

Corporate Parenting Committee

MINUTES of the Corporate Parenting Committee held on Wednesday 6 July 2022 at 2.00 pm at Ground Floor Meeting Room, 160 Tooley Street, London SE1 2QH

PRESENT: Councillor Jasmine Ali (Chair)
Councillor Naima Ali
Councillor Natasha Ennin
Councillor Charlie Smith
Councillor Irina Von Wiese

**NON-VOTING
CO-OPTED
MEMBERS** Dr Mark Kerr (subject matter expert)

**OFFICER
SUPPORT:** Alasdair Smith, Director of Children and Families
Andrew Fowler, Head of Service, Children in Care and Care Leavers
Steve Chaplin, Service Manager, Children's and Adults' Services
Tina Francis, Team Manager Care Leaver, Children's and Adults' Services
Helen Woolgar, Assistant Director – Safeguarding and Care
Usha Singh, Headteacher - Looked after and Previously looked after Children, virtual school Children's and Adults' Services
Steve Liddicott, Head of Quality Assurance and Practice Development
Dr Jenny Taylor, Head of Clinical Service, Children's and Adults' Services
Dechaun Malcolm, Children's Rights Officer
Paula Thornton and Beverley Olamijulo, Constitutional Team

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from:

Councillors Darren Merrill, Rachel Bentley and Esme Dobson.

Dr Stacy John-Legere.

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 2022-23

It was moved, seconded and

RESOLVED:

That Councillor Charlie Smith be elected as vice-chair for the Corporate Parenting Committee for the ensuing year 2022-2023.

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

There were none.

5. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS

None were disclosed.

6. MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 20 April 2022 be approved as a correct record of the meeting and signed by the chair.

7. WORKSHOP - CHILDREN'S SOCIAL WORK CARE: EXTENSION TO 25

The chair introduced the theme for the meeting. Steve Chaplin, 16+ Service

Manager, (Children's and Adults' Services) presented the item with power point slides.

Summary

Steve referred to The Children and Social Care Act 2017 concerning looked after children and the seven principles, outlined below:

Local offer for care leavers

A local authority in England must publish information about:

- Services which the local authority offers for care leavers as a result of its functions under the Children Act 1989
- The other services which the local authority offers that may assist care leavers in, or in preparing for, adulthood and independent living.

Extending personal adviser support to all care leavers to age 25

- The Children & Social Work Act 2017 introduced a new duty on local authorities, to provide personal adviser (PA) support to all care leavers up to age 25, if they want this support.
- Under previous legislation, local authorities were required to provide care leavers with support from a PA until they reached 21. With that support continuing up to age 25 if a care leaver was engaged in education or training. However, this support was not available to care leavers aged over 21 who were not in education, training or employment.

The committee noted the corporate parenting **principles** which local authorities are required to do:

1. Act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and well-being, of those children and young people.
2. Encourage those children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings.
3. Take into account the views, wishes and feelings of those children and young people.
4. Help those children and young people gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners.
5. Promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for those children and young people.

6. Support children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work.
7. Prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living.

Southwark's local offer for Care Leavers:

- Their own Pathway plan
- Being heard
- Support with identity
- Support with housing
- Support with education
- Support to find employment or training
- Support with mental and physical health
- Support if in custody
- Support with relationships

Link to Southwark Careleavers information: <https://southwarkcareleavers.co.uk>

- Council tax exemption up to the age of 25
- Pre-tenancy accommodation offer
- Priority bidding for Southwark tenancies
- Southwark leisure pass

Data – nature of support requested:

- Enquiries regarding childcare – 10%
- Housing /bidding – 34%
- Payment of leaving care grant – 14%
- Support required with ID documents – 14%
- Risk of homelessness – 14%
- Council tax enquiries – 14%

Care Leaver Independence Hub:

- There is no limit to the number of times a young person can approach for support
- Short term, focused work
- Support for care leavers up to and over 25 (corporate parent for life) Pathway plan completed when required
- A reach out drop in

- Allocated to a full time personal advisor in mainstream teams if longer work is required
- Meet the team' sessions
- Support from experienced practitioners.

Southwark's leaving care independence hub:

- PA allocated for long term involvement
- Agreed tasks are carried out as agreed
- A pathway plan (or parts thereof) is completed if necessary
- An initial consultation takes place to discuss needs
- Young person contacts the service for support.

Tina Francis, 16+ Service Manager outlined information about the care leaver independence hub:

- A personal advisor allocated to a young person who then works with them for up to 12 weeks.
- Support includes short-term focus work / pathway plan
- The council use outside agencies and partners to reach experience workers that provide advice to young people
- A breakdown of data (1 April 2022) was provided – it showed previous involvement of young people that worked with advocates and did partnership work
- Reach out/ drop-in provision and support
- Most referrals relate to housing or support for housing
- Link to housing and issue around homelessness, or if a young person (YP) has arrears, also deal with care leavers from other local authorities.
- Noted that 10% of enquiries related to corporate children – which involved childcare options.
- The age of YP return back - was 22 years, the officer stated care leavers support should not end at 21 years.
- Reach out drop in offer – ensure that YP get a wide range of advice or specialist advice, which include weekly drop-ins - (job, training and support) also involvement of charities in the community.

- Nurse drop-in for YP to refer themselves if it relates to their health.
- Emotional well-being
- Future Men Drop in – Support and advocacy for young men/fathers
- Gym sessions available on a Friday
- Sessions come together to combat loneliness

Case studies:

Name: Mary

Age: 23

Gender: Female

Reason for returning for support: Housing condition issues, rent arrears and pregnancy

Support provided included:

- Referred to specialist housing support for consultation with experienced practitioner for housing
- Provided details of discretionary rent payment scheme to assist with rent arrears
- Referred to the family nurse partnership/early help for support with pregnancy planning
- Advised re resolution procedure with housing due to concerns with property maintenance
- Referred to the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) drop in for advice on claim

Outcome

- Successfully accessed benefits advice
- Successfully accessed advice from early help around healthy pregnancy.
- Intervention from independence hub had escalated the housing concerns and compensation offered via the housing association.
- Was in regular contact with personal advisor to support with ongoing housing issues.

Name: Jack

Age: 23

Gender: Male

Reason for returning for support: Support required for EET advice, gym pass

Support provided included:

- Appointment made to discuss employment, education and training (EET) options
- Gym pass renewed and given to Jack
- Provided Jack with independence hub information, reach out drop in sessions, and local offer link

Outcome

- Experienced practitioner for EET continues to offer open-ended support to Jack around identifying courses that could help him train as a plumber
- Renewed Jack's leisure pass to keep himself healthy.

Name: John

Age: 29

Gender: Male

Reason for returning for support: Access to records, disability, housing, finance, external agency support

Support provided included:

- Contacted information governance team and supported 'access to files' request
- Personal advisor supported John initially with reviewing his files in sensitive manner
- Signposted John to advocacy services for the blind as he suffers with his sight
- Liaised with housing association regarding a planned move
- Found Southwark bidding number to progress housing
- Referred to the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) drop in to ensure he was accessing all entitlements.

Support/action:

- Contacted information governance team and supported 'access to files' request
- Personal advisor supported John initially with reviewing his files in a sensitive manner
- Signposted John to advocacy services for the blind as he suffers with his sight
- Liaised with housing association regarding a planned move
- Found Southwark bidding number to progress housing
- Referred to DWP drop in to ensure he had access to all entitlements

Outcome

- Southwark (dormant) bidding number found, and John would soon be bidding for a Southwark tenancy
- PIP application processed to provide extra financial support

- A specialist worker provided to help progress support to John
- Remains in regular contact with the independence hub team.

After the presentations the following was highlighted:

- The council acknowledged concerns regarding housing for young people and were actively working on the issue
- Provide training for job interviews
- The ethnicity of young people and contact with their own families and providing extra support particularly when they have a criminal record
- The response was young people that came out of custody were allocated a personal advisor and all specialised skills were available to support them
- All the necessary data on a young person's ethnicity and background would be on the system. Arrangements would be made to ensure they were connected to their families, local community or special guardian and carer
- Dechaun Malcolm (children rights officer) advised he would show a film at a future committee about the work involved in connecting young people to their families and identifying those that had no family connection
- GP access and health – the difficulties a young person had to see a GP
- Care leaver should have extended time with GP
- Officers agreed to use appropriate wording for special/extra support given to care leavers via GP access
- Employment: Apprenticeships, training and job opportunities – officers felt more support needed to be given to care leavers, so they have an opportunity to join large organisations. The government should be releasing guidance on this, so that care leavers are shortlisted or ring fenced for jobs.
- The above issue on employment was raised at the scrutiny sub-committee responsible for employment

The committee suggested inviting Southwark's chief executive to a future corporate parenting committee meeting.

8. SOUTHWARK ADOPTION PERFORMANCE IN 2021 - 2022

Helen Woolgar, Assistant Director for Safeguarding and Care presented information on the Southwark Adoption Performance in 2021 – 2022.

Summary

- During 2021-22 - 10 children were matched with adoptive families a similar number in 2020-21 and a significant increase from previous years.
- Southwark children in care with a permanence plan for adoption have progressed during 2021-22.
- Permanence is the long-term plan for how a child would be cared for which lasts throughout their childhood.
- 2021-22 four children were placed in early permanence placements and out of the nine adopted this year – three had been placed in early permanence placements.
- The connection rate with young people's families had been successful.
- Length of court proceedings had gone up and are much longer due to the young person's needs being complex or to match adopted children with families with a similar cultural background.
- Of the ten children that were matched at panel in 2020-21, four were white British, three have black Caribbean heritage, one has black African heritage and two are of mixed heritage.
- Issues concerning trans racial and inter racial adoption/fostering – it's careful matching process; identified needs based on cultural /racial background.

RESOLVED:

1. That the progress of the children with a care plan of adoption during 2021-2022 be noted.
2. That the activity of the local authority working in partnership with Adopt London South (ALS) during 2021-22 be noted.
3. That the Adopt London South Performance report for the council (Appendix 1) from April 2021 to March 2022 be noted.

9. ANNUAL VIRTUAL HEADTEACHER'S REPORT

Usha Singh, headteacher for Virtual School for Looked After Children presented the annual virtual headteacher's report.

Summary

- The latest exam results would be released in September 2022
- Some students in Year 10 and Year 11 were disengaged with education – steps were taken to ensure all children were provided with tuition to keep them engaged
- Topics on attendance, exclusions and finding ways to reduce exclusions were highlighted
- Referred to the virtual school charter and academies with their own admissions policy
- Special Educational Needs (SEN) – provide further support to deal with challenging behaviour in schools
- Reference to persistent absentee list
- Gave an update on the virtual headteachers conference.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Virtual Headteacher's report for Southwark looked after children.
2. That the comments made by the committee be noted.

10. REPORT BACK TO CORPORATE PARENTING COMMITTEE ON SEMI-INDEPENDENT LIVING

Andrew Fowler, Head of service children in care and care leavers (sixteen plus) presented the item.

Summary

- Visitors – provision to identify who they are before entering the property
- Works and accommodation cost
- Housing allocation; a young person would need to complete their own application and sort verification and proof to ensure the criteria was met
- Pets in social housing; puts young people at a disadvantage but due to cultural/religious work it would not be ideal to keep pets
- Privacy – concerns young people had about privacy; views should be taken into account.

RESOLVED:

That the Corporate Parenting Committee note the contents of this report.

11. CARE REVIEW BRIEFING

Steve Liddicott, Head of quality assurance and practice development presented the Care Review briefing to the meeting.

A summary of the presentation highlighted the following:

- Child Protection
- Families Network
- Transforming Care
- Work force
- Focus on Children and Families

Families Network

- Addressing the role of family group decision-making - making it a mandatory requirement, along the proposal of the family network plan.
- Special guardianship arrangements and kinship carers – provides support in those circumstances.
- Care review – does not fully address adoption with birth parents and adoptive parents; need to ensure there is always contact.
- The introduction of special guardianships.

Transforming care

- Mainly focused on the framework, setting new care standards for children's homes, and residential care to ensure there was a simpler understanding of this.
- The creation of a new fostering and care provision. Profits made in the private sector and the creation of regional care operatives should address:
 - Price capping
 - Profit margins
 - Windfall tax
- Proposals relating to the foster campaign to recruit foster carers – did not see many carers apply through this channel.
- Foster carers – delegated authority: How many decisions are given to a child that were being looked after – principles of mocking bird scheme.
- To abolish the independent looked after children care review and replace it with

an independent advocacy.

- Many of the review cases were processed on time
- Information about the care experience – recommendations
- CPC - responsibilities should hold different departments to account
- Introduction care experience (a protected characteristic).

Introduction Social Care Framework

- National Children's Social Care Framework
- Virtual School heads should be held accountable for school attainment

Care experience

- Care leavers – more training opportunities
- Addressed bursary fee for those aged 25 years old
- Strengthening options for housing for care leavers, and to combat homelessness in this group
- Addressed mental health and physical health support for those care leavers and those leaving care
- Statistics from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) for care leavers
- Costings for care leavers and guardianship system where some would get support and others might not get the support
- Addressed the number of care leavers who lost their jobs during covid.

Dechaun Malcolm, children's rights and participation officer spoke about the following:

- Care leaver celebration in October 2022 – to celebrate all children's achievements
- Campaign running summer activities - performing and arts
- A photography workshop
- Art forms – to sell at auction, to fund raise for a Speakerbox website.

The committee agreed (as suggested by Dechaun), that Speakerbox would be included as a standard item on the agenda for all meeting.

12. CORPORATE PARENTING COMMITTEE - WORKPLAN 2022 - 2023 - DRAFT

RESOLVED:

1. That the work plan for 2022-23 be noted and the following draft agenda for November 2022 corporate parenting committee as follows:

2 November 2022

Children in care

- Independent Review Officers (IRO) Annual report
- Sufficiency Strategy update
- Annual Fostering report 2021-22.

Care Leavers

Workshop theme: Fostering Caring (tbc).

Action:

2. To request Councillor Darren Merrill, cabinet member for Council Homes and Homelessness, to discuss his role, to the committee (particularly to the newly elected members).
3. Agreed there should be standard CPC agenda item for Speakerbox at the meetings.

The meeting ended at 4.45 pm

CHAIR:

DATED: