

Item No. 6.	Classification: Open	Date: 25 March, 2019	Meeting Name: Corporate Parenting Committee
Report title:		Bright Spots	
Ward(s) or groups affected:			
From:		Director of Children and Families	

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That corporate parenting committee note the contents of the Bright Spots reports: Your Life Your Care children (aged 4 – 18) and Your Life Beyond Care (18+) attached as Appendices to this report.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

2. The Bright Spots Programme, developed by Coram Voice with the University of Bristol, aims to improve the well-being of children and young people in care / care leavers by identifying and promoting practices that have a positive influence on them. It recognises that children in care / care leavers want the same things as other children, but that their well-being is affected by experiences other children may not have. The program is endorsed by OFSTED as well as the Children's Commissioner.
3. The experiences of children in care aged 4 - 18 are identified by encouraging them to complete an online survey (Your Life Your Care) supported by a trusted adult. There is a focus on four areas: rights, resilience, recovery and relationships. Care leavers are also encouraged to complete an online survey (Your Life Beyond Care) which focuses on the thoughts, feelings and experiences of care leavers. The findings are analysed and compared to other local authorities. A comprehensive report is completed so that "Bright Spots" of practice can be identified along with areas where further work is required.
4. This is the first time that Southwark has participated in this programme and the expectation is that it will be repeated at meaningful intervals so that progress against identified areas can be measured and sustained. The intention is that the reports provided by Bright Spots will enable us to embed the areas of identified strength but also work to address areas where greater focus is required.
5. Following completion of the surveys and analysis of the data four reports were written by Coram Voice: a) Your Life Your Care – Full report b) Your Life Your Care – Summary c) Your Life Beyond Care – Full report d) Your Life Beyond Care – Summary. The findings were presented to the service and an event held with children and young people.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

6. Your Life Your Care found that 96% of children in care in Southwark (aged 11 – 18) trust their social worker and that almost every child trusted their carer all or most of the time (98% aged 11- 18 and 100% aged 4-11) with 96% of children

feeling safe where they live. Additionally 83% of children (aged 11 – 18) liked school or college “a lot”, or “a bit” whilst 98% of carers were said to take an interest in children’s education. The importance of these findings is that having a trusted adult has been shown to be the main factor in helping children recover from traumatic events (Gilligan 2009). This is very reassuring because along with teachers, carers and social workers are the primary people with whom children and young people have contact with and who support our children’s journeys whilst Looked After.

7. Your Life Beyond Care found that 78% of care leavers thought they had been treated better or equally to young people who had not been in care, whilst 72% trusted their Personal Advisor and also experienced fewer changes of worker than young people in care aged 11 – 18. 93% of care leavers felt they had the skills needed to take care of themselves with 59% always feeling safe in their homes.
8. A “You said – We Will” plan has been written that brings together some of the issues identified and the planned responses.

What could be improved: children aged 4 - 18

9. Bright Spots found that a significant proportion of children wanted to know more about why they were in care or felt they had not had an explanation and this is an area where we need to continue to improve. In the recent focused visit (Ofsted, January 2019) some examples of life story work were identified as evidence of excellent practice, and were commended by the inspection team.
10. Life story workshops led by senior social workers and clinical practitioners have been established and funding agreed for a second practitioner to undertake in-depth training which will be used to support the development of life story work across the service. In addition, organisational development is working with lead practitioners to consider which apps / programs will support this work following the planned roll out of laptops / iPads to the service.
11. Bright Spots reported that almost half of children and young people were unhappy with their level of contact with their siblings. This is an issue that has been a focus by Speakerbox who have worked to raise awareness of the importance of promoting contact. We have also been working to promote the “Siblings together Activity and residential camps” that are run by “Siblings Together” and we are monitoring referrals monthly. Siblings Together is an organisation that is well regarded and a number of our children have previously attended their camps / events.
12. Reassuringly, several months after the Bright Spots reports, the January 2019 Ofsted focused inspection reported that *“there is a strong commitment to maintaining and sustaining contact for children”* and that children’s contact arrangements are clear in their plans and reviewed regularly. There is a commitment by the care service to continue to promote sibling and familial contact.
13. Work with 4 – 7 year olds to build trusting relationships with their social worker is required because this was an area requiring improvement identified by Bright Spots.
14. Since the survey there has been a reconfiguration of the care service with the

establishment of a service for under sixteens and a sixteen plus service, both with their own service managers. These specialisms will allow social workers to develop additional expertise in working with and engaging younger children. Work has also been undertaken to build a stable work force, reducing the numbers of locums by recruiting permanent staff and using newly qualified social workers presents an opportunity to help shape and develop their practice at a key stage in their practice development.

What could be improved: care leavers 18+

15. Across all measures of well-being care leavers had much lower scores compared to the general population, with 19% reporting they had felt lonely all or most of the time in the last few weeks with 35% reporting high levels of anxiety compared to 18% in the general population.
16. There has been a review of roles in the leaving care service and an adult mental health experienced practitioner has been appointed along with a youth worker. These practitioners will have a reduced caseload but will also develop practice across the service and add value. We are making plans to make better use of the young people's group work area and are developing a group work program that will be delivered both at Talfourd Place but also in the community. Plans are to deliver these outside of core hours including weekends.
17. There is a need to improve access to accommodation that care leavers feel is suitable, particularly for males. In addition to the appointments outlined above, a specialist housing worker has been appointed on a one year secondment to the leaving care service from Southwark housing. This is initially funded by DFE funding from the cross-government rough sleeping strategy. This worker will provide advice and support to all staff and young people in the leaving care service for issues relating to housing.
18. Care leavers with regulated status in the UK who are assessed as having good independence skills are currently eligible for a priority housing nomination (studio flat) at band 2 and receive a leaving care grant of £2,000. Additionally there has been a recommissioning of support, housing and resettlement services for children in care and care leavers, and young people at risk of homelessness in Southwark (16+), and the new providers will shortly begin to manage services. This will bring bring more control over quality and location of provision along with greater accountability.

Policy implications

19. None

Community impact statement

20. The decision to note this report has been judged to have no or a very small impact on local people and communities. Children in care and care leavers mostly come from communities in Southwark and as such the progress of services for children in care and care leavers has a small positive impact on those communities.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
Children's Services Focused Visit	Ofsted Published Report	N/a
Link: https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/provider/44/80514		

APPENDICES

No.	Title
Appendix 1	Your Life Your Care (summary)
Appendix 2	Your Life Beyond Care (summary)
Appendix 3	You Said, We will
Appendix 4	Full report: The views of care leavers in Southwark on their well-being & what makes life good

AUDIT TRAIL

Lead Officer	Alasdair Smith, Director, Children & Families	
Report Author	Andrew Fowler, Head of Service, Children in Care and Care Leavers	
Version	Final	
Dated	12 March 2019	
Key Decision?	No	
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER		
Officer Title	Comments Sought	Comments Included
Director of Law and Democracy	No	No
Strategic Director of Finance and Governance	No	No
Cabinet Member	No	No
Date final report sent to Constitutional Team	12 March 2019	