



Corporate Parenting Committee

7 February 2018

Report from the Strategic Director of Children and Young People

The Brent Pledge for Looked After Children

Wards Affected:	All
Key or Non-Key Decision:	
Open or Part/Fully Exempt: (If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)	Open
No. of Appendices:	1
Background Papers:	
Contact Officer(s): (Name, Title, Contact Details)	<p>Sonya Kalyniak Head of Safeguarding and Quality Assurance, Children and Young People's Services sonya.kalyniak@brent.gov.uk 020 8937 4526</p> <p>Brian Grady Operational Director, Safeguarding, Partnerships and Strategy, Children and Young People's Services brian.grady@brent.gov.uk 020 8937 4173</p>

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1. This report provides information to the Brent Corporate Parenting Committee on the revised Pledge for Looked After Children. All councillors are corporate parents to our looked after children. Ensuring that our looked after children are able to influence and shape the services provided for them is both a statutory duty and a key priority. This Pledge was therefore informed and developed with Care in Action (CIA), Brent's Children in Care Council.

2.0 Recommendation

- 2.1. The Corporate Parenting Committee endorse and adopt the revised Brent Pledge for Looked After Children (Appendix 1).

3.0 The importance of the Brent Pledge for Looked After Children

- 3.1. As the corporate parent of children in care, the whole of Brent Council is responsible for their well-being. As a good corporate parent this means being an advocate and helping looked after children become successful, well-rounded adults.
- 3.2. Statutory guidance on the roles and responsibilities of Directors of Children's Services (DCS) and the Lead Members for Children's Services (LMCS) states that the DCS 'should have regard to the General Principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and ensure that children and young people are involved in the development and delivery of local services' (Department for Education, April 2012, Statutory guidance on the roles and responsibilities of the Director of Children's Services and Lead Members for Children's Services).
- 3.3. The Children and Social Work Act (2017) sets out seven corporate parenting principles to which local authorities must have regard when carrying out their functions in relation to looked after children and young people:
 - To act in their best interests and promote their physical and mental health and well-being.
 - To encourage them to express their views, wishes and feelings.
 - To take into account their views, wishes and feelings.
 - To help them gain access to and make the best use of services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners.
 - To promote high aspirations and seek to secure the best outcomes for them.
 - To ensure they are safe and have stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work.
 - To prepare them for adulthood and independent living.

- 3.4. In addition to meeting our statutory duties, agreeing the Pledge demonstrates the commitment of the Council to meet the identified needs of Brent looked after children and respect the views of the children and young people who took part in the development of the Pledge.
- 3.5. Following consultations with care experienced young people across London, London Councils launched the London Pledge for Looked After Children in November 2008. Since this time, each local authority has developed their own individualised pledge which incorporates the views, priorities and wishes of their own looked after children.
- 3.6. The Brent Pledge for Children in Care was initially developed in 2010 and was reviewed and relaunched in 2014. The Pledge was again reviewed in the Autumn term of 2017, taking on board the views of looked after children and young people.
- 3.7. The Pledge sets out a number of promises that children and young people have identified which, if delivered, makes Brent Council a good parent and carer. It is anticipated that Members, chief officers and partners will sign up to the Pledge to signify their shared commitment to it.

4.0 Views of children and young people

- 4.1. Consultation was undertaken through Care in Action and Care Leavers in Action (CLIA) to review the Pledge. Over 20 looked after children and 13 care leavers shared their views.
- 4.2. When consulted, children and young people said they liked that the Pledge celebrates their achievements and includes respecting and honouring their identity and believing in them. They said they wanted an emphasis on 'involvement with decision making' and 'preparation for independence' as these are important areas for them. They also gave ideas on new content that they said was important. For example, CIA said they wanted the Pledge to include a commitment to respecting children and young people's right to privacy and acknowledged that alongside this, professionals needed to do everything possible to help keep them safe. Based on the views of looked after children, the Pledge now has 8 headings instead of ten with revised content.
- 4.3. Children and young people also requested a credit card size version of the Pledge so that it is easier to carry with them. A design based on this suggestion is being developed.
- 4.4. Consultation sessions with CIA and CLIA also contributed to the development of the Local Offer for Care Leavers and the Care Leavers' Charter.

- 4.5. Learning from the Bright Spots Survey of Brent children and young people, undertaken in April 2017 was also incorporated in the reviewed Pledge. This includes views on the need to improve promoting contact with family, access to computers, support with hobbies and opportunities to explore the outdoors.

5.0 Lead Member for Children and Young People and professionals involvement

- 5.1. Councillor Mili Patel, Lead Member for Children and Young People, joined a session with Care in Action on the 9 January 2018. This allowed Councillor Patel to hear and explore children and young people's views on what they felt were important commitments in the Pledge.
- 5.2. Social work teams, housing and local partnership representatives from health and schools have also given feedback on the Pledge.

6.0 Relaunching the Pledge

- 6.1. The reviewed Pledge will be relaunched at the Celebration of Achievement Event in spring 2018. Plans are underway with the Brent Virtual School for CIA to let other children and young people know about the Pledge at this event. A pocket-sized version of the Pledge will be available for looked after children to take home with them. It will also be posted to all looked after children and given to children when they enter care.
- 6.2. The Participation Officer will support CIA members to present the Brent Pledge at Foster Carers Support Groups, staff forums and team meetings to raise awareness. The Pledge will also be included in the staff induction programme.

7.0 Evaluating progress against the Pledge

- 7.1. The following methods for evaluation of Brent's progress against the pledge are being considered by CIA:
- CIA members to design surveys to provide children and young people in care and care leavers with the opportunity to share their views and inform Care in Action on whether they are receiving the services and support set out in the Pledge.
 - A youth inspection to enable children and young people to test how Brent Council is performing against the Pledge.

8.0 Legal Implications

- 8.1. The Children Act 1989, The Children and Social Work Act 2017 and Article 12 of the UNCRC outlines the importance of children and young people being given the right to be involved in decisions that affect them. Both the Charter and Brent

Pledge inform children and young people of their rights and highlight Brent Council's commitment to actively involving children and young people in decision making and the shaping of services.

Contact Officers:

Shirley Ricketts, Children in Care Participation Officer

Goitom Mebrahtu, Review Engagement and Participation Team Manager

Sonya Kalyniak, Head of Safeguarding & Quality Assurance

APPENDIX 1

The Brent Pledge 2018

The Brent Pledge is a list of promises to children and young people in our care. These are things that we will do so that they have the best support and help possible.

We Promise

To respect and honour your identity

- We will respect your personal beliefs, values, culture and heritage.
- We will support who you are and what you want to be.
- We will provide you with information about your background that is appropriate for your age.
- We will support and encourage relationships between you and members of your family.

To involve you in decisions about your life

- We will actively listen to your views and opinions and act on your behalf.
- We will explain our decisions and make sure that you fully understand what has been decided.
- We will involve you in planning of services that you receive.

To provide stability for you

- You will have your social worker's telephone number and know where they work so you can speak to them when you need to.
- If your social worker leaves you will be told when and know details of your new social worker and their manager.
- We will do our best to make sure you don't have too many change of social workers and move too many times.
- Your Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) will listen to you and make sure your views are heard.

To support you

- We will support you to become the person you want to be and help you choose what you want in your life.
- We will remember your birthday and other important days.
- We will tell you and other people when you have done something really well.
- We will find ways for you to feel safe and comfortable telling us how you feel.
- Your social worker will visit you at a time you are available and you can talk to them on your own every time.
- We will respect your right to privacy whilst doing everything possible to help you keep safe.
- We will help you to manage challenging relationships.

- You will have access to an independent person (an advocate) if you need this.
- We will make sure you get to meet other children in care so that you can help each other and talk about the things you like and don't like.

To provide you with a safe, stable and happy place to live

- We will ensure that your carer knows enough about you to be able to support you.
- We will support your carer to understand you and the things that you are going through.
- We will provide you with a safe place that you can call home.
- We will do everything possible so that you can meet your new carer before you move.

To support you to be active and stay healthy

- We will provide you with opportunities to take part in fun activities such as sports, access to the outdoors and other activities you are interested in.
- We will support your physical and mental health and encourage you to make healthy and positive choices for your life.
- We will make sure that your carer takes you to see your doctor, dentist and other healthcare professional when you need to visit them.
- We will provide you with information and advice about healthy eating, exercise, smoking, drugs and sexual health.

Work with you to achieve your goals and targets in education

- We will value your strengths, gifts, talents and encourage you to have high ambitions.
- We will support you to learn, help you to achieve your very best at school and support you when you are making decisions about your future.
- We will ensure that you have the things you need for your education including access to a computer.
- If needed, we will find an advisor, life coach or mentor to support you.

Prepare you to be independent

- We will work to ensure that you are ready for independent living including how to manage money and how to cook.
- We will work with you on your Pathway Plan at the age of 16 so that you are clear about what will happen next and what support you will receive.
- We will provide you with information about what you are entitled to and how to access your entitlements.
- We will consider your wishes to stay living with your foster carer after the age of 18.