



## **MINUTES OF THE CORPORATE PARENTING COMMITTEE**

### **Monday 4 February 2019 at 5.00 pm**

PRESENT: Councillor M Patel (Chair), Councillor Conneely (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Gbajumo and Sangani

Also present: Councillors McLennan

Apologies were received from: Councillors Kansagra

#### **1. Exclusion of the Press and Public**

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

#### **2. Apologies for absence and clarification of alternate members**

Apologies were received from Councillor Kansagra and Thakkar. Councillor Sangani was in attendance in place of Councillor Thakkar.

#### **3. Declarations of interests**

For purposes of transparency, Councillor Conneely advised that she worked for a local mental health charity in Brent and some young people accessing the services provided were Looked After Children (LAC).

#### **4. Minutes of the previous meeting**

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 30 October 2018 be agreed as an accurate record of the meeting.

#### **5. Matters arising (if any)**

There were no matters arising.

#### **6. Update from Care In Action Representatives**

The committee received an update from the Care in Action (CIA) representatives on activity since the last meeting. HS advised that as part of the London Wide Care in Action group, focus groups were being held with LAC and Care Leavers to identify

key areas of improvement across London. The findings would be communicated to MPs and Councillors. Gail Tolley (Strategic Director, Children and Young People) added that the report would also be submitted to the Association of London Directors of Children's Services. The Chair confirmed that she would identify whether there was a London Councils Lead Member group for Children's Services and would report back accordingly.

JBK then advised that the Junior Care in Action meeting had taken place and had included pizza, science based activities, board games, and basketball and football as usual. In response to a query regarding recruitment to the Junior CIA, HS advised that recruitment activity had been undertaken at the celebration events but advised that some foster carers did not appear to be particularly eager to support foster children attending. Onder Beter (Head of LAC and Permanency) suggested that officers facilitate a dialogue between CIA and the foster carer support group to better understand and address any issues around supporting attendance of younger members.

JBK further advised that he would be performing in the Voice in a Million concert as part of the Children in Care choir. The event aimed to raise awareness of Children in Care and would be held in the SSE Arena on 20 and 21 March 2019. JBK would be singing a solo as part of the performance!

HM advised that she and other members of Care in Action had attended a staff conference event in November 2018 to share their personal experiences as LAC and Care Leavers. This had been very well received and it was hoped had made people think about how they impacted on the lives of LAC and Care Leavers.

BJ informed the committee that the Care in Action end of year celebration had been held, with secret Santa and other fun activities.

The Chair thanked the CIA representatives for their update to the committee.

**7. Brent Looked After Children Health Annual Report 2017-2018 by NHS Brent Clinical Commissioning Group and Brent LAC Health Team - London Northwest University NHS Trust (LNWUHT)**

Dr Arlene Boroda (Designated Doctor for Safeguarding Children, Brent CCG) delivered a presentation to the committee summarising the Brent LAC Health Annual Report 2017-18. The Annual Report outlined the delivery of health services to LAC by the London Borough of Brent and combined NHS Brent CCG and Provider health reports; it included performance indicators, clinical work undertaken by the LAC health team, service improvements and plans for further development.

During the presentation, Dr Boroda drew the committee's attention to the statutory monitoring requirements, noting that the majority of health assessments for LAC were completed within the statutory timeframe. Any that were not undertaken within timescales were analysed to ascertain the reasons for delay and whether improvements to arrangements were needed. Members further heard about Brent's audit tool, used to assess the quality of health assessments, which would be used across the eight North West London CCGs. The audit explored issues of thoroughness, identification of health needs, consent, voice of the child, record keeping, developmental and educational needs, risk factors, and substance abuse,

among others. Highlighting areas for improvement, Dr Boroda noted that these included the recording of who was in the room during health checks, the tracking of immunisations, dental and vision checks, and supporting transitions between children's and adults' services.

In the subsequent discussion, the committee questioned how the statutory requirements were met for those young people who did not want to engage with LAC health services. Assurance was sought regarding the quality of the working relationship with London North West University Healthcare NHS Trust (LNUH). Clarification was sought regarding the numbers of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) in Brent. The committee queried what actions would be undertaken to deliver against the conclusions identified from the analysis of UASC health assessments. Questions were raised regarding non-NHS service providers and how the council and CCG engaged these organisations to ensure that the care and quality provided was sufficient. Further details were also sought regarding vulnerable LAC in prisons and the barriers to understanding whether their disability and learning needs were being addressed. Committee members raised further questions regarding mental health support when transitioning between children's and adults' services.

The Chair invited questions and contributions from the CIA representatives who sought an update on activity relating to a matter on which they had been previously consulted regarding mental health support

Responding to the queries raised, Dr Boroda explained that if a child or young person appeared unwilling to engage, an offer could be made to hold the assessment over the phone initially or in a place where the young person felt safe and comfortable. The team would also work to identify and utilise any existing channels of engagement with the individual established by other services. It was emphasised that for safeguarding and LAC services, communication and connectivity with the LNUH worked well.

Onder Beter (Head of LAC and Permanency) clarified that there had been an overall decline in the numbers of UASC from 2016/17. Dr Boroda provided an overview of the activity to address the identified needs of the UASC cohort which included training by the CCG across the local health economy, particularly for GPs, with whom all UASC had to be registered. The committee heard that the needs of UASC were being continually highlighted. Screenings for infectious diseases were offered routinely for UASC, as were emotional health and wellbeing screenings, with referrals made to other services as appropriate. It was noted that a significant number of UASC arrived without immunisation records. Training was given to foster carers and other care providers on supporting health needs, including immunisations and how to recognise a sick child.

Addressing questions regarding non-NHS service providers, Dr Boroda advised that this was an area which required further attention but a lot of work was being done to raise awareness of safeguarding considerations amongst commissioners. The committee heard that health care services for prisons and offender units were directly commissioned by the NHS. Brent CCG was currently in dialogue with the NHS regarding arrangements around quality assurance. It was emphasised that some of the health care services at these facilities were outstanding; however, this was a cohort of very vulnerable young people and therefore the matter would

continue to be pursued with the NHS. In response to a query regarding capturing the voice of the child, Gail Tolley (Strategic Director, Children and Young People) advised that each young person would have a Youth Offending Service (YOS) worker and a Social Worker.

Dr Boroda advised that supporting transitions was a priority and a specific post had been commissioned to support Young People transitioning between children's and adults services. It was explained that the CIA had been consulted with respect to a scoping exercise on the emotional health needs of children and young people. It had been found that there was overlap in the services and support available but that often there was a lack of connectivity between these services. It was agreed that arrangements would be made to formally feedback to the CIA on the findings and work arising from the scoping exercise.

The Chair thanked Dr Boroda for her contribution to the meeting.

#### **8. Feedback from Looked After Children: Outcome of Bright Spots Questionnaire 2018**

The committee received a report setting out feedback from the Bright Spots "Your Life, Your Care" Survey for 2018. The survey, delivered by Coram Voice, sought to measure the quality of Looked After Children's care experience and their sense of well-being. This was the second year that Brent's children and young people had taken part. The report detailed the actions which had been taken following analysis of the previous year's survey, including review of contact arrangements, social work realignment to provide competitive recruitment and retention packages, and support to foster carers to provide children with a wider range of outdoor opportunities.

Outlining the key messages of the 2018 survey, Janice Altenor (Interim Head of Safeguarding and Quality Assurance) highlighted the positive feedback received including children and young people reporting feeling settled in their placements and having trusted relationships with their social workers. Addressing areas identified for improvement, Janice Altenor explained that the percentage of children who reported trusting their carers (81 per cent) was lower than in other authorities (96 percent); children and young people continued to want more contact with significant family members; Brent had a higher percentage of children experiencing more than one social worker in the past 12 month period; high proportions of children aged 8-11 years were worried about bullying; and, young people aged 11 to 18 years were less likely to have a good friend than elsewhere.

Members' attention was drawn to section 5 of the report which set out the activities underway in response to the issues and concerns highlighted. These activities included: supporting foster carers to understand the challenges faced by older LAC in building trusting relationships; a continued focus on increased promotion of contact with family members; further recruitment and retention activities; and raising awareness amongst LAC's schools and foster carers of the concerns expressed about bullying. In concluding the introduction, Janice Altenor explained that efforts would be made to better promote the survey next year to encourage more LAC to get involved.

The Chair invited views from the Care in Action representatives, who emphasised the importance of the feedback and shared how some of the issues identified had affected them.

The committee then directed a number of questions to the presenting officers, including whether Britain's impending withdrawal from the European Union (Brexit) could affect efforts to recruit and retain social work staff. Further details were sought on the actions to address concerns about bullying and members questioned whether the results had been analysed by in borough and out of borough placements.

In response, Gail Tolley advised that the Department for Education (DfE) had written to all Directors of Children's Services regarding Brexit and the potential impact on workforce. Brent had undertaken an analysis and had identified a small number of staff who would be affected. Those members of staff had been given advice and guidance regarding the process for applying for the resettlement scheme. Onder Beter (Head of LAC and Permanency) advised that the council also recruited social workers from non-EU countries including South Africa and India. Providing further detail on the activities undertaken to address concerns around bullying, Onder Beter advised that Ofsted had previously highlighted the good work of Brent's Virtual School which was preparing a specific piece of work on this area. It was confirmed that there was little difference in the feedback received from those placed with carers in the borough to those placed out of borough.

The Chair thanked everyone for their contribution to the discussion.

9. **Brent Fostering Service Quarterly Monitoring Report: Quarter 3: 1 October to 31 December 2018**

Onder Beter (Head of LAC and Permanency) introduced the Brent Fostering Service Quarterly Monitoring Report for the period 1 October 2018 to 31 December 2018. Members' attention was drawn to the summary of activities regarding foster carer recruitment. Onder Beter highlighted that these had not proven as fruitful as hoped and moving forward, new ideas would be explored with the new Marketing and Recruitment Officer. One such idea was that the Marketing and Recruitment Officer would attend some home visits with supervising social workers to map networks to identify potential recruitment opportunities. Proposals were also contained in the 2020-22 budget for joint recruitment activity with neighbouring boroughs. Pooling resources in this way would enable the local authority to better compete with Independent Fostering Agencies and, if approved, it was hoped to have a joint recruitment campaign from May 2019. Drawing Members' attention to other key activity, Onder Beter advised that Brent offered a strong learning and development offer for foster carers and had received very positive feedback from the 23 courses which had been held in the reporting period. Positive feedback had also been received in relation to the Foster Carers Ball, an event which had been held in December 2018, to thank Brent's foster carers for looking after the children and to encourage lifelong links for children.

Members questioned how a forthcoming recruitment event had been advertised and were informed that in addition to social media, open evenings were featured in the Brent Magazine and on the council's website, stands were held and events were promoted directly in the community in a variety of ways. In response to a query from

a member of Care in Action, Onder Beter acknowledged the value of LAC and Care Leavers sharing their experiences directly with foster carers and staff and advised that this could be explored for recruitment and open evening events.

The Chair thanked everyone for their contribution to the discussion.

10. **Verbal update on 'Regionalisation of Adoption'**

Onder Beter (Head of LAC and Permanency) updated the committee on the progress in establishing a West London Regional Adoption Agency. Members were informed that the process was nearing completion. The London Borough of Hillingdon had recently withdrawn however, and this had necessitated further work to redraw the model, which would subsequently be submitted to Cabinet for approval.

11. **Any other urgent business**

None.

The meeting closed at 6.47 pm

COUNCILLOR MILI PATEL  
Chair