



CORPORATE PARENTING COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the Corporate Parenting Committee held on Wednesday 26 February 2025 at 2.00 pm at the Council Offices, 160 Tooley Street, London SE1 2QH

PRESENT:

Councillor Jasmine Ali (Chair)
Councillor Charlie Smith (Vice-chair)
Councillor Natasha Ennin
Councillor Sarah King
Councillor Maria Linforth-Hall

**OFFICER
SUPPORT:**

Alasdair Smith, Director, Children and Families
Helen Woolgar, Assistant Director – Safeguarding and Care
Elaine Reid, Head of Service: Permanence and Resources
Usha Singh, Virtual Headteacher
Dr Stacy John-Legere, Designated doctor for Looked After Children, Southwark
Joy Edwards, Designated Nurse for Looked after Children
Sarah O Connor, Designated Nurse for Looked after Children
Daisy-May James, Permanence Lead Service Manager
Children and Adult Services
James Hanley, Clinical Services Manager
Okie Adebajo, Clinical practitioner
Ekta Gupta, children rights and participation
Speakerbox representatives
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
Liam Reid, Cabinet office

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Youcef Hassaine and Esme Dobson.

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

There were none.

4. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS

Councillor Jasmine Ali declared an interest with regard to the adoption report as an adoptive parent. This was not a disclosable pecuniary interest.

No other disclosures or dispensations were made.

5. MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 11 November 2024 be approved as a correct record and signed by the chair.

6. REPORT - UPDATE ON MENTAL HEALTH PROVISION FOR CARELEAVERS

Dr Jenny Taylor provided a presentation to the committee on supporting the mental health of careleavers and the work and actions being undertaken to address. The slides and content of the presentation were included in the report to the committee.

The presentation in summary highlighted:

- How monitored and who has access to services
- Who receiving support
- Access to mental health support for 16- 17-year-olds
- Access and mental health support for the 18+ age group
- Ensuring care leavers mental health is being considered a key part of all work and essentially embedded within the service
- Reference to the complex needs panel and composition
- Making sure that neurodivergent young people particular strengths and needs are recognised
- The provision of open access, drop in wellbeing support provision
- Improving access to more specialist mental health care when required
- Improving the quality of the specialist mental health support provided
- Lifelong links use and helping young people to connect with previous links, if requested.

The committee also heard discussion from James Hanley and Okie Adebajo on the clinical side of work being undertaken to support mental health and understanding the young people. Reference to work happening with lifelong links and a case study referenced at the meeting of a young person with a failed adoption seeking contact with biological parents and being provided with support by the service to navigate this process and experience. The team attend Speakerbox and have ongoing communication.

Discussion and questions

- Query relating to unaccompanied asylum seekers and support given, mindful of the trauma and potential language issues. It was explained that staff were fully trained and aware of these challenges, with the skills in place throughout the service.
- Support and awareness around autism. Dr Jenny Taylor explained that work was being undertaken to get assessments processed quickly. A young person from Speakerbox was able to give insight to his experience also to the committee.

RESOLVED:

1. That the range of provisions available to support the mental health of our careleavers be noted.
2. That the officers report back to the next committee on how we are letting people know and advertising the services available for careleavers for mental health.

7. **SPEAKERBOX VERBAL UPDATE**

Speakerbox gave a presentation to the committee covering several areas:

- Education and employment. Targets and areas of focus for the young people.
- Fundraising. The successful T-shirt design project which has helped to bring out qualities of creativity and confidence for the young people while raising significant amount of funds. From the point of creating the design and seeing the T-shirt purchased.
- Music. Other creative opportunities have involved music creation and understanding the different components required of this process hearing directly from the young people; how this has contributed towards developing their confidence and a sense of accomplishment at the end of the process. Some of the young people talked about initially feeling 'shy' and that this exercise helped them overcome this and 'shine through', providing also a means of expression. The committee were provided with sample lyrics and listened to a video showing the playing of music put together as a result of the workshop.
- Innovation project. An opportunity is provided every week to discuss prominent issues with the service. It provides an insight into different aspects and behind the scenes working of the service. It was noted that they had received £15,000 of grant funding towards this project.

Moving forward. Identified a number of aims:

- Rule of 3. Aim to turn into objectives
- More creative opportunities and match funding
- Need for computer room/facilities.

Discussion/points raised.

- Congratulations from the committee members and officers for all the outstanding achievements from Speakerbox
- Joy Hopkinson (head of safeguarding & community services, legal) outlined a main event taking place on 19 March 2025 involving the legal profession, and local family justice board as

a means of engagement. She said she had been in contact with the Speakerbox who were planning to have a stall at this event and will be representing the voice of the child.

8. SOUTHWARK ADOPTION PERFORMANCE IN 2023-2024 AND ADOPT LONDON SOUTH ANNUAL REPORT 2023-2024

Helen Woolgar, assistant director, safeguarding and care introduced the report to committee. She advised Audrey Bouazizi, head of service Adopt London Regional Adoption agency was unable to attend the committee.

RESOLVED:

1. That the progress of the children with a care plan of adoption in Southwark during 2023- 24 be noted.
2. That the activity of the local authority working in partnership with Adopt London South (ALS) during 2023-24 be noted.
3. That the Adopt London South Annual Report for 2023– 2024 be noted.

9. VIRTUAL HEADTEACHER SUPPORT - ABSENTEEISM

Usha Singh, virtual headteacher presented the report to the committee, highlighting key issues.

Discussion / queries:

- Mention about the Latin-American category not showing up in statistics/presentation before the committee
- Types of reasons for suspensions listed under the category of 'other'.
- Concern about the young people/children when not in school and possible link with crime. Usha Singh explained the work being undertaken with the schools with exclusions and suspensions to address, including phoning the school every day to check on attendance. The school also try various strategies including trying to engage with children and young people and to establish career choices to encourage attendance.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Virtual Headteacher – Absenteeism update report be noted.
2. That the committee receive a report back on exclusions.

10. CORPORATE PARENTING COMMITTEE - WORK PLAN 2024-25

RESOLVED:

1. That work plan as set out in the report be noted.
2. That it be noted that two further items have been requested as follows:
 - How we are letting people know and advertising the services available for careleavers (mental health)
 - A report back on exclusions (date to be confirmed).

The meeting ended at 4.35pm.

CHAIR:

DATED: