



Corporate Parenting Committee

MINUTES of the OPEN section of the Corporate Parenting Committee held on Tuesday 16 April 2024 at 2.00 pm at the Council Offices, 160 Tooley Street, London SE1 2QH

PRESENT: Councillor Jasmine Ali (Chair)
Councillor Charlie Smith
Councillor Naima Ali
Councillor Rachel Bentley
Councillor Sarah King

OTHER MEMBERS PRESENT: Dr Mark Kerr (subject matter expert)
Rosamond Marshall (foster carers)

OFFICER SUPPORT: Alasdair Smith, Director, Children and Families
Elaine Reid, Head of Service: Permanence and Resources
Dechaun Malcolm, Children's Rights and Participation Officer
Chair of SpeakerBox and young people
Ekta Gupta, children rights and participation
Joy Hopkinson, Head of Safeguarding & Community Services, Governance and Assurance (legal)
Michael Crowe, Service Development Manager
Anna Chiva, Assistant Director for SEND
Clare Ryan, Service Manager, Looked After Children
Dan Woods and Julie, Children's and Adults' Services
Paula Thornton, Constitutional Officer

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Esme Dobson and Natasha Ennin, Dr Stacy John-Legere and Joy Edwards.

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

None.

4. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS

None were disclosed.

5. MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 28 February 2024 be approved as a correct record and signed by the chair.

6. SPEAKERBOX VERBAL UPDATE

Speakerbox made a presentation to committee highlighting the following key points:

- 55% increase in engagement compared to the previous year.
- Young people participated in the following ways:
 - Delivered training
 - Recruited senior leadership roles
 - Co-facilitated at the Learning Fest
 - Attended consultations
 - Contributed to cookbook for care experienced young people
 - Attended corporate parenting committee.

Under 13s cohort – principles behind younger group's engagement

1. Identification and building sense of self
2. Containment (feeling safe and held)
3. Familiarity and consistency (shared experiences)
4. Role modelling and community building
5. Voices (sharing knowledge, resources and feedback). *The committee heard*

some direct quotes and feelings as part this presentation.

LEAP leadership programme

During the April half-term Speakerbox members attended the first phase of the leadership residential programme (an interactive programme where young people are able to ignite their personal growth through games and exercise).

The programme provided space for attendees to:

- Develop new leadership skills
- Learn how to build positive relationships
- Develop new methods of problem solving
- Build confidence and raise self-esteem.

The next phase will include a four-day residential this summer.

The Big Theatre Production

A total of 10 young people participated in the Big Theatre Production in partnership with London Bubble Theatre and Southwark Stands Together against Racism.

A musical story was performed on the 12 April with a dynamic performance piece following a group of young Londoners as they examine, share and draw you into their world.

Positive outcomes for children and young people

Over the past 10 months Speakerbox has provided opportunities for young people which resulted in young people:

- Developing and acquiring new skills
- Feeling heard through direct advocacy via children rights officers (CROs)
- Having a secured base with consistent adults
- Becoming more confident in public speaking
- Improved understanding of rights
- Improved emotional well-being and
- Having improved aspirations and career paths.

Looking Ahead 2024-25 – key objectives

1. Rebrand and develop website to extend reach to more children and young people
2. Attend first residential in over seven years, partially funded by the voluntary sector and LEAP
3. Campaigning
4. Working in partnership with human resources in developing a development

- programme for young people in recruitment.
5. Staring pod-cast lead by care leavers.

Summary of points arising from discussion of presentation

- The pressures faced by under 13s and young people generally relating to mental health and pressures of social media
- The importance of positive role models and use of a key range of activities that helps deliver resilience. Example quoted of the older members of Speakerbox providing positive role models and support for the younger members
- Importance of consistency and building trust
- Query about the possibility of holding another performance and to give schools the opportunity to attend
- Different roles and skills acquired by young people in participating in the theatre production including writing and stage management
- How the committee can assist young people? Provision of opportunities where young people voices can be heard, a vision and how can influence decision making. Getting to know the young people so that they are familiar with councillors to make them more comfortable in communicating
- Young person from Speakerbox voiced the vulnerability felt by young people leaving care and suggested a default job position with Southwark to be offered a job. It was further explained that often when a parent runs / owns a family business and their child is looking for a job it is natural to offer / secure a job with their company. Argued that this should also apply to the council as corporate parents and their care leavers
- Need to address hurdles, barriers and access jobs
- Officers confirmed would continue to work with human resources on employment / training opportunities
- The issue of a venue for the annual care celebration raised.

ACTION:

1. Noted that discussions with human resources in respect of access to jobs for young people and care leavers will continue.
2. That Councillor Jasmine Ali discuss the venue issue and the possibility of Mountview for annual care celebration event with the council's director of planning and growth.

7. BRIEF REPORT: LIFELONG LINKS IMPLEMENTATION

Officers presented the report to committee.

Issues arising out of discussion

- Issue of communication raised and confirmed that a flagship launch event is being planned to promote work doing and raise awareness and

- will ensure all members of the corporate parenting committee are invited
- Examples quoted of children / young people tracing family members. This work is set against the data protection and safety considerations for the children and young people
 - Acknowledged the positive impact that friends and family can have a young persons life
 - Noted Speakerbox to be involved in recruitment / consultations.

RESOLVED

1. That the Lifelong Links programme and its implementation for children in the care of the council, or those formerly who are care leavers, as part of the Department for Education (DfE) family finding, befriending and mentoring programmes be noted.
2. That the inclusion of people with lived experience of social work within the Lifelong Links implementation, including children and young people, care leavers, parents and carers be noted.

8. SOUTHWARK HOMES FOR SOUTHWARK CHILDREN PROGRAMME UPDATE

Michael Crowe, service development manager presented the report to committee.

Summary of issues discussed / raised

- Safeguarding of children in homes. It was explained that a report is to be submitted to cabinet on quality assurance framework which will also be submitted to the corporate parenting committee
- Confirmed also that different layers of regulation and assurance in place for childrens homes
- Query relating to the acknowledgement of foster carers and the role. Noted measures currently in place to acknowledge work and that a foster carers ball will take place in October.

RESOLVED:

1. That the contents of the update on the Southwark Homes for Southwark Children programme of improvement work for the delivery of services to looked after children and care leavers be noted.
2. That the comments on the progress of the improvement work programme be noted as set out above.
3. That the quality assurance requested by cabinet also be submitted to the corporate parenting committee.

9. CORPORATE PARENTING COMMITTEE - WORK PLAN 2024-25

To be considered at the next committee meeting in July once the 2024-25 membership of the committee confirmed.

The meeting ended at 4.10pm.

CHAIR:

DATED: