



Corporate Parenting Committee

Monday 3 February 2025 at 5.00 pm

Boardrooms 1&2 - Brent Civic Centre, Engineers Way,
Wembley HA9 0FJ

This meeting will be held as an in person physical meeting with all members of the Committee required to attend in person.

The press and public will be excluded from this meeting

Membership:

Members

Councillors:

Grahl (Chair)
Dixon
Gbajumo
Smith
Hirani

Substitute Members

Councillors:

Chappell, Conneely, Kennelly
and Rubin

Councillor: Kansagra and Mistry

For further information contact: Hannah O'Brien, Senior Governance Officer
020 8937 1339, hannah.o'brien@brent.gov.uk

For electronic copies of minutes, reports and agendas, and to be alerted when the minutes of this meeting have been published visit: **www.brent.gov.uk/democracy**

Notes for Members - Declarations of Interest:

If a Member is aware they have a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest* in an item of business, they must declare its existence and nature at the start of the meeting or when it becomes apparent and must leave the room without participating in discussion of the item.

If a Member is aware they have a Personal Interest** in an item of business, they must declare its existence and nature at the start of the meeting or when it becomes apparent.

If the Personal Interest is also a Prejudicial Interest (i.e. it affects a financial position or relates to determining of any approval, consent, licence, permission, or registration) then (unless an exception at 14(2) of the Members Code applies), after disclosing the interest to the meeting the Member must leave the room without participating in discussion of the item, except that they may first make representations, answer questions or give evidence relating to the matter, provided that the public are allowed to attend the meeting for those purposes.

*Disclosable Pecuniary Interests:

- (a) **Employment, etc.** - Any employment, office, trade, profession or vocation carried on for profit gain.
- (b) **Sponsorship** - Any payment or other financial benefit in respect expenses in carrying out duties as a member, or of election; including from a trade union.
- (c) **Contracts** - Any current contract for goods, services or works, between the Councillors or their partner (or a body in which one has a beneficial interest) and the council.
- (d) **Land** - Any beneficial interest in land which is within the council's area.
- (e) **Licences**- Any licence to occupy land in the council's area for a month or longer.
- (f) **Corporate tenancies** - Any tenancy between the council and a body in which the Councillor or their partner have a beneficial interest.
- (g) **Securities** - Any beneficial interest in securities of a body which has a place of business or land in the council's area, if the total nominal value of the securities exceeds £25,000 or one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that body or of any one class of its issued share capital.

**Personal Interests:

The business relates to or affects:

(a) Anybody of which you are a member or in a position of general control or management, and:

- To which you are appointed by the council;
- which exercises functions of a public nature;
- which is directed is to charitable purposes;
- whose principal purposes include the influence of public opinion or policy (including a political party of trade union).

(b) The interests a of a person from whom you have received gifts or hospitality of at least £50 as a member in the municipal year;

or

A decision in relation to that business might reasonably be regarded as affecting, to a greater extent than the majority of other council tax payers, ratepayers or inhabitants of the electoral ward affected by the decision, the well-being or financial position of:

- You yourself;
- a member of your family or your friend or any person with whom you have a close association or any person or body who employs or has appointed any of these or in whom they have a beneficial interest in a class of securities exceeding the nominal value of £25,000, or any firm in which they are a partner, or any company of which they are a director
- any body of a type described in (a) above.

Agenda

Introductions, if appropriate.

Item	Page
1 Exclusion of the Press and Public	
<p>The committee is advised that the public may be excluded from meetings whenever it is likely in view of the nature of the proceedings that exempt information would be disclosed. Meetings of the Corporate Parenting Committee are attended by representatives of Care In Action (CIA), the council's Children in Care Council. The committee is therefore recommended to exclude the press and public for the duration of the meeting, as the attendance of CIA representatives necessitates the disclosure of the following category of exempt information, set out in the Local Government Act 1972: - information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual.</p>	
2 Apologies for absence and clarification of alternate members	
3 Declarations of interests	
<p>Members are invited to declare at this stage of the meeting, any relevant disclosable pecuniary or personal interests in the items on this agenda.</p>	
4 Deputations (if any)	
<p>To hear any deputations received from members of the public in accordance with Standing Order 67.</p>	
5 Minutes of the previous meeting	1 - 10
<p>To approve the minutes of the previous meeting as a correct record.</p>	
6 Matters arising (if any)	
<p>To consider any matters arising from the minutes of the previous meeting.</p>	
7 Update from Brent Care Journeys 2.0 (BCJ 2.0) Representatives	Presentation
<p>This is an opportunity for members of BCJ 2.0 to feed back on recent activity.</p>	
8 Progress Report - Brent Residential Children's Home	11 - 16
<p>To provide information to the Corporate Parenting Committee on the</p>	

progress towards opening Brent's first residential children's home.

9 Kinship Care Strategy

17 - 29

To share a summary of the national developments of the provision of support and services to kinship carers and children in kinship arrangements, and provide an update on progress with publishing the Brent Kinship Local Offer, and future areas for development.

10 Any other urgent business

Notice of items to be raised under this heading must be given in writing to the Deputy Director – Democratic Services or their representative before the meeting in accordance with Standing Order 60.

Date of the next meeting: Tuesday 22 April 2025



MINUTES OF THE CORPORATE PARENTING COMMITTEE Monday 14 October 2024 at 5.30 pm

PRESENT: Councillors Grahl (Chair), Dixon, Gbajumo and Hirani

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**

None.

3. **Declarations of interests**

None.

4. **Deputations (if any)**

None received.

5. **Minutes of the previous meeting**

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the last meeting, held on 15 July 2024, be approved as an accurate record of the meeting.

6. **Matters arising (if any)**

None.

7. **Update from Care In Action / Care Leavers in Action Representatives**

The Chair welcomed representatives from Care in Action (CIA) and Care Leavers in Action (CLIA) to the meeting and invited them to provide updates from the groups.

J informed the Committee that CLIA had taken part in a residential at the end of July 2024 which had involved activities such as kayaking, abseiling and campfires. CLIA were doing participation work to encourage more care leavers to get involved with the group, and felt that planning more residentials and activities would encourage that and bring new people together. J and another care leaver had been successfully appointed as Care Quality Ambassadors.

H told the Committee that the Leaving Care Manager organised weekly football which he took part in and enabled him to meet new people and make friends. H had been pleased to attend a box at Wembley Stadium the previous week to watch England vs Greece. Nigel

Chapman (Corporate Director Children and Young People, Brent Council) added that Wembley had offered those tickets through the Council's connections for that particular event, but officers hoped to keep pushing for tickets for children in care and care leavers as part of Wembley Stadium's commitment to social value in the local area.

N highlighted the summer fun day for care leavers, foster carers and social workers that took place in August. Some activities included football, basketball, t-shirt designing and prizes. N and another care leaver had been part of a recent interview panel for the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) position, and had found it informative to listen to the candidates.

