

Corporate Parenting Committee

MINUTES of the OPEN section of the Corporate Parenting Committee held on Thursday 7 December 2023 at 10.00 am at the Council Offices, 160 Tooley Street, London SE1 2QH

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

OFFICER SUPPORT: Alasdair Smith, Director, Children and Families, Children's and Adults' Services
Helen Woolgar, Assistant Director – Safeguarding and Care
Audrey Bouazizi, Head of Service, Adopt London Regional Adoption agency
Elaine Reid, Head of Service: Permanence and Resources
Dr Jenny Taylor, Head of Clinical Service
Dechaun Malcolm, Children's Rights and Participation Officer and colleagues from the team
Speakerbox representatives
Clare Ryan, Service Manager, Looked after Children, Children and Adult's Services
Andrew Marling, Deputy Headteacher
Joy Hopkinson, Head of Safeguarding & Community Services, Governance and Assurance (legal)
Paula Thornton, Constitutional Officer
Beverley Olamijulo, Constitutional Officer

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from:

- Councillor Charlie Smith
- Joy Edwards and Joy Izod, looked after children nurses
- Dr Stacy John-Legere, looked after children doctor
- Usha Singh, Head, looked after children
- Dr Mark Kerr, subject matter expert.

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

No late items.

4. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS

Councillors Jasmine Ali and Darren Merrill for the purposes of transparency, declared a non-disclosable pecuniary interest in respect of item 11: Southwark Adoption Performance in 2022-23 as parents who have adopted children.

5. SPEAKERBOX UPDATE AND ANNUAL REPORT

Dechaun Malcolm, children's rights & participation officer, along with colleagues and members of Speakerbox presented the annual report and a presentation to members of the committee.

Headlines from the presentation:

- Reference to team expansion and new officers
- 55% increase of the level of engagement from April to November 2023
- Examples and work to upskill young people
- Showed the committee the Speakerbox film, a collaboration with Bromley care council on stigma and capturing the challenges sometimes faced on assumptions
- The care free kitchen. Cooking skills and an opportunity to engage, learn new skills and build confidence
- Positive feedback from under 12s

- Feedback from young people in custody/ risk of exploitation
- How Speakerbox involve and hear young people. Outline of measures and activities/events
- Outline of positive outcomes for children and young people over the past eight months and
- Looking ahead for 2023-24 and key objectives supported with an extended team and plans to do more, to reach and empower children and young people.

Issues / queries arising from presentation

- What further the committee can do to support this work?
- Query relating to the level of engagement of boys and young men (traditionally a hard to reach group). Dechaun Malcolm explained that positive male roles was key and would help to attract this hard to reach group. Additionally, sport had proved to be an attraction for this group
- Reference to podcast by Councillor Portia Mwangangye, deputy cabinet member for young people about vulnerabilities. Counselling sessions were also provided as a follow up after this podcast
- Arising from the film, a query about the process of social workers meeting with young people. It was confirmed that the social worker would liaise with young people on best times / locations to meet. It was discussed that showing the Speakerbox film in schools would contribute towards co-developing practice and guidance in association with the teachers schools and provide a general awareness of the issues and challenges that arises
- Dechaun Malcolm also mentioned the aim to develop training and ensure embedded in Southwark practice, with the possibility of addressing as part of school INSET days
- Reference also to use of film as part of health and child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS)
- Apprenticeships and ring fencing. Helen Woolgar referred to an initial meeting, with a second meeting that was postponed. She would aim to get this meeting rearranged in the next four weeks. Councillor Jasmine Ali asked to be kept updated with progress.
- NVQ qualification for young people was raised when providing support. This would provide a pathway for those who do not have the necessary qualifications but the skills to progress to employment
- Mention was made of London South Bank University (LSBU) apprenticeships: further detail to be sent to Dechaun Malcolm.

6. MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 18 July 2023 be approved as a correct record and signed by the chair.

7. CORPORATE PARENTING ANNUAL REPORT 2022-23

Alasdair Smith, director, children and families, children's and adults' services, presented the corporate parenting annual report 2022-23 to committee. It was explained that there was a constitutional requirement to present an annual report to cabinet each year and was due for submission to cabinet 17 January 2024 meeting.

- Looking at creating a young person version of the report that could be easily read
- Request to add photos to the annual report
- Cabinet member forward to also include a foreword from Speakerbox when report finalised for cabinet January meeting
- Provide link in report to Speakerbox film
- Members of the committee to provide any additional comments on the report within seven days (by 14 December 2023).

RESOLVED:

1. The report contents and structure were considered and changes advised in preparation for cabinet on 17 January 2024.
2. That it be agreed for any recommendations to cabinet to be set out in a cover report, for example to note the report and endorse the 2023-24 draft priorities.
3. That if time allowed, a young person's version of the report should be produced.
4. That members of the committee submit any further comments / input to the report no later than 14 December 2023 to Paula Thornton, constitutional team.

8. ANNUAL VIRTUAL HEADTEACHER'S REPORT 2022-2023

Adam Marling, deputy head, KS5 lead, children's and adults' services presented the annual headteachers report to the committee.

RESOLVED:

1. That the virtual headteacher's report for Southwark looked after children be noted.
2. That the comments as set out below on Southwark looked after children's education for consideration by the Virtual School Head teacher be noted:
 - Exclusions. Query relating to the reasons/breakdown in the 30%

miscellaneous category

- Issue of access to laptop for care leavers raised (for those who were not in education) in terms of job applications and access to an online platform
- Many positive examples provided of the use of care leavers who have gone to university/apprenticeships to work with current students to provide good role models/inspiration.

VOTE OF THANKS

It was confirmed that Adam Marling, deputy head would be leaving Southwark Council employment shortly. A vote of thanks and appreciation was recorded by the corporate parenting committee for Adam Marling, Deputy Head for all his work for young people in education.

9. INDEPENDENT REVIEWING OFFICERS ANNUAL REPORT 2022-23

Clare Ryan, Service Manager, looked after children, children's and adults' services presented the report and key issues to the committee.

Councillor Jasmine Ali asked what the committee could do to assist with the profile of this work. Clare Ryan advised that she would give some thought to the role/assistance that could be provided from members of the committee.

RESOLVED:

That the Independent Review Officers (IRO) Annual Report 2022-23 be noted.

10. SPECIAL GUARDIANSHIP VERBAL UPDATE

It was agreed that this update be deferred until the next meeting of the committee.

11. SOUTHWARK ADOPTION PERFORMANCE IN 2022-2023

Helen Woolgar, assistant director, safeguarding and care introduced Audrey Bouazizi, head of service Adopt London Regional Adoption agency to the committee who presented the report and key highlights.

Issues /queries arising from presentation:

- Housing needs for potential adopters when considering adopting from sibling groups. It was explained that kinship carers do receive increased priority for rehousing
- Looked at issues relating to delays in the court process
- Systemic issues relating to black children having to wait longer to be adopted discussed. Ongoing piece of work with partners.

RESOLVED:

1. That the progress of children with a care plan of adoption during 2022-23 be noted.
2. That the activity of the local authority working in partnership with Adopt London South (ALS) during 2022-23 be noted.
3. That the Adopt London South Annual Report for 2022 – 2023 be noted.

12. CORPORATE PARENTING COMMITTEE WORK PLAN

RESOLVED:

That the work plan be noted. The agenda for the next meeting will be determined in consultation with the chair and Alasdair Smith, director of children and families.

The meeting ended at 12.20pm.

CHAIR:

DATED: