

## Corporate Parenting Committee

MINUTES of the OPEN section of the Corporate Parenting Committee held on Wednesday 19 April 2023 at 2.00 pm at the Council Offices, 160 Tooley Street, London SE1 2QH

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**PRESENT:** Councillor Jasmine Ali (Chair)  
Councillor Naima Ali  
Councillor Rachel Bentley  
Councillor Esme Dobson  
Councillor Natasha Ennin

**NON-VOTING  
CO-OPTED  
MEMBERS:** Dr Mark Kerr, subject matter expert

**OFFICER  
SUPPORT:** Alasdair Smith, Director of Children Service  
Helen Woolgar, Assistant Director – Safeguarding and Care  
Elaine Reid, Head of Service: Permanence and Resources  
Dr Stacy John-Legere, Designated Doctor for Looked After Children  
Dr Jenny Taylor, Head of Clinical Service  
Joy Edwards, Designated Nurse for Looked after Children  
Dechaun Malcolm, Children’s Rights and Participation Officer  
Chair of Speakerbox  
Clare Ryan, Service Manager, Looked after Children, Children and Adult’s Services  
Usha Singh, Virtual Headteacher  
Nicola Blake, Deputy Headteacher  
Andrew Marling, Deputy Headteacher  
Khalil Campbell, Fostering Service Manager and colleagues Emma (senior social worker) and Claudia (team manager)

Kerry Rabey, Head of Service All Age Disabilities and Learning Disabilities  
Bev Kemp, All Age Disabilities and Learning Disabilities Service Manager  
Joy Hopkinson, Head of Safeguarding & Community Services, Governance and Assurance (legal)  
Paula Thornton, Constitutional Officer  
Poonam Patel, Departmental Coordinator, Children and Adults' Services  
Beverley Olamijulo, Constitutional Officer

**1. APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Charlie Smith and Darren Merrill.

**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 items:

- Item 8: Children in care and care leavers with disabilities
- Item 9: Special guardianship.

Reasons for urgency and lateness will be specified in the relevant minutes.

**4. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS**

None were declared.

**5. MINUTES**

Subject to a correction to the officer name at item 8, Independent Reviewing Officers Annual report it be:

**RESOLVED:**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 1 March 2023 be approved as a

correct record and be signed by the chair.

## 6. **SPEAKERBOX VERBAL UPDATE**

Dechaun Malcolm, children's rights and participation officer and chair of Speakerbox made a presentation to the committee as follow:

### **Outline of purpose**

Empowering, upskilling and preparing children and young people to self advocate and amplify the voices of all care experienced children and young people.

### **Engagement**

76% increase in young people's engagement compared to the last highest recorded back in 2018-19.

### **Positive outcomes for children and young people**

Details of the opportunities provided by Speakerbox for young people including:

- Developing and acquiring a new skill
- Making and sustaining new positive friendships
- Feeling more confident to self-advocate
- Feeling more confident to speak in meetings
- Improved understanding of their rights
- Improved emotional well-being
- Decrease in loneliness and isolation and
- Improved aspirations and career paths.

### **#IBelongHere!**

Speakerbox part of the advertising campaign to recruit new foster carers and were part of the animation project. The series of adverts were launched on the 6 April 2023 at the South London Gallery.

### **I Am..!**

Speakerbox launched their "I am" identity campaign on 11 April 2023, with the view of inspiring social work professionals to think more openly and creatively when supporting children and young people with being their true selves.

In recognition of her contribution to looked after children and young people Speakerbox presented an award to Usha Singh, virtual school headteacher at the committee.

## **Campaigning 2023-24**

Plans for campaigning included:

- Sending out monthly bulletins to social work teams
- Film and young peoples voices to be imbedded into future training
- Attending service days to raise more awareness and
- Encouraging more children and young people to engage via Magazine.

## **Let's Talk about Racism**

On 13 April 2023 Speakerbox attending the 'Let's talk about Racism' workshop run by lecturers at Goldsmith's university. The young people had to share and talk openly about their different experiences and came away acquiring new strategies of how to appropriately respond to negative experience of racism. Some of these attendees now plan on co-designing and co-facilitating future workshops with Goldsmith's.

## **Looking Ahead for 2023-24**

1. Rebrand and develop website so can reach more children and young people
2. Push forward with campaigning
3. More young people upskilled to recruit and train social worker workforce
4. Improved engagement with under represented groups
5. Mentoring opportunities for care leavers (to mention young people).

## **Comments arising from presentation**

- Acknowledgement of the 'awesome' growth of Speakerbox and checking they have the necessary support
- Welcomed the award given and the positive appreciation of the work that is taking place
- Reference to the second children rights officers that will shortly be starting work and the idea muted about possible apprenticeships/training in this area for young people for these roles in future, mentioning the work that was already being undertaken with their contribution to interview panels and training.

## **RESOLVED:**

That the following actions be agreed:

1. A meeting to be set up with Councillor Jasmine Ali, cabinet member with regeneration portfolio, relevant children and adult services officers (Helen Woolgar/Alasdair Smith), the council's director of planning and growth with Mountview to ensure local looked after children and young people can benefit from this facility and the provision within the community.
2. Work to be undertaken looking at the provision of a space for Speakerbox to

call home, to be able to socialise in a safe environment and display artwork/awards. Helen Woolgar to look at with the possible establishment of a working group to examine.

## **7. VIRTUAL HEADTEACHER'S ANNUAL REPORT 2022-23**

Usha Singh, virtual headteacher presented her annual report to the committee with contributions from her colleagues Nicole Blake and Andrew Marling.

Key points from the presentation:

- Collaboration with care colleagues to ensure children accessing education
- Reference to the Department of Education expanding the role to cover all children with a social worker with regard to attendance. Staff were working hard to address attendance and remains a priority
- Southwark's favourable position in respect of education, employment and training (EET) and not in education, employment and training (NEET). Neighbouring boroughs have sought advice from Southwark so they can learn from this best practice in respect of preventative and early intervention work. Example quoted of dedicated advice officers meeting with year 11 students after GCSEs, with a contingency plan if results not quite what expected for progressing to the next stage
- Focus on A level students, including targeted tuition and workshops and bringing back care leavers to benefit from their learned experience
- Concentration and effort on those children missing education, focusing on early intervention and effective use of the pupil premium, looking at underlying issues. Weekly monitoring of progress.

### **Summary of discussion arising from presentation:**

- Acknowledgment on the focus on transition points for children and young people
- Query relating to support around looking for accommodation off university campus, guarantor and other finance issues that may negatively impact looked after children/young people
- Negotiation out of borough placements for special education needs and disabilities (SEND)
- Usha Singh referenced the proposal to extend the role of the virtual school to 25, which would address some of the issues discussed relating to support/guidance, although issue of how to fund still remains for this proposal
- Use of electronic personal education plan which is a live document and updated/actioned quickly. If a child is, excluded staff will be aware on the day and can take relevant action
- Query on out of borough special educational needs (SEN) process and issues arising (shortages and academies cannot be required to take placement of looked after children).

**RESOLVED:**

1. That the virtual headteacher's report for Southwark looked after children be noted.
2. That Usha Singh, virtual headteacher draft a SEND and exclusions paper outlining further detail and issues.

**8. CHILDREN IN CARE AND CARE LEAVERS WITH DISABILITIES**

It was not possible to circulate this report five clear days in advance of the meeting. The chair agreed to accept this item as urgent because the report had been planned for considered by the corporate parenting committee on 19 April 2023 and requested some time ago. This was the first all age disability (AAD) report to the committee. This was the last committee meeting of the municipal year and may be comprised of different membership in July 2023. The report to be considered as urgent to ensure all matters in relation to AAD's looked after children, and those receiving support as a care leaver, who have complex disabilities are received by the committee.

Officers outlined the main issues set out in the report.

A query was raised with regard to transitions and the level of support provided for looked after children.

**RESOLVED:**

That the contents of the report concerning Southwark children in care and care leavers with severe and profound disabilities receiving services through the all age disability service (AAD) be noted.

**9. SPECIAL GUARDIANSHIP**

It was not possible to circulate this report five clear days in advance of the meeting. The chair agreed to accept this item as urgent as the report had been planned for corporate parenting committee on 19 April 2023 and has been requested some time ago. This was the last committee meeting of the municipal year and may be comprised of different membership in July 2023. The report to be considered as urgent to ensure all matters in relation to special guardianship are considered by the committee.

**Queries arising from the presentation:**

- Ethnicity breakdown and the need to know the specific country of origin.

Officers explained that the support plan would address these issues, including intergenerational trauma and would delve much deeper

- The designated doctor for looked after children referenced the issue of the normal pathways of referral and children subject to special guardianship orders could be seen 'early' by her team
- Issues of SGOs in black communities and the feeling of not being supported in terms of access and support and feelings that special guardians struggle or are not sure how to contact the relevant team.

**RESOLVED:**

1. That the contents of the report about the activity of the council in assessing and supporting children who may become or are subject to special guardianship orders (SGO) be noted.
2. That in response to the issues raised about support for SGO children and access to support, Jenny Taylor (head of clinical service) to raise at the children's and young people mental health and wellbeing board to have these discussions as part of the overall health and wellbeing strategy.
3. That a leaflet be drafted that can be given to special guardians on what is available and who to contact for support. This can also be circulated via the relevant networks that special guardians might use.

**10. HOUSING DISCUSSION/ACTIONS ARISING FROM COMMITTEE ON 1 MARCH 2023 - VERBAL UPDATE**

This has been deferred until the July meeting of the committee.

**11. OVERVIEW REPORT OF QUALITY AND SAFETY REVIEWS OF CHILDREN IN CARE WITH DISABILITIES AND COMPLEX HEALTH NEEDS PLACED IN RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS REGISTERED AS CHILDREN'S HOMES**

The officer presented an outline of the report to committee and relevant issues.

The committee were informed that cabinet would receive a report back on quality assurance in response to a report on children's residential provision considered October 2022.

**RESOLVED:**

That the findings of the report, so that the welfare and care of children with disability and complex needs remains a key corporate parenting consideration be noted.

## 12. CORPORATE PARENTING COMMITTEE WORK PLAN 2022-23

### RESOLVED:

1. That the approach and work plan as set out in the report be agreed.
2. That the following draft agenda for the July committee be noted:
  - Speakerbox verbal update and report back on actions from April committee
  - Annual health report for looked after children
  - Race, ethnicity and gender proportionality
  - Foster and Adoption Service annual reports
  - Work plan 2023- 24 – new draft work plan will be submitted to this meeting
  - Housing discussion/actions arising from committee 1 March 2023 (verbal update)
  - Update on special guardianship arising from discussion at committee on 19 April 2023.

The meeting ended at 4.45pm.

**CHAIR:**

**DATED:**