The Chair thanked those present for their updates, and invited comments and questions from the Committee, with the following points raised:

The Committee asked whether those involved in interviewing found the process to be robust. J explained that he had taken part in interviews where young people had a separate panel and more recently where young people had joined the professional interview. He felt it worked better when young people joined the professional interview because this allowed the candidates to be assessed with the same questions instead of having two different panels looking for different things and resulting in clashes of opinion and different outcomes.

Kelli Eboji (Head of Service – LAC and Permanency, Brent Council) invited councillors interested in playing a game of football with care leavers to a care leavers vs staff football match taking place during care leavers week.

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. Report from Brent Care Leavers on Care as a Protected Characteristic

N (CLIA) introduced the report, which provided an initial overview of the conversations and thoughts that young people had regarding care as a protected characteristic and the further work that was expected to be carried out going forward. In introducing the report, she advised the Committee that, over the past few months, young people and participation workers had been discussing the prospect of care experience as a protected characteristic in several different sessions hearing from a range of young people about their views, and in September four young people had come together to bring those conversations into a report. The Working Group had also researched what other boroughs were doing in this space, for example, Camden Council provided free WiFi for care leavers.

Kelli Eboji (Head of LAC and Permanency, Brent Council) added that children and young people and staff alike had been on a journey of understanding what care as a protected characteristic would mean for children, young people and the Council and how it would benefit children and young people in the borough. With the research and reviews that young people had undertaken, there was now support for recognising care as a protected characteristic and adopting it as a Council principle to address issues of equality and protection. She highlighted that, even though this would not be enshrined in law at this point, as a Council principle it would mean all Council decisions, reports and activity would need to consider the impact on care experienced individuals.

The Chair thanked CLIA and officers for the introduction and invited contributions from the Committee, with the following points raised:

The Committee felt the report reflected the meaningful process CLIA and officers had undertaken to agree a principle and were pleased to see significant engagement from children and young people in this work. It was felt that by adopting this principle, the Council could more strongly tackle forms of discrimination that care experienced young people faced. For example, the Committee recalled the stigmatised attitudes the Council had faced from some members of community towards the decision to open a children's residential care home in the borough, which the Council could have been tougher against if care experience was protected and enshrined in Council policy. Care as a protected characteristic was also seen by the Committee as an opportunity to educate other staff outside of children's services about the barriers faced by care experienced children and young people and make them aware of the Council's obligations to them.

Nicole Levy highlighted that, in feeding back to officers about care as a protected characteristic, young people had made a strong request for the local authority to lobby central government to enshrine care experience as a 10th characteristic by law, which other local authorities had also done.

RESOLVED:

- i) To endorse the adoption of care experience as a protected characteristic by the Council.
- ii) To support and explore care experience having a similar status to other protected characteristics, including aligning this with Council activity to review Equality Impact Assessments (EIA) and the adoption of a socio-economic duty outlined in Section 1 of the Equality Act (2010).
- iii) To agree that young people have a key role in monitoring the practical implementation of care experience as a protected characteristic.

9. **Bright Spots Survey Presentation**

The Committee received a presentation from Alice Weavers (Participation and Engagement Manager, Brent Council) and members of CLIA which provided an analysis of the Bright Spots Survey 'Your Life, Your Care', which garnered the views of looked after children and young people aged 4-17 years old. In presenting the findings, the following key points were highlighted:

- There had been three different versions of the survey to cater to each age range, 4-7 years old, 8-11 years old and 11-17 years old, which had garnered a total of 82 responses.
- The survey had either been filled out by the young person themselves or alongside a trusted adult who was separate from the child's social worker or foster carer, or someone directly involved in their care.
- The survey asked about the child's experience of being in care, what they thought could be better and how they felt about themselves.
- Some of the areas of success were highlighted in terms of placement:
 - 11-17 year olds in Brent were statistically more likely to have stayed in the same place since going into care compared to those in other local authorities.
 - 93% of 4-17 year olds reported 'always' feeling safe where they lived, which was higher than the general population.
 - All 4-7 year olds felt settled at home and liked their bedrooms, and all 4-11 year olds trusted the adults they lived with.
- Areas of success were also noted regarding social workers:

- 11-17 year olds in Brent were statistically more likely to have kept the same social worker in the previous 12 months compared to those in other local authorities.
- All children aged 8-11 years old knew who their social worker was.
- There were high levels of trust in social workers, with 100% of children aged 4-11 years old reporting they trusted their social worker.
- 11-17 year olds were statistically more likely to have had a full explanation for why they were in care (96%) compared to those in other local authorities (78%).
- There had also been successful outcomes in feelings towards education and wellbeing:
 - 83% of 11-17 year olds liked school or college 'a lot' or 'a bit', which was higher than the general population.
 - 91% of 8-17 year olds felt the adults they lived with showed an interest in their education.
 - More 11-17 year olds had spent time outdoors at least once in the previous week than the general population.
 - 87% of 11-17 year olds reported being happy with how they looked.
- Alongside successes, there were some areas which needed focus to improve:
 - More young people in Brent reported not having a good friend compared to the general population.
 - Some young people were struggling with low levels of positivity about their future and life satisfaction.
 - 25% of 8-11 year olds did not know they could ask to speak to their social worker on their own.
 - Some young people wanted to spend more time with their family, including parents and siblings.
- Next steps were for the Brent Care Journeys 2.0 Younger Group to review the findings in a workshop to come up with potential solutions and projects. Service areas would then develop an action plan in consultation with young people, using the principles of co-design and feedback so that young people were leading on projects. Brent Care Journeys 2.0 would also review the care leavers survey when the results had been received.

The Chair thanked officers for the updates and then invited comments and questions from Committee members with the following raised:

The Committee raised concern that 25% of respondents did not know they could speak with their social worker alone, and asked whether young people were given a set of expectations when they met their social worker. Kelli Eboji (Head of LAC and Permanency, Brent Council) advised the Committee that there was no standard introduction when a child met their social worker with no set script. Going forward, she thought this would be something that could be introduced, using a checklist introduction. It was highlighted that those messages should be reinforced at set intervals, as when a child first came into care they were given a lot of information at a potentially traumatic time and may not retain information given to them immediately.

In considering that some children in care did not know they could speak with their social worker alone, the Committee asked how a child who was struggling and not feeling settled in their placement could raise their concerns if they did not feel they could speak with their foster carer. Officers highlighted that concerns could be raised with trusted adults at school or their Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO). There was also an Independent Advocacy Service commissioned by the Council that children in care could use. Nigel Chapman (Corporate Director Children and Young People, Brent Council) highlighted the importance

of children having a consistent social worker who built a good relationship with the young person and was speaking to the young person on their own at every visit so that they could hear how the young person was feeling.

The Committee were pleased that 100% of 4-11 year olds trusted the adults they were placed with.

In terms of the response rate of 32%, the Committee asked whether this was comparative to other boroughs and what the Council did to encourage engagement with the survey. Kelli Eboji highlighted that it was a collective effort across children's services to receive responses, with members of participation staff and personal advisors also trying to get responses. The challenge in gathering responses was because the trusted adults who assisted children to complete their responses could not be their primary carers or social worker but key people in their life such as IROs, trusted adults in schools and contact workers. Officers first port of call in getting responses to the survey was to engage the Brent Virtual School (BVS) who would then contact all the trusted adults within a school. However, it was highlighted that the survey was long and could raise emotive themes for children in care, with feedback suggesting that children and young people did not want to disclose some information to a professional they did not know well, and some young people did not want to speak about their life experiences in a school environment, preferring for that to be kept separate. As such, the service then looked to engage other professionals such as pastoral support from the Brent Virtual School and personal advisors. This was more successful in reaching children and young people within the borough but was more challenging for those out of borough.

RESOLVED:

- i) To note the content of the report and acknowledge the improvement in social worker stability.

10. **Updated Care Leaver Offer and Care Leaver Charter**

Kelli Eboji (Head of LAC and Permanency, Brent Council) introduced the report which presented the revised local offer for care leavers. In presenting the report, she advised members that the local authority was required to consult on and produce a local offer for care leavers under Section 2 of the Children and Social Work Act 2017. The offer provided care leavers with information about services and support available to them including both statutory entitlements and discretionary support. The local offer was first implemented in 2018 and refreshed in 2022, and it was now being presented with a refreshed offer again alongside an updated care leaver charter. The revised offer also made links with the previous item on the agenda considering care as a protected characteristic.

In detailing the revised care leaver offer, Kelli Eboji highlighted that, as of the end of March 2024, Brent Council was responsible for 564 care leavers, 164 of which were between 22-25 years old. Some of the additions to the offer were outlined in section 4.4 of the report and included; eligibility to apply for the Digital Resident Support Fund for a device and 12-month free fibre connectivity in their home; all eligible care leavers claiming universal credit would be able to apply for free internet access from internet provider TalkTalk; and expansion of the Grandmentors scheme to recruit mentors from within the Council and offer mentorship to care leavers; a rent deposit scheme to care leavers for whom private rented accommodation was deemed a suitable housing option; half price bus and tram travel, or free bus and travel for care leavers in education, employment and training with the Council paying the remaining half; an increase in the statutory care leaver allowance for care leavers to purchase essentials when they move into their first home, at £3,000, or £3,250 for single parents; an increase in festival and birthday allowances, in line with similar London local authorities.

The Chair thanked Kelli Eboji for her introduction and invited contributions from the Committee, with the following points raised:

CLIA fed back that free internet and discounts on bus and tram travel would be particularly useful for them. They queried why the birthday and festival allowance only applied to those under 21 years old when the Council had a duty to care leavers up to the age of 25. Afzal Ahmed (Service Manager for Leaving Care, Brent Council) explained that the Council's financial duties were up to the age of 21 and anything additional provided to 21-25 year olds was discretionary. The majority of local authorities stopped birthday and festival allowances at age 21, although there were other financial incentives available for care leavers between 21-25 years old. Nigel Chapman (Corporate Director Children and Young People, Brent Council) advised that increasing the age that care leavers were eligible for a festival and birthday allowance was aspirational, but the Council needed to balance that against budgetary pressures, with children's services stretched in what it could do to expand that offer. He highlighted this could be looked at again in future if budgetary pressures were alleviated.

Nicole Levy (Service Manager- Quality Assurance and Learning and Development, Brent Council) advised members that, in the discussions officers had with care leavers regarding the local offer, they had considered what the Corporate Parenting Committee could do politically to promote, enhance or advocate for additional offers for care leavers. The Chair highlighted that a motion would be presented to Full Council regarding care as a protected characteristic which would provide a strong and practical way forward to ensure care experienced young people were considered in all Council services and decisions. CLIA asked to be involved in the preparation of any motion to Full Council.

The Committee asked how often the local offer was reviewed and revised, noting the incoming Autumn Budget due from Central Government at the end of October might bring additional options for the local offer. They were advised that the local offer was usually revised on a three-yearly cycle, but if the government announced significant changes in funding for local authorities then officers and young people would need to revise the offer or annexe it with changes.

Going forward, CLIA asked for a feedback loop from Committee members where they had taken away actions to progress the local offer.

As no further comments were raised, the Committee RESOLVED to endorse the updated Care Leavers Offer and the work undertaken to date to ensure that the local authority and partners were effective corporate parents.

11. **Brent Adoption 6 Monthly Report - 1 April 2024 to 30 September 2024**

Mandy Wilkins (Adopt London West) introduced the report which provided information relating to adoption performance data for the reporting period, the progress and activity of Adopt London West (ALW) and the outcomes being achieved for children. In introducing the report, she highlighted the good practice she had seen in Brent around life story work with good partnership working. She had recently run life story training sessions with good attendance from Brent staff, and she offered consultation for social workers which was being well utilised in Brent.

In highlighting the main points in the report, Mandy Wilkins drew the Committee's attention to adopter recruitment, which was not on target due to issues with capacity in the team. Interviews for an additional post agreed by the Partnership Board would take place during the week and it was hoped there would be success in appointing a candidate. She

highlighted the difference it made when ALW adopters were placed with Brent children as the adopters were trained by ALW and ALW knew the children well.

It was highlighted that ALW had introduced an early support service two years previously which was available to special guardians, of which 26 special guardians were making use of. This was where special guardians did not need an allocated worker so ALW would provide an early support offer and check in with them every 2 months. This had helped to reinforce the message for special guardians to call the service if they needed any support and there had now been good engagement there.

Aligned with the modernised adoption agenda, Mandy Wilkins advised members that ALW was encouraging adopters and families to think more openly about engagement and keeping in touch with each other. There had been huge growth in that area with 113 letter exchanges and 42 direct contacts of adopted children and adopters with the child's birth families, and in surveys it had been found that the vast majority said they wanted more contact, information or meaningful relationships with their family, particularly siblings.

The Chair thanked Mandy Wilkins for her introduction and invited contributions from the Committee, with the following points raised:

The Committee asked for further information about the contact children were having were birth families and the benefits that provided. They heard that Adoption England were currently running webinars about this particular point, due to a statistic demonstrating that over half of adopted children thought about why they were adopted at least once a week. Nationally, officers were seeing a shifting culture in adoption in relation to maintaining contact with birth families and there was also new research to encourage maintaining a relationship with foster carers who supported transitions into adoption.

The Committee asked whether there was any research and learning from international models of adoption. Mandy Wilkins advised the Committee that the Adoption England resources available had been adapted from Australian models of adoption.

The Committee asked for reassurance that those children who were good candidates for adoption were able to move through the process as easily as possible. Nigel Chapman (Corporate Director Children and Young People, Brent Council) advised the Committee that the numbers of children adopted in Brent were low and the number of children in care was relatively low. He reassured the Committee that the Council looked at all forms of permanency for children, with adoption included as an option, but the majority of children returned home or stayed with a family member. The Council's approach was that the child was best placed with their parents or family where possible. Where children had been matched but were still waiting to be placed, this was usually due to delayed court processes which skewed the average figures due to the low number of children.

The Committee requested an update on the Black Adopters Project, noting the lack of attendance by staff at a recent safer space session outlined in the report, which was attributed to work pressure and caseloads. Mandy Wilkins explained that the Safer Space sessions were one aspect of the project and ALW was doing everything it could to encourage staff to make protected time for these. Now when those sessions were scheduled officers ensured they did not clash with meetings or staff leave. A Programme Lead had been recently appointed, who she felt was very dynamic and would help the project to move forward at pace now there was a dedicated lead. The upcoming focus of that project would be to look at data where families had barriers in accessing adoption support.

As no further issues were raised, the Committee RESOLVED to note the report.

12. **Annual Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO) Report 2023-24**

Palvinder Kudhail (Director Early Help and Social Care, Brent Council) introduced the report for noting. The report provided the Corporate Parenting Committee with information regarding the contribution of Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs) to the quality assurance and improvement of services for Looked After Children (LAC).

Nigel Chapman (Corporate Director Children and Young People, Brent Council) highlighted that the service was recruiting two permanent in-house IROs to support the consistency of relationships with young people.

The Committee requested further figures relating to timeliness of reviews, noting that only 83% were happening within statutory timeframes. Officers committed to providing information to show how much timeframes had been missed by, as often the delays were due to health being unable to obtain the data to complete a health review. Where it was clear there was a risk of a review falling out of timescales the IRO would often do the review in 2 parts to meet timeliness.

13. **Brent Fostering Service six-monthly Monitoring Report - 1 April 2024 to 30 September 2024**

Kelli Eboji (Head of LAC and Permanency, Brent Council) introduced the report which provided information about the general management of the in-house fostering service and how it was achieving good outcomes for children.

In considering the report, the following points were raised:

In response to a query on the activities that took place during Kinship Care Week, Kelli Eboji listed the coffee morning which had been a success and a Fun Day which had a much improved turnout compared to the previous year. A care leaver had been employed as a photographer for the events. There had also been a wellbeing session with WEST which took place during the coffee morning. She thanked staff involved in the preparation and organisation of the events.

The Committee asked how the service went about finding kin. Officers explained that a variety of routes were used. The child's parents would be the first port of call or the child themselves if they were of an age to be able to tell the service who their family was. Many families had a long history with the Council or other local authorities so there would often be records available. When the service found a link with someone this often led to finding other links, including grandparents, aunts and uncles.

The Committee heard that the government had recently announced a new Kinship Care Strategy. Officers had been working on the Council's policy but as the new strategy had been published the policy was being reviewed to ensure consistency with the government's strategy. It was agreed that the next meeting would consider the Kinship Care Strategy.

Nigel Chapman provided an update on the DfE funded pilot programme on the fostering pathfinder which was still in operation working with all other West London local authorities. The pilot had been extended to Autumn 2025 which the DfE had agreed to fund, but the Council now needed to see evidence of its impact and whether it was resulting in the Council obtaining more foster carers compared to in-house. Officers committed to updating the Committee every 6 months so that they had oversight and assurance that there was a cost effective local system.

Kelli Eboji highlighted the 'everyone' marketing video that would be launched on 17 October 2024 and agreed to send the video to members. A fostering friendly marketing campaign would be launched as part of the new fostering offer, and a Brent employee who was already a foster carer in Brent would be part of that campaign. The Committee requested for promotional materials to be sent to them so that they could share with other members and organisations.


As no further points were raised the Committee RESOLVED to note the report.

14. **Any other urgent business**

None.

The meeting closed at 7:15 pm
Councillor Gwen Grahl, Chair

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	Corporate Parenting Committee
	Report from the Corporate Director of Children and Young People
	Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Schools (Councillor Gwen Grahl)
An update on the Brent Residential Children’s Home project	

Wards Affected:	Barnhill
Key or Non-Key Decision:	Key
Open or Part/Fully Exempt: (If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)	Open
List of Appendices:	None
Background Papers:	None
Contact Officer(s): (Name, Title, Contact Details)	Michelle Gwyther Head of Forward Planning, Performance and Partnerships Michelle.Gwyther@brent.gov.uk

1.0 Executive Summary

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to provide an update to the Corporate Parenting Committee on the Brent Residential Children’s Home project. This is to follow from the previous update on 5 February 2024.

2.0 Recommendation(s)

That the Committee:

- 2.1. Notes the progress of the Brent Residential Children’s Home project and are informed of the key milestones to be achieved in the next three (3) months.

3.0 Background

- 3.1. In June 2022, the Department for Education (DfE) opened applications for its Wave 2 Children’s Home Capital Grant Programme. This provided an opportunity for local authorities to apply for matched capital funding available until March 2025 to create provision for residential children’s homes for children and young people in their own local area.

- 3.2. The Council's bid to the DfE's Children's Home Capital Programme was submitted on 9 September 2022. On 17 November 2022, the Council received a letter which confirmed the bid was successful. This notified Brent that it would be awarded in principle grant funding of £1.1m for the development of a residential children's care home in Brent subject to 50% match funding from the local authority. This match funding was agreed by the Council's Capital Programme Board in May 2023.
- 3.3. The Brent Residential Children's Home project will deliver a four-bed residential step-down home within Brent for looked after adolescents (aged 12 – 16) with social, emotional and behavioural needs. It will provide three bedrooms for a step-down provision to prepare young people who are in residential settings away from the borough for a move into a local fostering placement, supported accommodation (if 16+) or to return home. The remaining one bedroom will be allocated for emergency placements to enable a short-term response for young people in crisis.

4.0. Contribution to Borough Plan Priorities & Strategic Context

- 4.1. The development of a Children's Residential home in Brent aligns with two Borough Plan outcomes, firstly Prosperity and Stability in Brent, and secondly The Best Start in Life. Enabling more children and young people to stay in the borough means they will have greater opportunities to participate in and contribute to the Brent community. They will receive local services to enable them to be fully equipped to succeed in adulthood.

5.0 Detail

- 5.1. A fortnightly cross Council working group has been established with the aim of delivering the children's residential home in Brent. The working group is held to account by reporting to the Department for Education on a monthly basis, the Children's Residential Care Home Board on a monthly basis and the CYP Senior Leadership Team meeting on a quarterly basis, as well as the Corporate Parenting Committee.

Workstream Updates

- 5.2. The project plan has been split into separate workstream and progress on each area with key milestones over the next three months can be found below.

Capital Workstream

- 5.3. Refurbishment work on the property commenced on 28 October 2024 following a procurement exercise. This comprises both interior and exterior works, including replacing the roof.
- 5.4. The capital works are expected to be completed by 21 March 2025, which is later than late January 2025, due to some delays at the start and the end of the procurement process. This impacted on the start date for refurbishment works.

The completion date remains within the Department for Education wave 2 grant timeframe for all capital works to be completed by end of March 2025.

Recruitment Workstream

- 5.5. A successful candidate for the Registered Manager role has been onboarded and will start on 28 February 2025. A recruitment campaign supported by the corporate Recruitment Team has been created for the remaining residential home staff roles as these are hard to recruit and retain roles. This is due to go live by the end of January.

Registration Workstream

- 5.6. The process to register the home with Ofsted is composed of three aspects, the submission of an SC1 document for the residential home, an SC2 document for the Responsible Individual and another SC2 document for the Registered Manager. The SC1 document includes details on the home and key documents and policies such as the Statement of Purpose and Resident's Guide. The SC2 documents provide details of the Responsible Individual and Registered Manager to ensure they have the knowledge and experience required for the role. Once all three are submitted the Ofsted registration process commences. All three documents have been submitted and it could take at least 16 weeks for Ofsted to complete the registration process.

Operational Update

- 5.7. Operational aspects of the project are being formed as the opening date for the home becomes closer. This includes furnishing and decorating the property, how the home will operate, for example shift patterns for staff assurance and the early identification of young people to move into the home once it is opened.
- 5.8. The current expected annual operating costs is comparable with the estimated cost in the original business case (£1.1m) and has been developed from using available comparative information from the consultant, the Short Breaks Centre and benchmarking staffing costs against private and local authority owned children's residential homes. This is in the process of being finalised as the detailed operation of the home is being agreed.

6.0 Stakeholder and ward member consultation and engagement

- 6.1 Care experienced young people have been actively consulted throughout the development of the children's home, using various engagement methods to ensure broad participation. The goal is to gather their preferences on aspects such as the design, personalisation of private spaces, optimal use of communal areas, creating a sense of safety, and the overall operation of the home. Their feedback has been integrated into the planning process, and they will be kept informed about how their input has influenced decisions.
- 6.2 Previous approaches to engaging with young people included focus groups, a survey, and a drawing competition in which the young people were

compensated for their time and participation. Unfortunately, this had minimal take up with four young people in total engaging in these activities. The methods used were reviewed including gaining best practice insights from a Children's Residential Home Consultant as well as the Participation Team to help refine existing ideas, inform ongoing activities and plan for meaningful participation work.

- 6.3. It was agreed that instead of conducting activities specific to the children's residential home that young people would be engaged with through existing events hosted by various teams across Children and Young People. In December 2024, 12–17-year-olds in care were consulted through the Brent Virtual School and Brent Care Journeys 2.0 enrichment events. At the Brent Virtual School event, the children's residential home working group had a stall that enabled young people to engage with the topic if they were interested, this reached 5 young people. The Brent Care Journeys 2.0 event allowed for a 20-minute slot to conduct an activity focused on the children's residential home, there were around 14 young people who engaged with this. Both events asked young people to list qualities of a trustworthy adult and their bedroom wish list, if given a £75 budget. The former will help to inform how the home staff are inducted and the relationships they will build with future residents of the home.
- 6.4. Some of the qualities that young people stated include 'motivated by the cause, and capable', 'wants to be there', 'caring and vigilant' and 'arranges events and activities.' Items that young people would purchase include LED and fairy lights, a comfy rug, artist posters, plushies or soft toys and gaming accessories. This will be incorporated into the decision making for the soft furnishings of the home and how to enable young people to personalise their rooms.

7.0 Financial Considerations

- 7.1. Funding of £1.1m for the development of a residential children's care home has been secured via the DfE's Children's Home Capital Programme, subject to 50% match funding from the local authority. In developing the care home, the Council is required to ensure grant conditions and agreed timescales under the DfE's Children's Home Capital Programme grant are observed, failing which there is a risk of repayment of DfE funding.
- 7.2. The current assumption is the capital project will be delivered in time and budget.

8.0 Legal Considerations

- 8.1 A children's residential care home run by Brent Council directly supports the Council in delivering a range of statutory duties as laid down the Children Act 1989, the Children Act 2004, the Children Leaving Care Act 2000 and the Children and Social Work Act 2017.

9.0 Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Considerations

9.1 There are currently no Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) considerations arising from this report.

10.0 Climate Change and Environmental Considerations

10.1 There are no additional climate change or environmental considerations other than to ensure the home's refurbishment improves its environmental efficiency rating.

11.0 Human Resources/Property Considerations (if appropriate)

11.1 There are no additional human resource or property considerations to those referenced in the report.

12.0 Communication Considerations

12.1 The Barnhill Residents' Association is kept informed of changes in the project. The immediate residents of the property have been kept informed of works directly by the builder.

12.2 Information about the residential home is included on the Brent Council website.

Related documents:

[Brent Childrens Care Home Business Case](#), Cabinet Report, 22 May 2023


[Acquisition of Property Brent Childrens Care Home Project](#), Cabinet Report 15 January 2024

Report sign off:

Nigel Chapman

Corporate Director of Children and Young People

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 Brent	Corporate Parenting Committee 3 February 2025
	Report from Director, Early Help and Social Care
	Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Schools (Councillor Gwen Grahl)
Brent's response to the National Kinship Care Strategy and updated guidance	

Wards Affected:	ALL
Key or Non-Key Decision:	N/A
Open or Part/Fully Exempt: (If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)	Open
List of Appendices:	None
Background Papers:	None
Contact Officer(s): (Name, Title, Contact Details)	Divya Jolly Kinship Care Team Manager divya.jolly@brent.gov.uk Tom Donovan Service Manager, Looked After Children and Permanency Tom.donovan@brent.gov.uk Kelli Eboji Head of Service for Looked After Children and Permanency Kelli.eboji@brent.gov.uk

1.0 Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report provides Corporate Parenting Committee with an overview of the national developments relating to the provision of services and support to kinship carers in England and Wales.
- 1.2 This report also sets out the service priorities for publishing Brent's first Kinship Local Offer and developing this area of work over 2025/2026.

2.0 Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 To review and note the contents of this report.
- 2.2 To consider the work of the Kinship Care Team within the context of the wider Children and Young People service, future plans, and to provide elected member oversight ensuring that the Local Authority and their partners are effectively meeting the requirements of the new Kinship Care: Statutory guidance for local authorities (October 2024).

3.0 Detail

3.1 Contribution to Borough Plan Priorities & Strategic Context

- 3.1.1 This activity contributes to the following Borough priorities, by ensuring that children, living in a range of kinship care arrangements, are receiving the appropriate support from the local authority to ensure that they are being cared for safely by people who they are “connected” to.

- **The Best Start in Life**

Aligned to the borough plan priority for parents, children and young people to get the best start in life, the local offer aims to ensure that children and young people in kinship arrangements receive the support they need, when they need it.

- **Prosperity and Stability**

The local offer aims to tackle inequality and disproportionality for care experienced young people in London by creating a fair, transparent and consistent response across local authority areas, and this new strategy aims to ensure that kinship carers are supported fairly, consistently and transparently.

- **A Healthier Brent**

In order for care experienced young people to have good health outcomes social determinants of health such as inequalities in housing, employment and income must be addressed. The local offer aims to address these inequalities.

3.2 The National Kinship Care Strategy

- 3.2.1 In February 2023, the Department for Education published *Stable Homes, Built on Love* to respond to the Independent Review of Children’s Social Care, the National Panel Review into the tragic deaths of Arthur Labinjo-Hughes and Star Hobson, and the Competition and Markets Authority review into care placement sufficiency.

Stable Homes, Built on Love defined the then government’s vision for the children’s social care system and aimed to begin the work to meaningfully change the lives of children and families who interact with children’s social care. This reform was marked by an investment of £200 million to help tilt the system towards more supportive, preventative measures for families.

- 3.2.2 *Stable Homes, Built on Love* prioritised kinship care as a central pillar (Pillar 3) for improving support for kinship carers and wider family networks. The priorities for this pillar were:
- Testing how family networks could overcome financial and practical barriers in supporting children to live with their birth parents.
 - Extending legal aid entitlement to prospective guardians making applications for Special Guardianship Orders (SGOs) in private family law proceedings.
 - Strengthening guidance on engaging Family Networks and the use of Family Group Conferences
 - Publishing a national kinship care strategy.
 - Launching a national kinship training, information and advice service.
 - Extending additional workplace entitlements for kinship carers with a Special Guardianship Order (SGO) or Care Arrangement Order (CAO), as well as exploring the case for introducing a financial allowance for SGO and CAO carers in every local authority.

- 3.2.3 The *Children's Social Care National Framework* published in December 2023 is statutory guidance from the DfE on the principles behind children's social care, its purpose, factors enabling good practice and what it should achieve. It is central to setting direction for practice in children's social care as part of the reforms set out in *Stable Homes, Built on Love*.

This framework sets out a number of outcomes which indicate what children's social care should achieve for the children, young people and families they support, and reflect the core purpose of children's social care. One of the key outcomes in the framework was that children and young people are supported by their family network.

- 3.2.4 *Championing Kinship Care, The National Kinship Care Strategy*, furthers the vision of *Stable Homes, Built on Love*, by setting out how kinship care will continue to be reformed, in order to keep more children safe and allow them to thrive. The new government has broadly kept to a similar policy direction of travel in relation to kinship care. This culminated in October 2024 with an update to Family and Friends Care statutory guidance, now called *Kinship Care: Statutory guidance for local authorities* (October 2024), based upon the National Kinship Care Strategy.

3.3 Definition of Kinship Care

The strategy establishes the government's new definition of kinship care and states that "*Kinship care is any situation in which a child is being raised in the care of a friend or family member who is not their parent. The arrangement may be temporary or longer term.*"

This definition includes:

- *Informal kinship arrangements and private family arrangements*
- *Private Fostering arrangements*
- *Special Guardianship Orders*
- *Child Arrangement Order (non-parent)*

- *Kinship foster carers (children are looked after by the local authority)*
- *Adoption by family/friends*

The full definition can be found in the Kinship Care Strategy at: [Championing kinship care: the national kinship care strategy](#)

4.0 Kinship Care in Brent

4.1 Brent has a long and positive history of valuing and prioritising kinship care. Since 2007 we have had a specialist kinship team which was developed in response to clear practice knowledge and an emerging national picture which was beginning to understand that kinship carers required a specialist response from the local authority and support that was catered to their specific needs.

Brent has, over the last 20 years, embedded a ***family first*** approach and are proud of the professional tenacity demonstrated in making sure that children can be cared for by their wider family and friend network if it is safe to do so.

4.2 The assessment of kinship carers, both kinship foster carers and prospective Special Guardians are undertaken by the Kinship Care Team. This team also supports and supervises kinship foster placements prior to the carer's fostering approval or granting of a court order.

4.3 Private Fostering assessments and monitoring of these arrangements are also held within the Kinship Care Team.

4.4 Brent's regional adoption agency, Adopt London West (ALW) provides support to Special Guardians and children subject to Special Guardianship Orders. The CPC receives 6-monthly reports on the work of ALW, including its work to support SGO arrangements.

4.5 At the end of December 2024:

- 49 looked after children were living in a kinship foster care placement.
- 5 children were living in Private Fostering arrangements.

5.0 Kinship Local Offer

5.1 The *Kinship Care: Statutory guidance for local authorities* (October 2024) set out a requirement for each local authority to publish a 'Kinship Local Offer' in which is set out what support is available in the specific local authority area.

5.2 What was previously known as Brent's 'Kinship Care and Support Policy' will now be known as Brent's ***Kinship Local Offer***. The Kinship Care team are updating our offer currently with a deadline for publishing the refreshed offer in April 2025.

5.3 The new statutory kinship guidance requires local authorities to address the following areas within their ***Kinship Local Offer*** in respect to each of the

following groups: private fostering arrangements, kinship foster carers, Special Guardianship, Child Arrangement Order and adoption:

- **Evidence base:** Children, kinship carers and parents should be consulted with as appropriate, in drawing up their kinship local offers. The offer should set out how the kinship local offers have been informed by these views.
- **Information about services and support:** Kinship local offers should support the promotion of good information about the full range of services for children and families in the area and highlight the availability of advice from independent organisations.
- **Management accountability:** The Director of Children's Services should identify a senior manager who holds overall responsibility for the kinship local offer. They will need to ensure that the kinship local offer meets the statutory requirements and is responsive to the identified needs of children and carers.
- **Legal framework:** The kinship local offer should explain the relevant legal framework, in a format which is accessible to kinship carers and for parents. This should include an explanation of the authority's powers and duties in relation to children in need and looked after children, and address the effect of a child arrangements order, special guardianship order or adoption order.
- **Complaints:** The kinship local offer should explain or signpost how children, kinship carers and other relevant people may make a complaint about the service.
- **Types of support to be included in the kinship local offer:**
 - ❖ Support groups and training
 - ❖ Financial support
 - ❖ Supporting kinship carers to stay in work
 - ❖ Accommodation
 - ❖ Education
 - ❖ Supporting family time (promoting contact)
 - ❖ Family Group Decision Making
 - ❖ Legal support
 - ❖ Therapeutic support.

5.4 Brent's current *Kinship Care and Support Policy* covers all of the above areas, however in line with the new guidance there are a number of areas that require further development to ensure compliance. This includes:

- Implications and practicalities of the extended role of the Brent Virtual School Headteacher and how this applies to children in different kinship arrangements
- Implications and practicalities for the local authority in relation to promoting contact for children in different kinship arrangements
- Proposed changes to the way the local authority promotes and manages family group decision making
- Further work to develop the communication of the refreshed kinship offer.

5.5 Consultation will take place in February 2025, which will provide direct feedback on the proposed kinship local offer with kinship carers and children in kinship arrangements. This will be completed via a survey and face to face consultation discussions.

The refreshed ***Kinship Local Offer*** will be published in April 2025.

6.0 How Brent is meeting the requirements of the Kinship Care Strategy

6.1 The organisation, *Foundations-What Works Centre for Children and Families*, have developed the first national Practice Guide on kinship care in response to the Kinship Care Strategy. The tools provided within this guide have enabled the Kinship Care Team to complete a self-assessment on where Brent sits currently in relation to the principles set out in the recent policy developments regarding to kinship care. This has enabled analysis on current practice and helped to identify areas for development in 2025/26.

The Guide, commissioned by the Department for Education and developed by Foundations, aims to close the gap between practice on the ground and evidence about what works to improve outcomes for children and kinship families.

6.2 Kinship carers across the UK, feeding into the Kinship Care Strategy, have said that the most common challenges that they face are:

- Loneliness and impact on holistic wellbeing
- Unclear guidance and support from local authorities and charities
- Financial strain and inconsistent financial support across legal status and local authority boundaries
- Inconsistent education entitlements for children in kinship care

6.3 The key principles of the Kinship Practice Guide summarise the needs, experiences, and preferences of kinship carers in the UK, and evidence on implementation and design of services and interventions. These ensure accessible, acceptable, and effective interventions can be delivered. The Kinship Care Team have reflected on how we currently address these principles and the evidence that supports this position, and what we could do to improve services and support to kinship carers moving forward:

Key Principle 1:
Support for kinship carers should take into account the specific needs and strengths of kinship carers.
What we currently do
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• We approach kinship carers and prospective kinship carers at the earliest opportunity and provide them with information through verbal and written means to enhance their involvement with social workers and in the care planning process.• We involve carers in local interventions, through invitations to training, coffee mornings, and signposting to other services.

- We arrange for financial support to be provided to kinship carers to increase placement stability.
- We work in partnership with the child social work team to effectively match kinship carers' strengths to the child's needs.

Evidence

- We make contact with kinship carers in a timely way to introduce ourselves and establish our role in the process. We provide our contact information and make frequent welfare calls as well as calling and visiting at pre-arranged times.
- We offer the Kinship Preparation Training on a monthly basis to kinship carers in Brent and from three other London Local Authorities.
- We offer the Brent Fostering Training programme to Regulation 24 carers as well as approved foster carers.
- We make referrals to ALW, Brent's Wellbeing and Emotional Support Team (WEST) and Looked after children Resilience Service (LRS) depending on carers' individual needs.
- Kinship social workers attend placement planning meetings, PEP meetings, LAC reviews, and other meetings related to the child, to support and advocate for carers and children.
- Legal advice is offered during the assessment process as a one-off consultation for carers and prospective carers to understand the implications of the different kinship care arrangements, and further legal consultations are considered on an individual basis.
- Feedback is received from various forums including from carers, the fostering panel and court indicates that carers feel supported and enjoy a positive professional relationship with their assessing and supervising SWs. Carers have also expressed during fostering panel and after attending training sessions and attending court that they are pleased with the support provided.

What we can do to improve

- Prepare an information pack for all carers undergoing an assessment (to include the Kinship Local Offer and services specific to kinship carers such as ALW, LRS and WEST, and information about non-statutory services such as universal Brent services, Family Rights Group and Kinship). Include a written statement in the information pack recognising the existence of structural racism and Brent's commitment to anti-racist practice.
- Increase opportunities to obtain formal feedback from carers, i.e. utilising assessment questionnaires at different stages of the assessment process, surveys, feedback during support groups and coffee mornings, and then ensure there is a feedback loop leading to practice and service improvement.
- Redevelop the kinship care page on the Brent website for kinship carers which is relevant, up to date, and comprehensive.

Key Principle 2:

One-to-one relationships and high-quality casework should be at the heart of support for kinship families.

What we currently do

- We build trust and familiarity with kinship carers through a relationship-based approach.
- We show insight into carers' poor past experiences of statutory services based on family history and/or wider discrimination, such as experiences of structural racism (using models including anti-racist practice, trauma informed practice, systemic practice, and signs of safety).
- We demonstrate our commitment to support carers, both emotionally and practically through an empathetic and solution focused approach, ensuring their voices are amplified and we are acting as advocates for them.
- We employ effective partnership working across agencies.
- We have a high level of consistency of allocated assessing and supervising social workers.
- We celebrate kinship care week and offer events and activities like coffee mornings, that value and show appreciation for our kinship carers and the work they do.

Evidence

- We put this into practice through regular and consistent communication with carers through announced and non-announced calls and visits, responding in a timely manner, being flexible to carers' needs and adopting an inclusive, non-judgemental approach. We spend time getting to know our carers and understanding their needs and experiences, taking into consideration their individual circumstances.
- We utilise the assessment process as a means to forming stronger relationships with kinship carers and recognise that assessment is also an intervention in and of itself, for example by facilitating a kinship carer to emotionally process past trauma, and by providing information and education to kinship carers on various aspects of social work processes, their legal rights and entitlements, and aspects of therapeutic parenting and topics such as life-story work, safe contact with parents, and promoting a child's cultural identity.
- We include carers in Permanency Planning meetings, ensure they attend and have their voices heard in LAC reviews, PEP meetings, and other meetings specific to the child.
- We stay in close contact with the child social worker and other professionals involved, and we update the IRO on any pertinent developments.

What can we do to improve

- Develop the SGO support plan in closer consultation with the carer (and the child, and an ALW practitioner, where appropriate), and hold a meeting after the SGO is granted to ensure that the SGO carer is clear with the support available from ALW, Brent, and the local authority in which they reside.

- Kinship team to raise awareness of kinship care across different services and across the Brent community. To be achieved by developing links with Early Help and Family Wellbeing centres and continuing to provide training for social workers and other professionals, by celebrating Kinship Care Week, and by increasing the frequency of coffee morning support groups for kinship carers.
- The Learning and Development Team to be asked to consider providing more focussed training to enhance social work practice, for example the Secure Base Model, PACE approach, and DDP (Dyadic Developmental Practice), and learning from the practice of kinship teams in other local authorities.

Key Principle 3:

Kinship families need to be made aware of the support they are entitled to, and local authorities should actively work to address barriers to accessing support.

What we currently do

- We make carers aware of the support available from Brent, and we signpost to support available from non-statutory services.
- We are committed to working in ways that are culturally sensitive and culturally competent.
- We are committed to working in ways which address and support carers who are disabled, who have accessibility needs, and who face other barriers to accessing support.
- We offer support which is flexible and reflects the needs of different kinship families.
- We encourage carers to access therapeutic support and training via the fostering training programme, ALW, WEST and Early Help parenting programmes for parents and carers.

Evidence

- We provide new kinship carers and prospective carers with information during and around the time of the placement planning meeting about support available from Brent (including support from the child social worker, supervising social worker, Emergency Duty Team (EDT), WEST, LRS, ALW). Reminders from the fostering training co-ordinator are shared with carers and they are encouraged to attend trainings relevant for them.
- Trained practitioners adopt an anti-racist approach to all families we work with. We acknowledge and celebrate the different faiths and cultures in our families by learning about different traditions and customs depending on the family we are working with and asking culturally specific questions.
- Practitioners explore the specific needs of kinship carers with them in a sensitive and private manner, to establish if they have a disability, if they are neurodivergent, if they require an interpreter, or if they need support due to not being able to read or write in any language.

- Support is provided in a range of settings including face to face, virtual, office based, home based, and community settings, at different times of the day, including outside of working hours.
- We send out information about trainings to kinship carers via text message, email and letter, give verbal encouragement and reminders, and offer to register them for trainings on their behalf.

What can we do to improve

- Include kinship carers in the co-design of local interventions, through active involvement as well as feedback obtained via questionnaires, coffee mornings, and informal discussions. This will be discussed with ALW and possible joint working in this area will be explored.
- Raise the profile and reach of the current Foster Carer Programme, by including all relevant trainings in the monthly fostering newsletter, considering suggestions for additional specific and targeted trainings, and discussion with the Learning & Development Team about whether we can extend the fostering training offer to SGO carers.
- Create a kinship support group who will meet in person to improve kinship carers' wellbeing, beginning with 'coffee mornings', and to possibly include different events in the future, with the aim of empowering carers to sustain this independently in the longer term.

6.4 Consideration has been given to the strength of evidence for each of the six recommendations set out in the Kinship Practice Guide. These recommendations summarise the best-evidenced interventions for improving outcomes among kinship carers, and children and young people in kinship care. These are drawn from robust impact evaluations of interventions in high-income countries.

- Brent has a **good** strength of evidence to demonstrate that the local authority offers kinship carers specialist support to learn about, navigate an access the support that they are entitled to.
- Brent has a **good** strength of evidence to demonstrate that the local authority offers parenting support when a child or young person is demonstrating behaviours that challenge their kinship carer(s) on a frequent basis.
- Brent has **promising** strength of evidence to demonstrate that the local authority makes services available to facilitate peer support groups to improve kinship carers' well-being.
- Brent has a **good** strength of evidence to demonstrate that the local authority makes Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT) available to kinship carers who have been assessed as in need of therapeutic support because, for example, the child or young person in their care is demonstrating behaviours that challenge the kinship carers.
- Brent has **promising** strength of evidence to demonstrate that the local authority offers kinship carers trainings in self-care to support their emotional health, well-being and quality of life.

- Brent has **strong** evidence to demonstrate that the local authority offers financial allowance to kinship carers to increase placement permanency, reduce the likelihood of placement disruption and improve the likelihood of permanent guardianship.

7.0 Action Plan

	Action	By when
1	Consultation activities with children and carers in kinship arrangements on the new kinship local offer	28 Feb 2025
2	New Kinship Local Offer published	1 April 2025
3	Prepare an information pack for all kinship carers undergoing an assessment	28 Feb 2025
4	Increase opportunities to obtain formal feedback from kinship carers, in partnership with Adopt London West, that can be fed back into service development and practice improvement activity. This will include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • kinship assessment questionnaires/survey • feedback tools that can be used at support groups and coffee mornings 	30 June 2025
5	Update the kinship care page on the Brent website	30 March 2025
6	Develop SGO support plans in closer consultation with the kinship carer, child, ALW and relevant parties. To offer a post-order meeting to review the support plan and ensure the family understands the support available and where to access.	To begin immediately
7	Strengthen links with Early Help, Family Wellbeing Centres, and the Brent universal offer to children and carers in kinship arrangements.	28 Feb 2025
8	Continue awareness raising activity across CYP services and external, via multi agency training and quarterly information sessions provided by the Kinship Care team.	Ongoing
9	Extend our Brent fostering training offer to Special Guardians	31 Jan 2025
10	To build on the success of our 2024 Kinship Care Week coffee morning by facilitating a face-to-face kinship support group with the focus on empowering carers and improving wellbeing.	30 April 2025
11	Provision of focused training for specialist kinship social workers to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secure Base Model • PACE • DDP 	30 March 2025

8.0 Stakeholder and ward member consultation and engagement

- 8.1 The development of this Local Offer has and will continue to involve services within Brent CYP and across the council, Adopt London West, and external partners like Health and Education.
- 8.2 Consultation activity with children and carers in kinship care arrangements will be carried out over February 2025 and this will feed into the finalised Kinship Local Offer.

9.0 Financial Considerations

- 9.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. The total budget for Kinship Care, which includes the Kinship and Fostering teams, is £1.2m, with spending projected to remain within budget for the current financial year.
- 9.2 Currently where looked after children are placed with connected people/kinship carers, Brent provides fostering allowances in line with the council's Fostering Rates and Guidance.
- 9.3 Brent undertakes a financial means test for carers where children were looked after prior to a private law order, either through a Child Arrangement Order or Special Guardianship Order. If a carer is eligible for an allowance, this is made available until the child turns 18 and annual reviews are undertaken. The baseline for the means tested allowance is the Brent fostering allowance.
- 9.4 Although the new guidance does not place any new statutory duties on local authorities, it has reiterated that support available to these children and carers should be based on the needs of the child rather than the legal status of the child. This change could lead to additional financial implications that would need to be considered as part of the refreshed *Kinship Local Offer*.

10.0 Legal Considerations

- 10.1 In October 2024 the new Kinship care: framework for local authorities was published. It is effective as from the date of publication. It replaces and updates the 2010 Family and Friends Care guidance. Whilst the 2024 Guidance does not place any new statutory guidance on local authorities, it sets out a framework for the provision of support for both the children living with a kinship carer and potential kinship carers. It requires each local authority to publish a 'kinship local offer' which sets out what support is available in the specific local authority area. The kinship local offer should be clearly expressed, regularly updated, made freely and widely available.
- 10.2 The expectation is that local authorities are to promote, support for families on the basis that 'children are best looked after within their families unless compulsory intervention in family life is necessary'. The Guidance states that the support available should be based on the needs of the child rather than the legal status of the child.

11.0 Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Considerations

11.1 The Kinship Local Offer will contribute to the local authority's responsibilities to children in kinship care arrangements, ensuring that the children are not further disadvantaged because of their adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and have the best opportunity to succeed in all aspects of their lives. It will also ensure that there are clear parameters and a transparent framework for the delivery of resources and services to kinship carers.

12.0 Climate Change and Environmental Considerations

12.1 At this stage there are no climate change or environmental considerations.

13.0 Human Resources/Property Considerations (if appropriate)

13.1 At this stage there are no human resource or property considerations.

14.0 Communication Considerations

14.1 A key element of the new statutory kinship guidance is the availability and accessibility of information for kinship carers in Brent. Our new Kinship Local Offer will be uploaded to the Brent website to ensure accessibility and will also be shared with colleagues across CYP and the wider council through email, discussions at team meetings and within quarterly workshops offered to staff and multi-agency partners.

Related documents:

Stable Homes Built on Love September 2023)- [Children's Social Care: Stable Homes, Built on Love consultation response](#)

Championing Kinship Care- The National Kinship Care Strategy (December 2023)- [Championing kinship care: the national kinship care strategy](#)
Children's Social Care National Framework(December 2023)- [Children's social care national framework](#)

Kinship Care: Statutory guidance for local authorities (October 2024)- [Kinship care: statutory guidance for local authorities](#)

Practice Guidance, Kinship Care- [Kinship Care - Foundations](#)

Report sign off:

Nigel Chapman

Corporate Director Children and Young People

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