodation
- Speakerbox verbal update.

Care Leavers

Workshop theme – To be agreed

19 April 2023 – draft subject to review

Children in care

- Speakerbox verbal update
- Annual health report for looked after children
- Virtual head teacher annual report
- Special guardianship

Care Leavers

Workshop theme – To be agreed

The meeting ended at 4.15pm.

CHAIR:

DATED: