



MINUTES OF THE CORPORATE PARENTING COMMITTEE
Thursday 28 April 2016 at 5.00 pm

PRESENT: Councillor Moher (Chair) and Councillors Conneely, Hossain, Thomas and Warren

1. Declarations of interests

None declared.

2. Minutes of the previous meeting

RESOLVED:

that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 16 February 2016 be approved as an accurate record of the meeting.

3. Matters arising

None.

4. Deputations

None.

5. Children in Care - questions and answers

PE (Chair, Care In Action) gave an update on activity on the CIA since the last meeting. He reported back on an event, taking the CIA to the next level, looking at how children in care, councils and corporate parents could work better together. The CIA hosted a stall and were able to feedback on their activity. A new idea was to make a film of care experiences and how services could improve. The committee heard that following the recent Ofsted inspection, the junior and mid CIA groups had considered a summary of the findings and Ofsted highlights. PE reported that there would now be a participation champion in each of the care planning teams, to be the point of contact and ensure that children and young people had a chance to be involved.

PE was pleased to report back on the CIA recent involvement in the appointment process for Operational Directors in Children and Young People. From feedback, the young people had enjoyed serving on the panel which they felt had been well organised and worked well. Each young person had had an opportunity to ask a question and their only regret was that they had not been able to ask more due to lack of time. They had welcomed the opportunity to meet the staff they would be working with, observe them in detail and were honoured to have been able to take

part and to make a difference. Gail Tolley Strategic Director, Children and Young People, advised that she hoped to be able to announce the successful candidates shortly. There would be a further opportunity to participate in an interview panel for Heads of Service in the near future.

Members welcomed the presentation from Care In Action which they considered to be informative, clearly setting out how busy they had been, performing a valuable role. Members expressed interest in the film proposal, questioning funding arrangements. PE advised that he had contacts who could possibly assist or, if necessary, would contact the council's webteam.

6. Fostering report - Q4 2015/2016

Nigel Chapman (Head of Service Placements) introduced the report from the Strategic Director, Children and Young People, which set out information about the general management of the in-house fostering service and how it was achieving good outcomes for children. This was in accordance with standard 25.7 of the Fostering National Minimum Standards (2011). He summarised the position on placement activity advising that the council was close to its annual target of placing 75% of LAC overall within foster placements, noting that 20% were unaccompanied asylum seekers, a growing trend. On recruitment activity, Nigel Chapman highlighted the Make a Difference campaign and community events where there were opportunities to reach out. The fostering marketing exercise had resulted in 300 enquiries, a third more than the previous year. Nigel Chapman also referred to fostering training on offer and mentioned Patrice Thomas who had been awarded an MBE for services to foster care over 31 years. For the future, a social pedagogy training programme was continuing to be valuable to help sustain some placements and would be shared with other WLA local authorities to achieve greater consistency. The committee heard that the digital campaign would be evaluated and training monitored.

Members questioned the absence of detailed information on the Ofsted inspection and also detailed information on foster care such as reasons for leaving and assessment presentations to the Fostering Panel. It was felt that issues raised should be monitored. The Strategic Director clarified that the Ofsted inspection had been discussed in detail at the previous meeting and the requirement now was to mainstream the findings from the inspection. She advised that the department was required to submit an action plan to Ofsted and relevant sections would be extracted and highlighted in future committee reports.

Members also requested information that would allow Brent to be benchmarked with other boroughs and Nigel Chapman confirmed that the annual data returns, given to Ofsted, could be included in a schedule and reported to the next meeting. Members also asked questions on the number of asylum seekers, the number of unaccompanied minors and reasons why they were attracted to Brent. Janet Lewis (Head of Virtual School) reported that many were in education and were very keen to learn. There was some evidence of local law firms working to support applicants and the department had responded to a request for assistance to Kent. The committee heard the view that a nationally supported dispersal system would go some way to assisting.

Members congratulated officers for the foster caring campaign which had been widely publicised and requested an update on LGBT fostering and also the process for fostering households getting re-registered, after having been removed from the list. Nigel Chapman advised that the Fostering Panel would make recommendations to the Fostering Service regarding learning and training.

The committee extended its congratulations to Patrice Thomas on her MBE.

RESOLVED:

that the contents of the Brent Fostering Service Quarterly Monitoring report 1 January-31 March 2016 be noted.

7. Adoption report - Oct 2015 - Mar 2016

The committee considered the report from the Strategic Director, Children and Young People the purpose of which was to provide information to the Council's Corporate Parenting Committee about the general management of the adoption service and how it was achieving good outcomes for children. The report detailed the activity of Brent's adoption service from 1 October 2015 – 31 March 2016.

Nigel Chapman (Head of Service Placements) in introducing the report drew attention to the performance data in the report and the two main indicators of time taken to place after entering care and time taken to place following a court authority, performance in both of which had improved, most significantly in the latter and Brent was now in the top third. He outlined the position on child related data and adopter recruitment and support with many in receipt of a support package. Nigel Chapman was pleased to report continued service improvement over the six month period and also the 'Good' rating achieved from the Ofsted inspection. The committee noted that the Scrutiny Committee on 5 April 2016 had considered a report on the proposals for adoption reform contained within the government's Education and Adoption Bill 2015 and the local authority's response.

Member's welcomed the positive comments from the Ofsted inspection.

RESOLVED:

that the contents of the adoption report October 2015 to March 2016 be noted as evidence that the management of the adoption service was being monitored and challenged in order to promote good outcomes for children, is in line with standard 25.6 of the Adoption National Minimum Standards (2014).

8. Training

PE advised the committee that the Care in Action (CIA) were due to take part in the delivery of training to social workers and carers in the responsibilities under the Brent Charter and circulated information on the Brent Pledge and Care Leavers charter activity. Members and officers present then took part in a training exercise designed to explore the importance of communication, keeping promises and the impact of disappointment – valuable lessons when relating with Looked After Children.

The committee congratulated the CIA for leading the exercise which they found valuable and also felt would be useful for social workers.

9. **Any other urgent business**

The committee heard from Paul Egunjobi that Caroline McGuinness would be stepping down from the role of Chair of the Care Leavers section of Care in Action (CIA). On her behalf, he read out a letter of farewell and thanks. Paul Egunjobi would be taking on the role of chair. Members wished her well in her future endeavours.

The CIA also said farewell to Councillor Moher who was stepping down as Lead Member for Children and Young People and chair of the committee. They thanked her for her support and encouragement over the past 2 years.

The meeting closed at 6.20 pm

R MOHER
Chair