



MINUTES OF THE CORPORATE PARENTING COMMITTEE
Wednesday 5 February 2020 at 5.00 pm

PRESENT: Councillor M Patel (Chair) and Councillors Conneely, Gbajumo and Thakkar.

Apologies were received from: Councillor Kansagra.

1. Exclusion of the Press and Public

RESOLVED: that under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the duration of the meeting, on the grounds that the attendance of representatives from the council's Children in Care council, necessitated the disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 2, Part 1 of Schedule 12A, as amended, of the Act, namely: Information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual.

2. Apologies for absence and clarification of alternate members

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Kansagra.

3. Declarations of interests

An interest was declared in relation to item 10 by Councillor Conneely, who advised that she worked at Brent Centre for Young People, which was a provider of Mental Health Services for Adolescents.

4. Deputations

None received.

5. Minutes of the previous meeting - 30 October 2019

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the last meeting held on 30 October 2019 be approved as an accurate record.

6. Matters arising

None.

7. Update from Care In Action/care Leavers in Action Members

S (Care Leavers in Action) reported that Care Leavers In Action wanted to work on a project for young people approaching leaving care that created a guide as a compliment to the service based on issues they had reported such as health, opticians, mental health, personal care and bills.

N (Care Leavers in Action) added that they had discussed how Children's services could help young people leaving care with financial support and housing.

A (Care Leavers in Action) highlighted that she had seen the Wedding Singer at the Troubadour Theatre the previous evening attending with the Strategic Director as a VIP guest, reporting that it was a great show with good singing and Paparazzi attending.

Care leavers had been invited to the London Borough of Culture opening ceremony, Rise, and received first class tickets. S reported that they had met people from Parliament at the VIP event and felt a part of the show. N added that the stage had followed the stories of people with different cultures and heritage throughout the years, noting how much Wembley had changed.

J (Care Leavers in Action) advised that he had been involved in the London Borough of Culture Project, explaining that he had spent 6 months helping to plan Rise and then implement the idea with funding. There was a whole year project he was involved in with lots of different activities and the Borough of Culture were looking at employment for the young people involved.

L (Care in Action) felt that Care In Action enabled her to express her feelings and show who she was.

The Committee thanked the representatives for the updates and RESOLVED:

That the updates by the representatives of Care in Action/Care Leavers in Action be noted.

8. Findings of Ofsted focused visit to review arrangements for care leavers

The report provided information to the Council's Corporate Parenting Committee about the Ofsted focused visit to review arrangements for care leavers that took place on 13 and 14 November 2019. The inspection was not graded, but a letter was received with the outcome, which was attached to the report. It had come to the Committee for comment and review.

Members heard that inspectors had spoken to the Chief Executive of Brent Council, the Lead Member, the Strategic Director for Children and Young People, partners such as the CCG, and over 20 young people through the Care Leavers' Hub. They had been complimentary overall towards the Council as Corporate Parents, and thought care leavers received a very strong support package from the Council and partners. The Council Tax Exemption for care leavers had been highlighted as a good initiative, and the inspectors felt the local offer was supported by the whole council, including senior leaders, partners, and care leavers. A review of the local offer would shortly be conducted, beginning with consultation with young people and care leavers aged 16+ years. This review would be presented to the Committee in April 2020.

Onder Beter (Head of LAC and Permanency, Brent Council) raised awareness of the need for further support for care leavers in apprenticeships and work experience. Practice points such as recording and showing how intervention had led to better outcomes for children and young people were identified as areas needing improvement, and an action plan overseen by the Strategic Director Children and Young People had been created with issues addressed monthly. All targets addressed would be completed by June and a report presented to the Committee.

In response to member's questions, Onder Beter highlighted transitions work being done to ensure Looked After Children were prepared for leaving care, with a new initiative put in place

with 'ASDAN' to ensure every care leaver was undergoing an accredited programme of life skills before they turned 18 years old. The aim was for all Social Workers and Personal Advisers to take the training. The programme was initially targeted at those ready to take up tenancies. N fed back that she had attended life skills group workshops at the hub and would recommend it, which this new programme arose from.

In response to members' questions about case recording needing improvement, Onder Beter explained that while personal advisors were able to demonstrate the good relationships they had built face to face with young people to inspectors, this was not reflected in the case files. It was acknowledged that there were some newly recruited personal advisors who were still learning, but audit work was now done on a regular basis. Onder Beter added that budgets meant the service was unable to have the same staff and children allocation ratio for care leavers as social workers, but the case load for personal advisors did not stand out as high pan London. The committee raised the importance of clear recordings of the management rationale for closing cases. Onder Beter acknowledged that new measures in place should ensure this.

