

Corporate Parenting Committee

Thursday 17 April 2025

2.15 pm

Ground floor meeting rooms GO2B and C, 160 Tooley Street, London SE1
2QH

Membership

Councillor Jasmine Ali (Chair)
Councillor Charlie Smith (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Esme Dobson
Councillor Natasha Ennin
Councillor Youcef Hassaine
Councillor Sarah King
Councillor Maria Linforth-Hall

Reserves

Councillor Irina Von Wiese
Councillor Sunny Lambe
Councillor Joseph Vambe
Councillor Kath Whittam
Councillor Renata Hamvas

Non-voting co-opted members

Dr Mark Kerr and Rosamond Marshall

INFORMATION FOR MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

Access to information

You have the right to request to inspect copies of minutes and reports on this agenda as well as the background documents used in the preparation of these reports.

Babysitting/Carers allowances

If you are a resident of the borough and have paid someone to look after your children, an elderly dependant or a dependant with disabilities so that you could attend this meeting, you may claim an allowance from the council. Please collect a claim form at the meeting.

Access

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Contact

Email: paula.thornton@southwark.gov.uk or beverley.olamijulo@southwark.gov.uk

Members of the committee are summoned to attend this meeting

Althea Loderick

Chief Executive

Date: 9 April 2025



Corporate Parenting Committee

Thursday 17 April 2025

2.15 pm

Ground floor meeting rooms GO2B and C, 160 Tooley Street, London SE1 2QH

Order of Business

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MOBILE PHONES

Mobile phones should be turned off or put on silent during the course of the meeting.

PART A - OPEN BUSINESS

1. APOLOGIES

To receive any apologies for absence.

2. CONFIRMATION OF VOTING MEMBERS

A representative of each political group will confirm the voting members of the committee.

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

In special circumstances, an item of business may be added to an agenda within five clear days of the meeting.

4. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS

Members to declare any interests and dispensations in respect of any item of business to be considered at this meeting.

5. MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

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To approve as a correct record the minutes of the open section of the meeting held on 26 February 2025.

Item No.	Title	Page No.
6.	SPEAKERBOX VERBAL UPDATE	-
7.	CARE LEAVERS INTO EMPLOYMENT - WORKSHOP / DISCUSSION	-
8.	CORPORATE PARENTING COMMITTEE - WORK PLAN 2025-26	7 - 11

ANY OTHER OPEN BUSINESS AS NOTIFIED AT THE START OF THE MEETING AND ACCEPTED BY THE CHAIR AS URGENT.

EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

The following motion should be moved, seconded and approved if the sub-committee wishes to exclude the press and public to deal with reports revealing exempt information:

“That the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 1-7, Access to Information Procedure rules of the Constitution.”

PART B - CLOSED BUSINESS

ANY CLOSED BUSINESS AS NOTIFIED AT THE START OF THE MEETING AND ACCEPTED BY THE CHAIR AS URGENT

Date: 9 April 2025



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. The 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:

Meeting Name:	Corporate Parenting Committee
Date:	17 April 2025
Report title:	Corporate Parenting Committee – Work Plan 2025-26
Ward(s) or groups affected:	All
Classification:	Open
Reason for lateness (if applicable):	N/a

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the corporate parenting committee agree the approach and work plan as set out in the report.
2. That the committee review and identify any further items for consideration in the work plan.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Role and function of the corporate parenting committee

3. The constitution for the municipal year 2024-2025 records the corporate parenting committee's role and functions as follows:
 - a. To secure real and sustained improvements in the life chances of looked after children, and to work within an annual programme to that end.
 - b. To develop, monitor and review a corporate parenting strategy and work plan.
 - c. To seek to ensure that the life chances of looked after children are maximised in terms of health, educational attainment, and access to training and employment, to aid the transition to a secure and productive adulthood.
 - d. To develop and co-ordinate a life chances strategy and work plan to improve the life chances of Southwark looked after children.
 - e. To recommend ways in which more integrated services can be developed across all council departments, schools and the voluntary sector to lead towards better outcomes for looked after children.
 - f. To ensure that mechanisms are in place to enable looked after children and young people to play an integral role in service

planning and design, and that their views are regularly sought and acted upon.

- g. To ensure performance monitoring systems are in place, and regularly review performance data to ensure sustained performance improvements in outcomes for looked after children.
- h. To receive an annual report on the adoption and fostering services to monitor their effectiveness in providing safe and secure care for looked after children.
- i. To report to the council's cabinet on an annual basis.
- j. To make recommendations to the relevant cabinet decision maker where responsibility for that particular function rests with the cabinet.
- k. To report to the scrutiny sub-committee with responsibility for children's services after each meeting.
- l. To appoint non-voting co-opted members.

National and local context for care leavers

- 4. There is national momentum towards improving outcomes for care leavers. The government introduced 'Keep on Caring' strategy in 2016, increased council statutory duties to care leavers in the Children and Social Work Act in 2017, appointed a national Adviser for Care Leavers who produced a report in 2018, alongside the national launch of the Care Covenant. The council has responded to the various recommendations, for example by prioritising education, employment and training outcomes for care leavers in the Council Plan and developing the care leaver local offer as well as increasing service capacity for the extended personal adviser duties to 25.
- 5. Although much has been done to improve services and outcomes for care leavers, the council has an ambition to go above and beyond, by creating the best Leaving Care Service possible, by co-designing this with young people, learning from other organisations and trialling new ideas to test what works best.
- 6. In 2017 the council and Catch22 received funding from the DfE Social Care Innovation Programme to work in partnership to design and test new ways of working to support care leavers. The Care Leavers Partnership (CLP) works to improve outcomes for young people in Southwark by working across boundaries, reshaping the service delivery model, unlocking capacity in the community, and co-designing solutions. There are a number of strands that the CLP is working on to achieve our goals.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

- 7. The corporate parenting committee review and update the work plan each

meeting. Following the beginning of the municipal year 2019-20, and reflecting on the momentum towards improving outcomes for care leavers, the opportunity has been taken to review how the committee works and present proposals to refresh this in relation to: non-voting co-opted members; committee approach; and work plan and suggested agenda items.

Corporate Parenting Committee work plan 2025-26 – draft outline

The following dates for the corporate parenting committee were agreed by the council assembly meeting in March 2025.

16 July 2025

- Speakerbox verbal update
- Exclusions report back
- Care Leaver employment - council wide approach.

22 October 2025

- Speakerbox verbal update and report back on actions
- Annual health report for looked after children
- Foster annual report.

25 February 2026

- Speakerbox verbal update / annual report
- Annual independent reviewing officer report
- Adoption annual report
- Annual virtual head teacher's report.

22 April 2026

- Speakerbox verbal update.

SpeakerBox

8. SpeakerBox, established in 2005, ensures that the views of looked after children and care leavers are used to influence decision making that affects their care and support particularly service planning and design. Representing children and young people between 8 and 24 years the group also provides a peer to peer networking support system for looked after children. The programme is operated independently and run by the young people themselves, although it is supported by the council's children services and councillors.

Community, equalities (including socio-economic) and health impacts

Community impact statement

5. The work of the corporate parenting committee contributes to community cohesion and stability.

Equalities (including socio-economic) impact and health impact statement

6. Relevant issues will be addressed in the reports submitted to the corporate parenting committee.

Climate change implications

7. The work plan process for the committee has no direct implications.

Resource implications

8. There are no specific implications arising from this report.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
Minutes of meetings of Corporate Parenting Committee	Constitutional Team 160 Tooley Street London SE1 2QH	Paula.thornton@southwark.gov.uk
Web link: http://moderngov.southwark.gov.uk/ieListMeetings.aspx?CId=129&Year=0		

APPENDICES

No.	Title
None	

AUDIT TRAIL

Lead Officer	Alasdair Smith, Director of Children and Families		
Report Author	Beverley Olamijulo/ Paula Thornton, Constitutional Team		
Version	Final		
Dated	7 April 2025		
Key Decision?	No		
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER			
Officer Title		Comments Sought	Comments included
Assistant Chief Executive – Governance and Assurance		No	No
Strategic Director of Resources		No	No
Cabinet Member		No	No
Date final report sent to Constitutional Team			7 April 2025

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CORPORATE PARENTING DISTRIBUTION LIST (OPEN)**MUNICIPAL YEAR 2024-25**

NOTE: Original held by Constitutional Team; all amendments/queries to
Paula.thornton@southwark.gov.uk; Beverley.olamijulo@southwark.gov.uk

Name	No of copies	Name	No of copies
Membership		Paula Thornton/Beverley Olamijulo	5
Councillor Jasmine Ali (Chair)	1		
Councillor Maria Linforth-Hall	1	Total:	9
Councillor Charlie Smith	1		
Councillor Natasha Ennin	1	Dated: 8 April 2025	
Electronic versions (No hard copy)			
Councillor Esme Dobson			
Councillor Youcef Hassaine			
Councillor Sarah King			
Reserve members – electronic copy			
Councillor Irina Von Wiese			
Councillor Sunny Lambe			
Councillor Joseph Vambe			
Councillor Kath Whittam			
Councillor Renata Hamvas			
Co-opted members			
Mark Kerr (email)			
Rosamond Marshall (email)			
Children's Services - electronic versions (No hard copy)			
Alasdair Smith			
Legal – electronic version (no hard copy)			
Sarah Feasey / Joy Hopkinson			