

Corporate Parenting Committee

MINUTES of the Corporate Parenting Committee held on Tuesday 18 July 2023 at 2.00 pm at Rooms GO1A and B, 160 Tooley Street London SE1 2QH

PRESENT: Councillor Jasmine Ali (Chair)
Councillor Charlie Smith (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Naima Ali
Councillor Rachel Bentley
Councillor Esme Dobson

OTHER MEMBERS PRESENT: Dr Mark Kerr (subject matter expert)

OFFICER SUPPORT: Alasdair Smith, Director, Children and Families
Helen Woolgar, Assistant Director – Safeguarding and Care
Elaine Reid, Head of Service: Permanence and Resources
Dr Jenny Taylor, Head of Clinical Service
Joy Edwards, Designated Nurse for Looked after Children
Jenny Izod, Southwark NHS
Rachel Massey, Community Consultant
Dechaun Malcolm, Children’s Rights and Participation Officer and chair of SpeakerBox
Khalil Campbell, Fostering Service Manager and colleagues, Emma (senior social worker) and Claudia (team manager)
Leval Haughton-James, youth worker and the young people (in attendance)
Usha Singh, Virtual Headteacher
Karen Shaw, Head of Housing Solutions
Mathew Griffiths, NHS South East London ICB
Paula Thornton, Constitutional Officer
Beverley Olamijulo, Constitutional Officer (clerk for the meeting)

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Dr Stacy John-Legere, Councillors Darren Merrill (adoption leave) and Kimberley McIntosh.

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. Fostering Service Annual Report 2022-23

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 19 April 2023 be approved as a correct record and be signed by the chair.

6. SPEAKER BOX VERBAL UPDATE / WORKSHOP SESSION (GROUP DAY FOR CARE LEAVERS)

Dechaun Malcolm, children's rights and participation officer and chair of SpeakerBox presented the following to committee:

SpeakerBox mission and purpose

- Empowering, upskilling and equipping our Children and Young People (C&YP) with the tools to self-advocate whilst amplifying the voices of all our care experienced C&YP. Doing this was in partnership with the Virtual School.

Engagement: From April to June 2023

- There were 316 episodes where C&YP engaged or participated with SpeakerBox during the last quarter.
- This was 120.9% increase from the previous year (April – June 2022) where 143 episodes were recorded.

Engagement Methods

Developing and delivering training

- Delivered mental health training to – Assisted and Supported Year in Employment (AYSE)
- Developing own 'Total Respect' training
- Supporting skills to Fostering.

Attending training Workshops

- Mentoring Programme for care leavers
- Let's Talk About Racism.

Attending events/programme

- 'I Belong Here' (Fostering Animation film Launch)
- Creative Collective
- Bowling and Crazy Golf.

Recruitment

- Recruitment for the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) Team
- Leaving Care Team Manager.

Consultations

- Reviewing the National Care Standards with DfE
- Review of independent visitor (IV) advocacy services
- Mediation service (as part of the complaints process).

Campaigning

- I Am .. Campaign Launch Event (April)

Additional Support Offer

A safe and non-judgemental space where YP can be themselves, whilst feeling heard and supported.

- Advice, information and signposting (**connecting**)
- Advocacy
- Emotional support
- Accessing case files.

Last Quarter (April – June 2023)

SpeakerBox Juniors Re-established

- The Virtual School had partially funded the second Children Rights Officer (Ekta Gupa) for the next year. This enabled them to extend the SpeakerBox's reach. As a result the under 12s group was formerly re-established during the half term week in May where 19 children attended the SpeakerBox bowling event. This would be the start of regular groups – of where under 12s, would have a safe space to be together whilst helping to shape service delivery.

Train to be a mentor

- In June, nine care leavers signed up to SpeakerBox's mentor training programme. Care leavers will develop coaching skills to support Southwark's senior leaders.
- Once they complete their training they would be matched with a senior leader, and help shape services.

Stepping up with the Step-Up Programme

Two of SpeakerBox's most experienced panel members (care leavers) supported Greenwich Council with their Step Up to Social Work Programme.

Two of the care leavers facilitated training to 15 other young people, (including Lewisham and Greenwich young people) and prepared them for recruiting prospective students. 11 of the young people left the workshop up-skilled and ready to recruit from Southwark's workforce.

Hole in One

SpeakerBox Seniors participated in Crazy Golf during the May half-term as a reward for their hard work in campaigning. One of Southwark's trainee mentors (care leaver) supported the group.

Positive Outcomes for Children and Young people (C&YP)

During the last quarter, SpeakerBox provided opportunities, which resulted in the following:

- SpeakerBox extended its reach and influence external to Southwark council
- C&YP being with others with shared experiences (particularly the under 12s)
- Young people developed and acquired new skills
- C&YP begun making new positive friendships.

Young people:

- Felt more confident to self-advocate
- Had improved understanding of their rights
- Experienced improved emotional well-being

- Had improved aspirations and career paths.

Looking ahead and next quarter

“With an extended team, speakerbox plan to do more, reach more and empower more of our children and young people”

- Revamping Child Protection Conference rooms with SpeakerBox artwork and photography
- Planning the next Care Celebration event (November 2023)
- Improved engagement with under represented groups, (unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC), special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), young people in custody and the under 12s)
- Rebrand and develop their website to extend SpeakerBox’s reach
- Relaunching first SpeakerBox magazine in four years, and first ever SpeakerBox digest
- Launch of Southwark’s total respect training titled “Bridging the gap” October 2023
- Planning the first residential (in a very long time).

Following the presentation the chair said it was important for the committee to work together and set priorities for children and young people by way of a focus group. SpeakerBox agreed to focus more on outreach work to target young people with disabilities and those with additional needs.

The following points were highlighted at the meeting

- Wellbeing for young people coming out of COVID-19 covid pandemic – because a large number of children are not getting the help they need
- During COVID-19 – a number of young people moved out of the care system. The council needed to look into this further
- SpeakerBox HQ – provide support to other people like health services and other groups which seem over stretched
- To find ways to signpost young people and carers to the services they need
- Support for young people is not as prominent because of the cost of living crisis and a number of community groups have reached their limit

- Young people not being aware of SpeakerBox – finding ways to provide that connection
- Suggestion from the chair – was to provide a balance sheet on what was available post covid - example; access to dental services
- PAs (personal advisors) work better with young people - (addressing their needs and hobbies) because information was channelled across to young people – SpeakerBox would like to relaunch their magazine to extend their reach
- Headquarters for young people: There was still ongoing discussion about Talfourd Place, creating spaces for young people. It was still a working progress and aid to be moving in the right direction
- Celebrating work young people had achieved and focus should be to connect and support rather than sign-posting
- Event on Saturday 29 July from 12 noon until 4pm at Kingswood House. This event was happening at the request of young people. Members of the corporate parenting committee were encouraged to join this summer cook-out and email Dechaun.Malcolm@southwark.gov.uk to confirm their participation.

The director of children and families thanked the young people present for their aspirations.

7. THE CARE LEAVER STEERING GROUP - PRESENTING THE WORK THEY HAVE DONE

Leval Haughton-James, youth worker and the young people (in attendance) presented the item on the care leaver steering group:

Young person 1 – presented (Communication and connecting with young people)

- Communication and connecting with the young people
- Being able to provide service updates, opportunities and connect with young people over various platforms
- Opportunities for youth led content and /or promotion of activities
- Access to YouTube and social media pages (all digital content created could be uploaded on YouTube for care leavers to view in their own time)
- Use of social media to advertise and promote events

- Newsletters: Updates of care leavers support (internal and external), information regarding cost of living and advice for young parents
- Digital team: Recording and editing gateway sessions, testimonials/feedback, 60-second news report, short films (A day in the life of?)
- Ring-fenced opportunities across Southwark council and/or creating job opportunities – care leavers to have opportunities to gain employment for specific job or apprenticeship within the council.

Young person L – presented (Housing)

- Young people to have more bidding options
- Support with moving on from studio flats (to bigger properties) post 25 or case closer
- Opportunities to bid on studio and 1 bedrooms
- Additional support in place from housing departments
- Gardening support – help and support with maintaining garden
- Maintenance support – repairs, painting – for new tenancy.

At this point, the chair explained that the cabinet member for housing, Councillor Darren Merrill was currently on adoption/parental leave. It was noted that Councillor Stephanie Cryan would take over responsibility of this cabinet role during the councillor's leave of absence.

Young person R – presented (Health)

- Learning difficulties/disabilities testing examples, Dyslexia, ADD and ADHD
- Testing service for over 18s (free for care leavers)
- Hoarding advice and support (health or housing) – to have a service in place to promote the importance of understanding why young people hoard
- Substance abuse and emotional wellbeing – clear pathway of support and follow up with young people.

Young person A – presented (Participation)

- Young people to have access to Talfourd Place area which is still an ongoing issue after COVID 19 only sessions

- Use of computer room, access to advice support and guidance
- Access to shower rooms or washing machine
- Some sessions take place in Talfourd Place
- Driving and theory lessons and support around owning a car
- Theory lessons and preparation agreed to start on: 23 August
- Guidance and information about owning and maintaining a car
- Workshops – mortgage advice and support, housing options and housing pathway for care leavers.

Young person C – presented (Finances)

- Update process of making payments to young people – named finance contact was able to support with outstanding payments and for payments under £100 could be made instantly
- Paying private rented deposits – payment made same day /once tenancy agreed for deposits of private rent – service managers were able to make payments from credit cards.

Identified areas for extra support

- YouTube and social media pages – support and access and permission to upload to Southwark YouTube channel and permission to have additional social media pages (Instagram and ticktock)
- Digital team – support from Southwark communications dept (mentors, time and/or resources for partnership work)
- Update process to make payments easier for young people – BACS payments (instant payments) were not possible
- Referenced housing issues delays and ability to bid on one-bedroom flats
- Finance issues/ communication with social worker and personal advisor – concerned about the length of time it takes for money to reach young people (e.g. care leaver grants).

Comments and suggestions highlighted at the meeting:

- Professional filmmaker connected with young people in Southwark - to secure funding for long-term work

- Expansion of work for corporate parenting duties
- Property – social value to care leavers and addressing issues on health
- Social services caseload - not enough information provided to social workers, needs more delivery and connection of services especially during induction.

At 4.03pm the meeting took a comfort break and then reconvened 4.05pm.

8. FOSTERING SERVICE ANNUAL REPORT 2022-23

The report was not circulated within the five clear working days deadline for the reasons set out in the report. The annual report was considered as a late and urgent item to ensure the most current information had been provided on delivery of services and outcomes for children in care and care leavers.

Khalil Campbell and officers from the fostering team presented the annual report of Southwark Fostering Service.

- The annual report was to inform on the activity of the fostering service in order to review and improve the quality of care and national minimum standards (2011)
- It covers performance and developments in Southwark's delivery of fostering services and how the council was compliant with key national minimum standards
- The service offered to those seeking to foster and the children in care that were fostered
- Southwark fostering service now part of the South London Consortium
- Southwark fostering service was inspected by Ofsted – and judged as good in all areas
- Ofsted mentioned recruitment and retention – outlined advertising someone to market the fostering carers
- Fostering: Placements in general had been reduced with more children going into kinship or with people they know
- Moving forward: Revisited internal processes, hold regular meetings, compliance review and ensure all social workers and carers were skilled
- CAMHS model – focussed on outcomes – child adolescents, understanding strengths, and best practices

- Placement disability forums – CAMHS fits in well with this – wider support
- First UK local authority to adopt the practice
- Care recruitment
- Importance – need to show what the fostering service offer in comparison to other local authorities
- Communications officer – propose to recruit a dedicated person.

The chair mentioned the deputy mayor hoped to put this at the forefront (focus diverse groups) when she becomes mayor.

RESOLVED:

That the annual report of the Southwark Fostering Service be noted.

9. HOUSING FOR CARERS, DISCUSSIONS AND ACTIONS: ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MEETING (1 MARCH 2023)

Karen Shaw, head of housing solutions introduced herself and gave a verbal update on housing allocations for carers.

- The officer responded to the issues faced by young people on health and housing (e.g. studio flats) – currently 17,000 people were on the council housing register
- Updated the review of housing allocations scheme, which followed on from the committee meeting in March 2023
- Housing allocations policy: Officers agreed to talk to young people about this, to receive ideas
- The cabinet meeting would consider a report on the housing allocations policy
- Mentioned the different types of support – council housing, moving and minor repairs as well as gardening
- Properties with a garden were limited and generally allocated to families
- Resident service managers help people with hoarding
- In response to a question raised by the young people (care leaver steering group), regarding many staff were in her team – the officer said:

- 7 staff – register applications
- 4 staff – deal with allocations
- 2 to 3 staff – provide wider support on housing matters
- People in private rented properties had seen a large increase in their rent and housing solutions had been dealing with the additional pressures due to this increase in demand
- The team were trying to address the backlog due to the increase and have shared this information with the cabinet member for housing
- Waiting time: Housing solutions have tried to address this by reviewing and prioritizing all applications – with the aim of improvement within 6 months
- The team were in the process of finalising an action plan for care leavers on housing
- Joint protocol – devising a care leavers’ housing compact which involves housing directors across London to address homelessness (under 25s)

ACTION POINTS

- Produce a care leaver’s draft plan and present information to the care leaver steering group. In addition, if the draft plan should be readily available in November 2023 for the committee to endorse.
- Dr Jenny Taylor addressed the issue of health care amongst the under 18s – e.g. to address special educational needs and attention deficit hyperactivity disorders (ADHD) assessments (broaden criteria) for the under 18s.
- The chair suggested drafting this in form of a charter, addressing all points highlighted.

10. SOUTHWARK ICB/ICS ANNUAL LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN AND CARE LEAVERS HEALTH REPORT 2022/23

Joy Edwards, designated nurse for looked after children and care leavers, Dr Jenny Taylor, virtual mental health lead for looked after children Southwark, Jenny Izod (Southwark NHS) and Rachel Massey (community consultant) were present at the meeting.

Summary of Powerpoint presentations

Joy Edwards – presented

- Changing NHS landscape, implementation of ICB (integrated care board) /ICS (integrated care systems) continues

- Unknown impact both short and long – term of the current economic crisis
- Whilst services return to normal delivery post COVID-19, impact of long COVID-19 was unknown and had a potential to impact on service delivery across the health economy in the future
- There was an increase in demand on current commissioned services, increasing the need of all vulnerable families across the health economy. This includes both primary and secondary health care i.e. occupational therapy, community paediatrics, speech and language, social emotional mental health (SEMH), autistic spectrum disorder (ASD)
- Increasing evidence indicates that care leavers require further support and whilst unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC) numbers remain stable these young people form part of an increasing number of care leavers
- The uncertainty of unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC) may experience as part of their asylum status may lead to increased vulnerabilities and reduced engagement with health services as they become care leavers
- Southwark looked after children profile shows an increasing number of older children entering care for the first time
- Data suggests that there was evidence that this population have identified unmet health needs such as: emotional well-being disorders, missing immunisations and undiagnosed health and learning needs
- Potentially delayed identified complex needs that require early intervention
- Looked after children placed outside of a twenty-mile radius from Southwark may experience a variation in service delivery.

Looked after Children Strategic Focus 2023/2024

- Continued oversight and assurance of current service specifications delivery and key performance indicators with providers
- Continued collaborative partnership working with all relevant agencies to improve health outcomes for looked after children and young people
- Continued support to care leavers as they progress to semi-independence/independence
- Develop and progress a health quality assurance framework for children placed in Residential units in partnership with the local authority

- Establishing assurance/evidence that residential units can meet the health needs of the children and young people who live there
- Transitional safeguarding alongside adult Safeguarding to highlight our more vulnerable cohort as they move to adult services
- Influence of the voice of children/carers and parents is visible and embedded in service delivery
- Continued strategic influence across the health economy to consider the identified needs of looked after children and young people within all children's commissioned services
- To challenge and act as an advocate for our children and young people to ensure that their health needs are met in a timely manner, wherever they are living
- Continue deliver current training programmes and develop training in relation to trauma informed care.

Positive news – summary

- Embedded proactive and positive partnership working with local authority and health partners across the health economy
- Continue partnership working shows a positive increase in reaching statutory requirements for health assessments
- Distinct local looked after children's health service available at point of contact
- Agreement for care leavers (up to 25 years of age) to access pre-paid prescription certificates should they have to pay for prescriptions
- Newly developed health pathway guidance for social care as care leavers move to semi-independence
- Unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC) are able to access specialist health support from public health and CAMHS
- Public health and looked after children health team actively working together to promote and increase immunisation uptake for our cohort of children.

Team challenges – summary

- Significant IT outage of our community electronic notes system led to challenges in accessing data of the children and young people (CYP) for a number of months, impacting access to patients' medical records

- Fall in immunisation levels of our LAC cohort, aligns with national figures of all CYP, but also impacted by the IT outage as there was no access to immunisations
- Care leavers health summaries sitting at 12%, this is an area of focus for the named professionals who are working closely with clinicians to understand the barriers for completing these summaries.

Team successes - summary

- Despite significant IT and staffing challenges, 85% of children and young people were seen within 20 days of a referral to the LAC health team
- A pilot project running jointly with LAC health and the paediatric infectious diseases team from Evelina - in a one stop service has started. The team hope this would improve the experience for the UASC population and streamline support and services
- Funding for a UASC specific carelink therapist was approved
- Following the fall in the number of fully immunised LAC children and young people, the team held two fully booked immunisation clinics and the plan would be to have a regular rolling program as part of the LAC Health offer moving forward.
- The team had two additional clinics over summer months, plus the two on this rolling program to capture as many young people as possible and increase uptake. With the full support of a new immunisation coordinator in post
- Improved capacity of nursing team allowing flexibility of clinics to be arranged around young people needs
- The team would continue to seek the views and opinions of our LAC population. Initial ideas from phone consultations with the young people
- To continue to provide effective and efficient CLA health services which improve outcomes for CLA.

Mental Health of Looked after Children

Dr Jenny Taylor – presented

- SDQ - screening questionnaires, are requested annually from all carers of 4 – 16 year olds
- Children and young people's psychological as well as physical health needs were assessed annually at their annual healthcare assessments

- Children and young people's social workers and PAs regularly review their well-being with embedded mental health clinicians as part of the local authority's group supervision process
- These processes ensure that children and young people's needs are identified early so that specialist input can be provided as needed
- In line with national requirements the team currently monitor children's mental health in Southwark with the strengths and difficulties questionnaires (SDQ) – we had a 83% completion rate (compared with 77% UK average)
- The first UK local authority to use the more comprehensive child and the adolescent needs (CANS), assessment tool to monitor our children's wellbeing.

Mental health provision:

Southwark's looked after children continue to benefit from access to an array of mental health provision:

- Children up to the age of 18
- Specialist NHS CAMHS provision (Carelink)
- Open access CAMHS provision (The Nest)
- 18 - 25 year olds
- NHS AMHS provision
- Open access CAMHS provision (The Nest)
- Children/young people out of borough
- Carelink if able to travel to site
- Local CAMH/AMH services out-of-borough
- Private providers

Note:

If the support is not provided via the above routes, the embedded local authority clinicians are able to provide direct assessments and interventions and work with birth families as well as carers and residential placements.

- In terms of equity of access, our data suggests that the authority needs to ensure there is enough good access for black children and young people aged 16 and over. Both issues would be a priority for understanding and remedying over the year ahead
- CANS implementation now underway
- Carelink have recruited to a specialist post for UASC.
- The trusted assessor approach to improve access to AMHS for our over 18 careleavers has now been formally agreed
- Plans for embedded L.A. clinical staff to work with Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust (GSTT) colleagues to support an increase in capacity for autism diagnostic assessments
- Plans to review staffing in relation to mental health provision for over 18s.

RESOLVED:

1. That the report in relation to the delivery of health services for children looked after and care leavers (LAC) who are in the care of London borough of Southwark be noted.
2. That the committee agreed to feedback any comments on the Southwark LAC Health report for consideration by the LAC Health leads across the health economy.

11. VERBAL UPDATE - SPECIAL GUARDIANSHIP ARISING FROM DISCUSSION/ PREVIOUS COMMITTEE: (19 APRIL 2023)

Members agreed to defer the update on special guardianship until the next meeting in November 2023.

12. WORK PLAN 2023-24 (NEW DRAFT WORK PLAN)

Alasdair Smith, director of children and families announced the proposed annual report on corporate parenting would be presented at the cabinet meeting in December 2023 and at the corporate parenting committee in November 2023.

RESOLVED:

1. That the corporate parenting committee approach and work plan as set out in the report be agreed and reviewed at the November corporate parenting committee.
2. That the following items be added to the November agenda:
 - Special guardianship (verbal update) and
 - Annual report on corporate parenting committee.

The meeting ended at 5.10 pm.

CHAIR:

DATED: