



Corporate Parenting Committee

MINUTES of the OPEN section of the Corporate Parenting Committee held on Monday 11 November 2024 at 2.00 pm at Ground floor meeting rooms B and C, 160 Tooley Street, London SE1 2QH

PRESENT: Councillor Jasmine Ali (Chair)
Councillor Charlie Smith (Vice-chair)
Councillor Esme Dobson
Councillor Sarah King
Councillor Maria Linforth-Hall

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
SpeakerBox representatives
Tendai Murowe, Assistant Director, Quality Assurance and Practice Development
Claire Pitchford, Senior Service Development Officer
Andrew Fowler, Children and Adult Services
Usha Singh, Virtual Headteacher
Jessica Penketh, Children and Adult Services
Dr Stacy John-Legere, Designated doctor for Looked After Children, Southwark
Joy Edwards, Designated Nurse for Looked after Children
Hilary Towse, NHS
Ekta Gupta, children rights and participation
Joy Hopkinson, Head of Safeguarding & Community Services, Governance and Assurance (legal)
Clare Ryan, Service Manager, Looked After Children
Paula Thornton, Constitutional Officer
Beverley Olamijulo, Constitutional Officer

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Natasha Ennin and Youcef Hassaine.

2. CONFIRMATION OF VOTING MEMBERS

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

3. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR FOR THE CORPORATE PARENTING COMMITTEE 2024-25

RESOLVED:

That Councillor Charlie Smith be elected as the vice-chair of the corporate parenting committee for 2024-25.

4. NOTIFICATION OF ANY ITEMS OF BUSINESS WHICH THE CHAIR DEEMS URGENT

The following item was identified as late and urgent which the chair agreed to accept for the reasons set out in the report:

- Item 9: Annual Virtual Headteachers report 2023-2024.

5. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS

None were declared.

6. MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 17 July 2024 be approved as correct record and signed by the chair.

MATTERS ARISING

It was noted that the draft annual health report for looked after children was considered at the last committee on 17 July 2024. It was requested that the committee be provided with another opportunity to examine the detail relating to the mental health aspect of the report. Date to be confirmed with Dr Stacy John-Legere Stacy, when agreed.

7. SPEAKERBOX VERBAL UPDATE

Ekta Gupta and members of Speakerbox provided the committee with a presentation of key activities and events as follows:

Residential community engagement

A residential opportunity provided to young people to cover various themes relating to conflict resolution, mental health and developing trust.

A young person talked about the opportunity provided to build a bond with officers and develop trust within this residential setting and take these lessons forward.

Care two Dance

An initiative that enabled development of confidence and experience of working with others. It was explained that the dance helped overcome anxiety and develop trust with others. The experience of dance provides an opportunity to provide 'freedom' and see others in a different light. Helped to learn about self and for the young people to know that they are not alone, providing an opportunity for shared experiences.

Podcast

Two-day workshop to promote key information tackling young people and their needs. Provides a chance to develop new skills and another platform to show young peoples views and feelings to social workers and those that work with young people.

Staff newsletter

A quarterly newsletter to:

1. Inspire and motivate staff on what young people need from the services
2. Empower young people by giving them a platform to be heard and
3. Bring back hope and positivity by creating shared goals with staff.

A young contributor of the newsletter read a moving and powerful piece about the "pressures of being a good black man".

The impact of these contributions provides an insightful and far-reaching impact on the staff that work with young people and has received positive feedback so far.

Moving forward

Discussion of engagement, life skills and employment opportunities.

In particular issues relating to pathways and the support required to assist young

people into work (preparing and capability to go straight into employment) was an identified concern on being prepared adequately for this challenge and demands.

Life skills opportunities

Expressed the importance of learning basic skills like doing laundry, cooking and finance.

Points raised in discussion

- The issue of apprenticeships and guaranteed interviews
- Joy Edwards talked about the Catch 22 project and NHS money to enable access to job in health (in all aspects of employment) to care leavers and provide a bridge to help access into work
- Employment and the need to do more
- Housing and Councillor Sarah King explained the process currently being undertaken to consult on the housing allocation policy and planned change from the numbering of bands to letters to make things more understandable. It was made clear that care leavers would get the highest priority. Explained that the new policy was still in draft and Speakerbox will be included as part of the consultation
- Councillor Sarah King suggested joint working with Councillor Batteson as the relevant cabinet lead for employment in conjunction with the chief executive and to develop this joint working on employment and housing
- Noted care leaver and housing protocol due to be considered at the next corporate parenting committee
- Issue of career advice given to young people queried. For example, certain careers will have an established pathway and the direction and understanding for young people (for example to be a lawyer). Young people present agreed that it was important to have a pathway 'plan'
- Issue of networking raised and the importance. Noted that young people should also regards officers as part of their network
- Young person raised the cost of dance classes and was given an assurance that money would be found to ensure could happen
- Elaine Reid agreed to look into the point raised on life skills and raising through the hubs.

ACTIONS:

That Councillors Sarah King and John Batteson in conjunction with the chief executive be invited to attend the next committee in view of the points made in respect of housing and employment, with a view to develop this joint working.

8. CORPORATE PARENTING COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2023-24

RESOLVED:

1. That the report contents and structure in preparation for cabinet on 7 January 2025 be noted.
2. That the 2023-24 draft priorities be agreed and recommended to cabinet.
3. The following comments were submitted at the meeting:
 - The issue of pictures and if possible, to include in report. Noted that this is subject to agreement of young people but felt important to celebrate their success
 - Request to pull out more around employment and develop further within the report
 - The committee members were requested to submit any further comments on this report by Friday 15 November 2024.

9. ANNUAL VIRTUAL HEADTEACHER'S REPORT 2023-2024

It was not possible to circulate this report five clear days in advance of the meeting due to the additional clearances processes that were required. The chair agreed to accept this report as urgent because the virtual head teacher is a key part of delivering this service for children in Southwark. The corporate parenting committee needed to be provided with the most current information on delivery of services and outcomes for children in care and care leavers, so that it could 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.

Timely reporting to the committee contributes to informed deliberations of the committee's work planning for the future municipal year.

Usha Singh, the virtual head presented to the report to committee to identify key highlights and issues.

RESOLVED:

1. That the virtual headteacher's report for Southwark looked after children be noted.
2. That the committee be kept updated on the issue of absenteeism and to receive a report to the next meeting.

10. INDEPENDENT REVIEWING OFFICERS (IRO) ANNUAL REPORT 2023-24

Clare Ryan, service manager presented the report to committee identifying key highlights.

One of the young people present at the meeting relayed her positive experience of independent reviewing officers and the value of receiving the views and support in one place.

RESOLVED:

That the Independent Review Officers (IRO) Annual Report 2023-24 be noted.

11. QUALITY ASSURANCE REPORT ON CHILDREN HOMES

Tendai Murowe, assistant director quality assurance and practice development presented the report to committee.

It was advised that the team are in the process of recruiting young inspectors and will be subject to peer challenge reviews from other local authorities, in addition to the usual frameworks.

Additionally, it was confirmed that Speakerbox will be consulted in the preparation of the guide to be presented to children and young people when at the home.

RESOLVED:

1. That the quality assurance framework for the council's children's homes be noted.
2. That a visit be organised for the members of the committee to the children's home.
3. That the relationship of local councillors with these homes be continued to be developed to foster a close knowledge of the home and children.

12. CORPORATE PARENTING COMMITTEE – WORK PLAN 2024-25

RESOLVED:

1. That the approach and work plan as set out in the report be agreed.
2. That the request to consider employment and housing at its next meeting be noted (chief executive and Councillor John Batteson be invited to attend).
3. That the committee revisit mental health (arising out of the annual report on

health of care leavers considered at the July meeting).

The meeting ended at 4.20pm.

CHAIR:

DATED: