

MINUTES OF THE CORPORATE PARENTING COMMITTEE
Wednesday 1 February 2023 at 5.00 pm

PRESENT: Councillors Grahl (Chair), Collymore, Gbajumo, Hirani and Kennelly (substituting for Councillor Dixon)

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 were received from:

- Councillor Dixon, who was substituted by Councillor Kennelly.

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 19 October 2022, 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

T (Care in Action) informed the Committee that the Bright Spots Survey was now officially finished, and the Care in Action (CIA) group had explored resources for that and how it could be improved. CIA had produced leaflets for social workers and personal advisers to give guidance on issues pertinent to looked after children and care leavers, such as how to build trust, building healthy relationships, and quotes from looked after children and care leavers. The CIA stamp would be included on the leaflet to show it had been co-designed, checked and approved by looked after children before distribution. T informed the Corporate Parenting Committee about the Brent Care Journeys project she had been involved in, which was to develop memory boxes. She had shown her memory book at the last Corporate Parenting Committee and had also presented it to CIA members to demonstrate new projects that they could access and the benefits of life story work. CIA and Care Leavers in Action (CLIA) were working jointly with Brent Care Journeys and the Learning and Development Team to co-develop foster carer training which would be delivered by young people.

K (CIA) had attended CIA since the previous year and felt it was a great space to meet other care experienced young people. K had particularly enjoyed the residential trip CIA had taken during the summer where there had been many activities and opportunities to bond with other young people.

J (CLIA) advised the Corporate Parenting Committee that, since the last meeting, he had been chairing interview panels for personal adviser positions and had been involved in interview panels for the new Chief Executive position at Brent Council. J continued to attend CLIA's quarterly meetings, most recently focused on how CIA and CLIA could work more closely with Brent Care Journeys and develop opportunities for young people to be involved with co-design. CLIA had also worked with the commissioning team regarding the discharge pathway for young people coming out of hospital. J concluded his presentation by informing the Committee that the end of year celebration had been to London Zoo which had been well attended.

The Chair thanked those present for their contributions and invited members of the Committee to ask questions to the CIA / CLIA representatives. The following questions were raised:

Members recalled that T had previously presented her memory box from the Brent Care Journeys project and asked more about where the idea came from and how many other young people were using them. T was not sure where the idea came from but felt they had done a good job. She had tested them as a prototype with other young people. There were 2 different boxes, one with a digital camera and one more creative. T had received the creative box and 2 other young people received the camera. The 2 young people who received the camera did not see the project through to the end, but T had used all the resources she could to make her creative memory box. She was pleased that the project was being taken forward for other young people.

The Committee asked about CIA and CLIA members' experiences of being part of interview panels. J highlighted that he had been doing interview panels for a while and was used to chairing panels. He thought it was useful to know what it was like to interview people because he had an insight into the best way to represent himself at his own interviews now. T added that the questions for the Chief Executive panel had been very tough and showed the person's determination, willpower, and knowledge. This gave her comfort that the people in senior positions had earned it.

In response to discussions around training and employment opportunities for young people, Nigel Chapman (Corporate Director Children and Young People, Brent Council) advised the Committee that part of the role of a Personal Adviser was to help young people get good employment, skills and training, and a question during interviews for that position revolved around that responsibility. Overall, the numbers for children and young people in employment and training were good, but he felt there was more to be done to improve the number even more.

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. Brent Care Journeys

Anna Willow (Barnardo's) introduced the report, which provided a summary of activities undertaken by the Brent Care Journeys Programme, key achievements in 2022, and areas for priority in the remaining three years of the partnership. She highlighted the following key points:

- The first full co-designed project had involved a group of ten care experienced young people who had been late into care, and started with discovery about a problem that democratically people agreed on. The next phase of co-design was ideation, where the subject matter became very broad before being narrowed down and defined into a few prototypes that project members wanted to try out in the real world quickly, cheaply, and with as few risks as possible.
- Since the first full co-design, the Programme had now done a second whole co-design phase which integrated social care staff, children and young people's services, and young people, and worked to break down the systemic roles and barriers that existed.
- The report explained where the programme was at three years through the 5-year partnership. Over the past 2 years, Brent Care Journeys had engaged over 200 young people.
- Nigel Chapman (Corporate Director Children and Young People, Brent Council) added that the work being done with Barnardo's through Brent Care Journeys was not a traditional commissioned service where they were paid to deliver a service for Brent, but a different way of working with a full partnership approach. The partnership agreed they wanted to bring young people into the heart of service design to deliver projects with the voice of young people.

The Chair thanked Anna and Nigel for their introduction and invited contributions from the Committee, with the following points raised:

The Committee commended the fact that Brent Care Journeys had been able to engage 200 young people since 2020 but highlighted that, due to lockdown, it was likely there would have been some missed opportunities. They asked whether there were any ways the number of young people engaged could be expanded using provision in the community that was already available. They also wanted to know what other opportunities there were for Brent Care Journeys to partner with organisations facilitating young people to gain further skills. Nigel Chapman felt there were opportunities for Brent Care Journeys to link up to local community groups to offer activities and opportunities for young people, including career opportunities. Anna Willow agreed, advising that their role was to find different ways of doing that. Brent Care Journeys were trying to expand the way in which all parts of the borough had a sense of duty and responsibility for children leaving care. They were aware of the demands on statutory services to give Brent's children the opportunities they deserved, and agreed that needed to be done together. Over the next year within goal setting and service planning, Brent Care Journeys could begin thinking about creating more informal partnerships with the communities they worked with.

The Committee noted that Brent Care Journeys had been able to engage young people who were not involved in CIA, and asked what it was doing differently to groups run directly by the Council. Anna Willow advised the Committee that Brent Care Journeys was very reflective in what it did, and worked with young people to get ideas about what they might do, then tested those ideas and learned from them repeatedly. When things did not work, they stopped doing them and learned from them. Now, Brent Care Journeys had created a relationships first approach and were fortunate to have time to do the work. Anna Willow highlighted that unpicking the power of authority was enticing for young people as well as being part of those deconstructed environments where things could be changed both dramatically and on a smaller scale. The Committee heard that deconstructing the power had proved challenging on occasion, as there were certain ways where it would not be appropriate to deconstruct responsibility. In working together with young people, Brent Care Journeys had to overcome some of those obstacles. For example, a potential barrier was that officers at Brent Care Journeys were employed and paid to do that work, and so had worked hard to create paid roles for young people with professional expectations in order to share that authority.

The Committee asked whether Brent Care Journeys worked with Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASCs). Anna Willow confirmed that UASCs were the fastest growing cohort of new members, mainly boys. Brent Care Journeys had worked to understand where young people were to engage the least heard voices, as the programme existed primarily to address inequalities experienced by looked after children and care leavers. As a result, the programme had approached semi-independent providers and engaged some members there, who had then validated the space for other young people to join. There was a very organic way of working with UASCs because much of the membership came about by word of mouth. There was now a successful 'power group' for young people every morning, led by trained young people, where they ran therapy and art sessions known as 'therapart'.

In response to whether members could attend the performance and exhibition that Brent Care Journeys had worked on, Anna Willow advised that the performance had culminated in October 2022 so was no longer being performed, but if Brent Care Journeys were successful in receiving money for that in the future they had learned a lot about how to do it and had some completed works that could be exhibited. Members asked that councillors be invited to any future performance.

RESOLVED:

- i) To note the report.

9. Brent Fostering Service Quarterly Monitoring Report Quarter 3– October 2022 to December 2022

Kelli Eboji (Head of LAC and Permanency, Brent Council) introduced the report. She highlighted that a Sky advert had been sent out in the previous month as a marketing technique for the recruitment of foster carers. She had been pleased to receive some anecdotal feedback that the advert was targeting the right interest groups, and she looked forward to seeing the results of that. Moving forward, the quarterly fostering report would include a focus on kinship carers as well as mainstream foster carers. Kelli Eboji informed the Committee that two foster carers had attended the Committee to talk about their experience of fostering for Brent.

The Chair thanked Kelli for her introduction and invited the foster carers present to speak.

One foster carer had begun his fostering career as a nominated foster carer when he was younger. Over time, he had seen how important it was for the family network to work together to help and support the young person being cared for, and so he became a joint foster carer. The journey had been daunting but rewarding, and he highlighted that no child he cared for was the same as the last. The fostering family had a good network around them, and the family approach to foster caring had encouraged him to be more involved, aware and learn more.

Another foster carer had started her foster career when a young person had come into her care as a friend of her son. The young person was a late teen and had experienced difficult circumstances in life. The young person had been with 3-4 foster carers prior to being with this foster carer, and her son had asked if she would look after the young person for a few nights. She had got in touch with Brent who wanted to bring the young person back into the fostering system to find a carer for them, but through discussion with the foster care team arrangements were made for her to become his carer. She was approved as the young person's carer at foster panel and the young person had now been in her care for 18 months, was well settled and thriving at school.

The Committee asked the foster carer what barriers had been faced which meant the young person did not want to return to his previous foster carers. The foster carer advised that the

young person she cared for had a learning disability which the previous foster carers had not fully understood, and there were also barriers in place because they were in different local authorities and so there had been a lot of changes in school for the young person. The initial process of becoming the young person's carer with Brent had been very smooth, but there had been challenges along the way, such as changes in staff. The family had seen several different social workers over the last few months, making it difficult to build a bond. She highlighted this was a crucial time for her young person's life and it was important to have stable support from the social work team.

Kelli Eboji (Head of LAC and Permanency, Brent Council) added that often a child chose to stay with someone they knew due to the connection and familiarity of the person, which was another reason the fostering service wanted to shine a light on kinship care and make it more visible.

The Committee asked whether the Council were offering any additional support to foster carers amidst the rising cost of living. The foster carers advised the Committee that the support was ongoing. For example, during the pandemic children required laptops, and social workers had done very well in providing those. There were always new environments with new barriers for children, and with the support foster carers had around them they could speak to their social worker who would react as quickly as possible to support the family.

The Committee asked whether there was a Forum set up for kinship carers. Kelli Eboji advised the Committee that kinship carers received specific induction training, and were also able to participate in the mainstream foster carer training and support groups. She hoped to develop more forums where the voice of kinship carers could be heard, and there had been discussions with some non-government organisations and volunteers about promoting the voice of kinship carers specifically. Zafer Yilkan (Director Integration and Improved Outcomes, Brent Council) added that as part of engagement with foster carers the service was looking at introducing more face-to-face activities such as coffee mornings and could consider some kinship carer only sessions.

RESOLVED:

- i) To note the report.

10. National Safeguarding Review Report of Children with Additional Needs Placed in Residential Education Provisions

Zafer Yilkan (Director Integration and Improved Outcomes, Brent Council) introduced the report, which summarised the actions local authorities were asked to undertake as part of the national review of children with disabilities and complex health needs placed in residential settings to ensure they were safe, quality placements. As part of Brent's investigation of children in those settings, a manager went to see each child in those service provisions and had spoken to each child on their own, their parents or carer, and the providers. Based on the investigation and feedback, Brent was very satisfied with the quality of service provided to those young people, and had subsequently submitted the report to the national panel.

RESOLVED:

- i) To note the contents of the report.

11. Annual Looked After Children (LAC) Health Presentation

Ileen Ashitey (Designated Nurse for Looked After Children, Integrated Care System (ICS)) introduced the presentation. She highlighted the main challenges for the health service, which were around having adequate staff. A designated doctor was now newly appointed and would be in post shortly, but the ICS had to work with the staff shortages they had. Improvements had been made regarding social care staff submitting paperwork on time which had been a work in process. Audits were being carried out on healthcare planning for care leavers and Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASCs), looking at if recommendations were being carried out and if the planning involved the voice of the young person. The audit findings could be presented to the Committee once finalised. The ICS was pleased with the Healthy Smiles Community Dental Services and hoped to have some local data in the future to demonstrate how effective it had been.

Kelli Eboji (Head of LAC and Permanency, Brent Council) added that her team worked closely with the LAC health provider service to ensure children and young people had the support they needed. Following Covid, Brent had reintroduced co-location for social workers and LAC nurses in the Civic Centre, and those nurses had access to a laptop and Mosaic systems. One of the challenges for health providers was where children and young people were placed out of borough, as they were required to receive a local health assessment. This was an area for improvement, and had resource implications.

In response to a query on CAMHS, Nigel Chapman (Corporate Director Children and Young People, Brent Council) advised the Committee that the waiting times for assessment for CAMHS had reduced but waiting times for treatment following assessment had not. The Director of Public Health and a representative from the local Integrated Care Board (ICB) had raised the point in a meeting the previous week about the fact Brent had historically been underfunded for CAMHS in comparison to other NWL boroughs and were lobbying to level up that funding in the following year.

As no further issues were raised, the Committee RESOLVED:

- i) To note the report.

11. **Any other urgent business**

None.

The meeting closed at 18:35 pm

Councillor Gwen Grahl
Chair