



Corporate Parenting Committee

Tuesday 19 July 2016 at 5.00 pm

Boardroom - Brent Civic Centre, Engineers Way,
Wembley, HA9 0FJ

Membership:

Members

Councillors:

W Mitchell Murray (Chair)
Conneely
Hossain
Thomas
Warren

Substitute Members

Councillors:

S Choudhary, Crane and Dixon

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The press and public are welcome to attend this meeting

Agenda

Introductions, if appropriate.

Apologies for absence and clarification of alternate members.

Item	Page
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1	Declarations of interests	
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Members are invited to declare at this stage of the meeting, any relevant disclosable pecuniary, personal or prejudicial interests in the items on this agenda.

2	Minutes of the previous meeting	1 - 4
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3	Matters arising (if any)	
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4	Deputations (if any)	
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5	Children in Care - feedback on the pledge	
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This is an opportunity for members of the Children In Care Council (CIA) to feedback on recent activity.

6	An induction presentation for members regarding Corporate Parenting	
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7	Brent Fostering Service Quarterly Monitoring Report 1 April - 30 June 2016	5 - 14
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The purpose of this report is to provide information to the Council's Corporate Parenting Committee about the general management of the in-house fostering service and how it is achieving good outcomes for children. This is in accordance with standard 25.7 of the Fostering National Minimum Standards (2011).

The report covers the first quarter of this reporting year.

8	Any other urgent business	
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Notice of items to be raised under this heading must be given in writing to the Head of Executive and Member Services or his representative before the meeting in accordance with Standing Order 64.

Date of the next meeting: Tuesday 25 October 2016



Please remember to set your mobile phone to silent during the meeting.

- The meeting room is accessible by lift and seats will be provided for members of the public.

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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

Paul Egunjobi 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

	<p style="text-align: center;">Corporate Parenting Committee 19 July 2016</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Report from the Strategic Director of Children and Young People</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Brent Fostering Service Quarterly Monitoring Report 1 April – 30 June 2016</p>	

1.0 Summary

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide information to the Council's Corporate Parenting Committee about the general management of the in-house fostering service and how it is achieving good outcomes for children. This is in accordance with standard 25.7 of the Fostering National Minimum Standards (2011).
- 1.2 The report covers the first quarter of this reporting year.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 The Corporate Parenting Committee is requested to review, comment on and question the contents of this report. This is to provide evidence that the management of the fostering service is being monitored and challenged in order to promote good outcomes for children.

3.0 Service Values

- 3.1 The in-house fostering function is positioned within the new LAC and Permanency Service of the Children and Young People's Directorate. The vision as set out in the 2016-17 service plan is that:
- The best foster carers are recruited for our children.
 - All placements receive high quality support, effectively targeted according to need and providing good value for the Local Authority.
 - To increase the number of children placed closer to home with our in-house foster carers.

- Children are found permanent families without delay and within their extended family network where appropriate.

4.0 Staffing Arrangements

4.1 These remain the same as those provided to the Corporate Parenting Committee in the Brent Fostering Service Quarter Four Monitoring report (January-March 2016).

5.0 Placement Activity

5.1 The corporate performance targets for this year relating to fostering are as follows:

- Percentage of LAC placed with in-house (Brent) foster carers – annual target 35%.
- Percentage of LAC placed with a relative or family friend – annual target 15%
- Percentage of LAC placed in Independent Fostering Agencies – annual target 25%.
- Percentage of LAC overall within foster placements – annual target 75%

5.2 The overall LAC population increased during the first quarter from 337 on 31st March 2016 to 352 on June 30th 2016.

As at the 30th June 2016 there were:

- 112 children placed with Brent foster carers. This represents 31.8% of total LAC.
- 42 Children placed with a relative or family friend on a fostering basis. This is 11.9% of total LAC
- 89 children placed with IFAs. This is 25.28% of total LAC.
- 70% of children live within a fostering setting at 30/06/16

5.3 The most recent reporting period has continued to see an increase in unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC) approaching the borough for support. There were 64 UASC in the Local Authority's care as at 31st March 2016 and this number has already risen to 72 as at 30/06/16, which represents 20.5% of all looked after children in Brent. There are 15.6% LAC in semi-independent accommodation as at 30/06/16. This reflects the older age range of young people entering the care system within Brent.

5.4 The service operates with few vacancies so that the majority of available space with foster carers is maximised. As at 30th June 2016 there were 10 fostering households with at least one bed space available for fostering. This is approximately 10% of the total capacity of non-related households a reduction from a vacancy level of 12% in the previous quarter. The current carers with vacancies have a range of approval categories.

6.0 Recruitment Activity

6.1 The fostering service carried out 15 recruitment focused activities within the reporting period with the aim of raising awareness of fostering and encouraging potential foster

carers to come forward within the Brent community. During this reporting period our fostering teams co-ordinated Brent Fostering Fortnight, which included a number of activities aimed at recruiting new foster carers from both within the council workforce and also the wider community.

6.2 In addition to our usual recruitment activity, the fostering service participated in Fostering Fortnight during the month of May 2016. We held three events to raise awareness of Foster Care Fortnight 2016:

- A [promotional video](#) featuring Brent Council staff. Distributed on Brent Council website, social media networks and YouTube. Viewed on YouTube 381 times.
- A coffee and cake morning at Brent Civic Centre on Wednesday 18 May. Event aimed towards raising awareness of fostering recruitment among Brent Council Staff. Current foster carers and children in care were invited to take part also. Promoted extensively on Yammer and social media.
- A pamper evening on Wednesday 25 May at Brent Civic Centre. The event was advertised on Facebook, Netmums, JC Decaux as well as social media. 19 people attended the event plus 3 current foster carers. 3 of our stall holders attended the event as a result of advertisements.

As a direct result of our Fostering Fortnight activity we had 39 enquiries during May 2016 (in comparison to 18 enquiries in May 2015). A key aim of Fostering Fortnight is to raise awareness of fostering in the community and this level of interest is therefore a very encouraging outcome. In line with our Recruitment Strategy we have been working hard to develop our social media presence as a platform for foster carer recruitment, and during Fostering Fortnight 2016 our engagement level on social media went up by 83% in comparison to the previous month.

6.3 During this quarter other recruitment events took place at a number of venues including Bridge Park, the Civic Centre, local supermarkets and three of our libraries. The purpose of our outreach activity is to market our brand within the local community and reinforce our campaign messages. The success of our marketing activity has been evidenced by our Fostering and Adoption campaigns being the second most remembered local authority initiatives over the last 12+ months.

6.4 The monthly information evenings have continued to be held at the Civic Centre for members of the public to find out more about the fostering role and to enable us to determine whether an individual or family has the potential to become a carer for Brent.

6.5 Our improved recruitment and marketing activity has seen a significant growth in enquiries to the service in 2015-16 compared to 2014-15. The service received 307 enquiries in 2015-16, compared to 203 in 2014-15. From our own historical data as well as comparisons with other boroughs and IFAs on average 10% of enquiries move ahead to a formal application to foster, with approximately 5-6% of enquiries resulting in an approved fostering household.

The recruitment activity during the reporting period produced 77 enquiries about fostering. These enquiries resulted in 17 initial visits. As at the 30th June 2016 there were 16 formal assessments in process under the 2-stage fostering assessment process.

6.6 The target for the service in 2016-17 is to recruit fifteen non-related foster carers during the reporting year; with a net growth of 5 fostering households once carer resignations and terminations of approval are taken into account. There continue to be some ongoing delays in approval of foster carers due to the slow return of information from the Disclosure and Barring Service. This is a systemic issue affecting all fostering agencies within London and has been signalled as a priority area to be resolved by the Metropolitan Police.

6.7 Our analysis of current foster carer views and those of carers who have ended their fostering role is helping the service to respond to carer needs promptly, with the intended outcome that there are greater levels of retention.

7.0 Fostering Panel

7.1 The fostering service has a Fostering Panel constituted in accordance with Regulation 23 of the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011. The service maintains a central list of Panel members that includes an elected member. The panel chair and vice chair are independent people with professional experience of fostering. Recent demand has risen and three panels have been held every two months.

7.2 The functions of the Fostering Panel are to consider:

- Each application and to recommend whether or not a person is suitable to be a Foster Carer, Connected Person(s) (Family and Friends Foster Carer) and the terms of their approval.
- The first annual review of each approved carer and any other review as requested by the fostering service.
- The termination of approval or change of terms of approval of a Foster Carer.

- 7.3 The panel has a quality assurance role and monitors the standard of reports presented to it and relays any issues or concerns to the relevant manager. The panel makes recommendations to the fostering service and these recommendations are referred to the Agency Decision Maker who is the Operational Director, Integration and Improved Outcomes.
- 7.4 During the period 1st April 2016 – 30th June 2016, 5 panels were held with 25 specific cases discussed during these sessions. Within this group:
- 2 new fostering households and 3 new 'Family and Friends' foster carer households were recommended for approval.
 - 4 fostering households were found suitable to continue as foster carers following review.
 - 1 foster carer's approval terms were changed from short to long term to provide permanency for a child in placement.
 - 3 fostering households were found suitable to continue as foster carers following allegations.
 - 1 fostering household's approval was recommended for termination due to a list of concerns which left panel feeling unsatisfied that the fostering household remained suitable.
 - 4 'Family and Friends' fostering household's approval were terminated for the following reasons:
 - the child in placement no longer being looked after;
 - the child in placement returning to the care of their parents;
 - a Special Guardianship Order being granted; and
 - a list of concerns which made panel feel unsatisfied that the fostering household remained suitable.
 - 6 fostering households resigned from their fostering role for the following reasons:
 - a change in family circumstances;
 - electing to foster for another London Borough;
 - wishing to adopt instead;
 - finding their first placement too challenging;
 - a breakdown in relationship between carer and the department; and
 - due to the challenging behaviour of the young person in placement (the carer had been approved to care for one specific child).

All of the recommendations made to the Agency Decision Maker were ratified.

7.5 The feedback from the fostering panel chair has been constructive to the service as it develops. The department now deals more effectively with the issue of allegations against carers to support the reintegration of the household to fostering. The Fostering Service took part in research into unfounded allegations against foster carers, the outcomes of which support us to develop our work with carers who are subject to allegations.

The annual joint training day for Central List Fostering Panel members and social workers within the Fostering Service was held on 24th June 2016, its main focus being using a Serious Case Review from another London Borough Fostering Service to improve our practice; this was received extremely well.

8.0 Training and Support to Foster Carers.

- 8.1 All of Brent's foster carers are allocated to a Supervising Social Worker who carries out monthly supervision and support visits, ensures carers provide a good standard of care and creates an important link between the child's social worker and the foster carer.
- 8.2 As part of foster carers' commitment to Brent and reinforced within their foster care agreement is a requirement to attend mandatory and identified training courses. During the period April 1st – June 30th 2016, 11 training courses were held, attended by 78 carers. Also in this quarter half day training sessions were held for the Fostering and Adoption Panels with attendance from relevant teams.
- 8.3 Every month a foster carers' support group is held, facilitated by Supervising Social Workers but informed by the needs of carers. The groups are generally attended by a small group of carers and the Fostering Support Team are working to improve attendance as they provide an important communication link between carers and the Placements' Service.
- 8.4 A continuation of social pedagogy development through a bridging project to embed the learning of foster carers and social care staff took place between October 2015 and April 2016. Meetings have been held with other Local Authorities using a similar approach in order to share practice. Senior managers have met during this reporting quarter to consider the continued development of social pedagogy throughout the service.

9.0 Monitoring Arrangements

- 9.1 During the reporting period there were two formal allegations made against a fostering household. Both cases were dealt with under the LADO process and both facilitated by another local authority. In addition there was one standards of care meeting held. All of these matters are being dealt with through the usual processes.
- 9.2 There were no formal complaints received from Brent foster carers during the reporting period.
- 9.3 All foster carers, regardless of the length of their approval with Brent, must have an annual review of their arrangements. The Fostering Reviewing Officer completed 27 annual reviews during the last quarter.

10.0 Future Developments

- 10.1 Collaborative work with other West London Authorities has continued with joint foster carer preparation training now in place. An agreement was reached from 1st April 2016 for all 8 West London Alliance authorities to offer the same carer benefits' package to foster carers – delivered through the Fostering Network.
- 10.2 The main activities for the fostering teams within the newly formed LAC & Permanency Service from April 2016 are as follows:

- To use the opportunity from a newly formed service to listen effectively to the voice of children and young people and embed their views into improving the quality and consistency of our fostering service.
- To ensure that the recruitment of in-house carers continues to improve and that the impact of the digital campaign is evaluated.
- To finalise the survey of current foster carers and to compare this with exit interviews completed in December 2015 to identify trends and to support service planning.
- To ensure the foster carer training offer is monitored and the impact reflected within foster carer supervision and care of children.
- To ensure feedback from fostering panel is embedded into quality assurance work and development areas are progressed by team managers.

Appendices / Links

- (i) Brent's 'Make a Difference' Fostering Campaign:
<https://www.brent.gov.uk/services-for-residents/children-and-family-support/fostering/make-a-difference/>

Contact Officer

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GAIL TOLLEY
Strategic Director of Children and Young People

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Your fortnightly update from Brent Council

Check out our brand new e-news bulletin packed with all the information you need to help you in your fostering and adoption role. Published fortnightly, the bulletin is your gateway to fostering and adoption news, training updates, council news, events and local offers and more from Brent's Placement Service. If you have any suggestions of news stories or want to contribute an article please email fostering@brent.gov.uk.

Summer playschemes

For a comprehensive list of all available playschemes, please click [here](#). Below are some of the schemes available. Please contact each individual school/centre for more details.

Bridge Park Community Leisure Centre

Playscheme for 8 - 13 years old and drop in sessions for 5 to 7 year olds. Activities include arts and craft, athletics, trampolining, football and more. Call 020 8937 3730 or email bridgeparkclc@brent.gov.uk.

1Life Activity camp at Willesden Sport Centre

3 & 4 year olds Monday-Friday 9.30-1pm
5-12 year olds Monday-Friday 8.30-5.30pm or 9.30-4.30pm
Call 020 8955 1120 or email willesden@1life.co.uk

S & S Playscheme at Park Lane Primary School

Tel: 020 8902 5006

Payment dates

This is a reminder to all foster carers that your payment from 03/07/16 to 16/07/16 will be paid into your account on the 15/07/16. This is part of the move to make payments to you fortnightly in arrears.

Wembley funday

Fun day on 16 July, 1pm – 6pm at Wembley High Road. Food, music, stalls and fun activities for everyone. [Read more>>](#)



Michael Sobell Sinai School	Tel: 020 8204 1550 All children are welcome including those with special needs.
The Kidz Club Playscheme At Uxendon Manor Primary School	Tel: 020 8907 5019, thekidzclub@live.co.uk Age group 4-11yrs
Gladstone Park Primary School	Tel: 020 8452 1350 Age group 4-12 yrs
Malorees Infant School/ Junior	Tel: 07905 007 996 Age groups 4 - 11 years



Supporting children in education

There are still some spaces left on our 'Transitions: Supporting children moving from Primary to Secondary School' course on the 18 July, 10am – 3pm. This session will provide you with some advice and tools to help you manage one of the biggest changes in a child's education, i.e. the change from primary to secondary school.

This course is suitable for kinship and foster carers of children aged 8+. To book your place now please email zak.darwood@brent.gov.uk or call 07788 335717.

Finding Dory

Just some word of advice for parents about the new Disney animation, Finding Dory, released nationwide in cinemas on 29 July 2016. We recommend all foster/adoptive parents should preview the movie first to see if it is suitable for their child. The film deals with some issues regarding loss and abandonment/finding birth parents – this may be upsetting to watch for some children. If you have any concerns or would like some advice please speak to your supervising social worker.



Referral reward scheme

As a Brent foster carer you are eligible to take part in our Referral Reward Scheme. The Brent Placement Service will pay a "referral reward" to any Brent approved foster carer who successfully recommends a friend or family member to the Service. An initial £250 is paid when the referred person is approved at panel and a further £250 following their first placement. Referrals can be made to our recruitment number 020 8937 4538 or email fostering@brent.gov.uk – quoting 'Referral Reward'.

Date for your diary

Please note the following dates for the next Foster Carers' Support Group.

- 12 July (daytime) - Training room 2

The support group is your chance to meet other foster carers and share your stories. To confirm your attendance please email fosteringsupport@brent.gov.uk

Roller-skating disco

Learn to skate or if you can skate bring your friends and skate to music! Starting Saturdays from 1 July 2016 at Bridge Park Leisure Centre. Sessions cost £2 and are for young people 14 years old and above. Email bridgeparkclc@brent.gov.uk or call 020 8937 3730 for more details.