Discussion moved on to availability of apprenticeships for care leavers. It was confirmed that the FA did not offer care leavers apprenticeships. Many apprenticeships required qualifications that many care leavers would not possess, and officers raised the need for recognition of this amongst those who offer apprenticeships. The Council worked hard to prepare care leavers and help them achieve qualifications needed, and they were also looking to sharpen their approach targeting businesses. National Apprenticeship Week was due which could be used to develop partnership arrangements. Another way they were looking to increase the number of care leavers in apprenticeships was to promote them more. It was added that businesses were cautious to offer apprenticeships therefore raising awareness of barriers was necessary.

One care leaver expressed that when she was doing her apprenticeship she was not told until it was already underway that she would not be able to pass without her English qualifications. It was agreed that there should be discussions with employers about exceptions for care leavers with a guarantee that the Council would support the young person to achieve the qualifications necessary.

RESOLVED:

- i) To support the work senior leaders have been undertaking with partners to increase the number of care leavers in apprenticeships through local business contacts.
- ii) To note the content of the findings of Ofsted's Focused Visit as well as the actions taken by the Looked After Children and Permanency Service following the Focused Visit.

9. Health annual report of looked after children 2018-19

This report provided the Looked After Children Annual Report covering the period from 1st April 2018 to 31st March 2019. The report formed part of Brent CCGs assurance arrangements in relation to Looked After Children and wider Safeguarding Children arrangements. It outlined information about service performance and objectives and priorities for the following year.

Brigid Offley-Shore (Designated Nurse for Looked After Children, Brent CCG) highlighted the summary of key messages. Some achievements during the reporting period were: a stable workforce during the reporting period; good dialogue between Brent CCG and the CYP department; and 96.4% of looked after children had received their statutory health assessments. Work picked up from the 2017 SEND inspection included health action plan tracking which was now embedded into the emotional support work for looked after children.

Brigid pointed to data from paragraph 5.1 of the report regarding Brent Looked After Children placement types and locations, noting that 62% of looked after children were male and 37% were female. There had been 2 audits in 2018/19 including a Looked After Children health provider records audit where areas of good practice and areas for improvement were identified.

In the ensuing discussions, care leavers highlighted the importance of having a 1:1 during their health check without carers present. Esther Power (Lead Nurse for Looked After Children, Brent CCG) confirmed that health assessors should be explaining to the young person and carer what would happen, receive consent to conduct the assessment and then see the young person separately from their carer for assessment. Anything that was spoken about at the assessment was recorded in a report and made available to care leavers. It was added that during the recent focused visit the latter was highlighted as an area for improvement, so Brent CCG were ensuring care leavers were getting copies of their health summaries. Care leavers also highlighted that health reports had been sent to their foster carer and not themselves and highlighted difficulties in accessing information when they had contacted health centres. Duncan Ambrose (Assistant Director, Brent CCG) expressed that they heard the importance of the issue and would pick it up.

As part of discussions regarding health checks, care leavers suggested that there should be a booklet for young people to read through prior to the health check to prepare them for what to expect. It was agreed that this was something Care Leavers In Action and Brent CCG would work on together to develop. Brigid Offley-Shore also highlighted the booklet being devised to highlight to care leavers where they could access healthcare, which would be shared with Care Leavers In Action for suggestions.

Committee members highlighted that the issues highlighted in the discussion were listed in audit recommendations within the report, and queried the action plan for those recommendations as the issues had been raised previously. Duncan Ambrose explained that actions were assessed through the CCG Quality Assurance Committee with multiagency oversight. The report had been to that committee and accepted and responsibility now sat with them. Challenge was brought through Brent Children's Trust and its subgroups.

As no further issues were raised the Committee RESOLVED:

- i) To note the report and recommendations.
- ii) To receive an update in 6 months time regarding the actions agreed relating to the creation of guidance for health checks.

10. Emotional and Mental Health of Looked After Children

This report provided information to the Council's Corporate Parenting Committee (CPC) about services available for the emotional and mental health needs of Looked After Children.

Duncan Ambrose (Assistant Director, Brent CCG) expressed that there was more awareness of the emotional needs of young people, but that there was still stigma for mental health illness. There was ongoing work to increase services in the area of emotional and mental health support but it was dependent on there being enough professionals to deliver the services. Brent CCG were looking at how they could offer support without clinical professionals before and after treatment. The Committee were presented with a PowerPoint explaining the different services available for young people to access support. Services highlighted included:

- BEWS (Brent Emotional Wellbeing Service), a psychologically led service with a team of 4 psychologists. The service provided consultations to social workers and foster

parents of Looked After Children and group support to foster parents. Duncan Ambrose drew the Committees' attention to the case study in slide 4 of the presentation as an example of the work done by BEWS and the links it made with other services. BEWS could refer children to specialist CAMHS.

- CAMHS Learning Disability Team, which supported children who found it difficult to put experiences into words to communicate. The service offered Positive Behaviour support plan intervention and medication amongst other offers.
- Targeted / Specialist CAMHS Services, to which a young person could be referred by a Social Worker, GP or school, or through online self-referral. The service prioritised Looked After Children referrals and the timeline for Looked After Children to begin an intervention was shorter than non-Looked After Children. Currently the service only offered support up to 18 years old, but the age range was due to change to 25 over the next 4-5 years. The purpose of the service was to conduct an intervention, where the specialist and young person would work out a goal to manage symptoms and return to coping. Every week the CCG received a report on how many young inpatients the service had taken.
- Brent Centre for Young People, a service which specialised in psychotherapy and had an expanding range of services. The service worked with young people up to the age of 25, therefore a young person reaching 18 could be referred to the service by Specialist CAMHS to allow consistent care up to 25 years old.
- Kooth.com, an online self-referral service. The service allowed young people to access support online but could facilitate getting additional help and link to the specialist CAMHS service. A young person was able to request a call from a counsellor for up to an hour during the week or use the text service. The young person would be interacting with trained counsellors. It was highlighted that there had been a good take up of the service, which peaked at around 8pm. The service was available Monday to Friday from 12pm to 10pm, and Saturday to Sunday and Bank Holidays from 5pm – 10pm. The service signposted to all other services. It was confirmed that chat data would not be retained in the chat but that the counsellor would keep case notes that only them and the young person could have access to.

Duncan Ambrose highlighted that services used a trauma informed approach, which was working well.

Brent now had a 24/7 crisis service with 100% response rate for crisis calls, whose number was signposted to through Kooth and NHS 111. In 2020 there was also a home treatment service available for those who needed to see someone the same day but were safe at home.

Members queried how familiar Primary Care Networks were with these services for young people. Duncan Ambrose advised that information was cascaded and there was a training programme for GPs, which was the main route for giving information. He advised that a group of young people were looking at what was available online to make recommendations on whether it was helpful or not.

Regarding the prioritisation of Looked After Children for Specialist CAMHS, members queried how that process worked. Duncan Ambrose explained that if someone was referred to the service without information to say they were looked after it was hard to prioritise on that basis. The CCG now had a list of all Looked After Children that they could use for linking up, but tended not to hold patient level data. The CCG knew the incidence of Mental Health Illness was 4 times higher in Looked After Children, so the basis on which cases were prioritised were the immediate urgency for the case and the system around the young person. Clinical judgement was used to prioritise cases and there was not a separate team dedicated to Looked After Children. Cases were categorised into urgent, emergency and routine. All crisis cases were being met on time, and 77% of routine cases were being met on time.

Care Leavers in Action advised that they were not aware of the Brent Centre for Young People, and Councillor Conneely advised that the level of knowledge depended on how closely an organisation worked with the Council and CCG. A colleague was hired a year ago to work on the engagement and visibility of the service in the community. Duncan Ambrose added that there was a dedicated engagement service known as Brent Young People Thrive that helped CCG shape strategy and plans.

RESOLVED:

That the presentation for Emotional and Mental Health of Looked After Children be noted.

11. Fostering Service Quarterly Report , Q3 (October 2019 – December 2019)

The purpose of this report was to provide information to the Council's Corporate Parenting Committee about the general management of the in-house fostering service and how it was achieving good outcomes for children for the period from October 2019 to December 2019.

The Committee heard from Brent foster carers demonstrating their experience of fostering in Brent, including the highlights and challenges they had faced during their fostering career. The Committee heard from a range of experiences, including a foster carer who had 36 years of fostering experience with Brent and had fostered over 100 children. The foster carers spoke about the enjoyment and reward they got from fostering, and highlighted the 'behind the scenes' work involved with foster caring. The foster carers had worked with a variety of challenging children and expressed gratitude for the support from Supervising Social Workers and Brent Fostering Service to cope with those challenges. Care Leavers in Action invited the Foster Carers to attend their group.

Gail Tolley (Strategic Director Children and Young People) advised that a successful Foster Carer Annual Awards Ceremony had taken place and encouraged Committee members to attend future awards.

Nigel Chapman (Operation Director Integration and Improved Outcomes, Brent Council) advised that there was current project work with Ealing to share foster services which might lead to a future proposal.

In terms of recruitment, Nigel Chapman highlighted that recruitment drives with current foster carer feedback had been included in the Brent magazine and drew the Committees' attention to the video recently published on the website featuring Brent foster carers.

The Committee heard that Foster Carers referred positively to the Learning and Development offer, and the offer would be refreshed in April. A lot of focus would be on social pedagogy.

12. Any Other Business

None.

The meeting closed at 7 pm

COUNCILLOR MILI PATEL
Chair