



MINUTES OF THE CORPORATE PARENTING COMMITTEE

Wednesday 24 July 2019 at 5.00 pm

PRESENT: Councillor M Patel (Chair), Councillor Conneely (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Gbajumo, Kansagra and W Mitchell Murray

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 Thakkar. Councillor Mitchell Murray attended as a substitute member.

3. Declarations of interests

There were no declarations of interest.

4. Deputations

There were no deputations.

5. Minutes of the previous meeting - 24 July 2019

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the previous meeting held on Wednesday 24 April 2019 were approved as an accurate record.

6. Matters arising (if any)

There were no matters arising.

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

JBK advised that work was ongoing with the Junior Care in Action group to continue to build relationships and encourage membership. Recent activities had included visits to the theatre, a theatre workshop and bowling. Work was also underway to contribute to the development of the Pathway Plan App for Looked After Children and Care Leavers.

SK had attended the All Party Parliamentary Group for LAC and Care Leavers and had found the experience enlightening but highlighted that they did not appear to be

focussing on the real issues that young people needed solutions to. The committee further heard that SK was also involved with Brent Youth Parliament and the London Borough of Culture via the Blueprint Collective.

The committee thanked the representatives for their update and extended congratulations to JBK who had recently won a Pride of Brent Award.

RESOLVED: That the Update from Care In Action / Care Leavers in Action representatives be noted

8. Annual Corporate Parenting Report 2018/19

The committee received the Annual Corporate Parenting Report for 2018/19 which set out a profile of Brent's Looked After Children (LAC) and Care Leavers and reported on annual activity, highlighting strengths and areas for development. Onder Beter (Head of LAC and Permanency) drew members' attention to the summary of committee activity detailed at paragraph 3.4 of the report, thanking members for the challenge and scrutiny provided over the year. Members were further reminded of the 'Good' overall Ofsted judgement received following the Inspection of Brent's Children's Services (ILACS) May and June 2018 and the 'Outstanding' judgement received with respect to the progress and experience of LAC and Care Leavers. Onder Beter noted that a variety of work had been undertaken to support LAC and Care Leavers to participate in the decision making process impacting their lives, including the continued use of the Bright Spots survey, which measured the quality of Looked After Children's care experience and their sense of well-being.

The Chair thanked Onder Beter for his introduction to the report and invited comments and questions from the committee.

Members welcomed the report and sought updates on the recruitment of permanent Social Workers and Personal Advisors and on the caseloads for Brent's social workers. The committee sought details of the percentage of Care Leavers progressing to university and requested that future reports include details of the number of the Care Leavers undertaking apprenticeships and include a breakdown by ethnicity and gender.

RESOLVED: That the Annual Corporate Parenting Report for 2018/19 be noted.

9. Update on Semi-independent Provision for looked after children and care leavers

The committee received a report on semi-independent provision for looked after children and care leavers. In introducing the report, Shirley Parks (Head of Forward Planning Performance and Partnerships) advised that approximately 60 Looked After Children (LAC) and 87 care leavers were accommodated by 35 providers. Providers were commissioned through various mechanisms, including a contract framework established by the West London Alliance. The council worked closely with the providers to ensure the needs of Brent's LAC and care leavers were met and that they felt safe and secure in the placement. Of particular note was the work with the provider, Centrepont. Brent had awarded a block contract to Centrepont in July 2018 for the provision of up to 60 placements, subject to identification of

suitable properties. Centrepont provided a high support unit and a range of additional resources and support and having a strong supplier relationship enabled greater influence over the quality of the provision. Concluding the introduction, Shirley Parks emphasised that semi-independent was seen as an equivalent to 'Stay Put' arrangements whereby a care leaver chose to remain in their foster home, and the expectation was that the young people would be supported in developing independence skills in a safe environment.

In the subsequent discussion, the committee welcomed the report, in particular noting the support provided to young people in semi-independent provision and the recognition of the importance of the relationship between commissioner and provider. Members sought further details about ongoing monitoring, including site visits and questioned whether officers had any concerns regarding provider engagement. Members further questioned which providers owned the properties where LAC and Care leavers were placed, noting that ownership would confer some leverage for providers, as the units would be lost to the council if the contracts were not maintained. An update was sought on the NHS Go app and the health passport. Further details were sought of the project with Barnardo's to support consistent commissioning of high quality semi-independent provision.

RESOLVED:

that an update report on semi-independent provision be provided to the committee in a year's time or sooner, if any issues of concern arise.

that a report on project with Barnardoes be brought to the committee in six months' time.

10. **Brent Virtual School Annual Report 2017/18**

Sarah Miller (Head of Inclusion) introduced the Brent Virtual School Annual Report 2017/18 to the committee, which summarised the activity and impact of the Brent Virtual School over the reporting period. Members heard that a high proportion of children and young people entering care had significant gaps in school attendance and learning. Through effective partnership working with schools, Brent's LAC were making good academic progress year on year, though it was important to acknowledge that each cohort varied and each year should be looked at in isolation. It was recognised that children often needed to make social and emotional progress before academic progress could be achieved and the Virtual School had worked with the LAC and Permanency team to fund a significant programme of enrichment activities, using in part the pupil premium. A large training programme had also been supported to ensure that education was a part of the thinking of all who worked with LAC including Independent Reviewing Officers, Social workers and Designated Teachers.

Outlining the educational attainment of Brent's Looked After Children for 2017/18, Sarah Miller advised that the KS1 and KS2 cohorts were very small and referred the committee to the report for the narrative around the results achieved. At Key Stage 4, 22% of the eligible cohort achieved at least 4 passes including English or

Maths and 13% of the eligible cohort achieved the benchmark of 5 passes (grade 4+) including English and Maths, which was consistent with LAC National data.

In the subsequent discussion the committee questioned why children were more likely to enter care between the ages of 11 to 16 years' old; what alternative provision was provided for the high number of children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) and how this was quality assured; and, the support provided for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children, particularly with regard to learning to speak English.

RESOLVED:

That the Brent Virtual School Annual Report 2017/18 be noted.

11. **Brent Fostering Service Quarterly Monitoring Report: Quarter 1: 1st April to 30th June 2019**

The committee considered the Brent Fostering Service Quarterly Monitoring Report for Quarter 1, which covered the period, 1 April to 30 June. The report presented information about the general management of the in-house fostering service and how it was achieving good outcomes for children, including staffing arrangements, placement activity, recruitment and assessment of foster carers, and learning and development. Onder Beter (Head of Looked After Children and Permanency) highlighted that a bid had been submitted with Ealing and Hounslow councils to undertake some viability work regarding combined needs-led and targeted marketing and recruitment and commissioning and integration. This bid had been successful and Brent would be leading on this work going forward.

The Chair thanked the officers for their introduction of the report and invited questions from the committee. Members sought further information regarding Independent Fostering Agencies (IFAs) and the council's ability to provide appropriate and successful placements for older children coming into care.

RESOLVED:

That the Brent Fostering Service Quarterly Monitoring Report: Quarter 1: 1st April to 30th June 2019 be noted.

12. **Brent's Local Offer for Care Leavers 2018-2020: a year on**

Onder Beter (Head of Looked After Children and Permanency) introduced the report which provided an overview of the progress of the Brent Local Offer to Care Leavers during the period from 1 April 2018 – 31 March 2019 and presented an updated offer for 2019/20 for the committee's approval. Members were informed that the updated offer had not been subject to a full review but had been amended to reflect and respond to feedback received from Care Leavers via the Bright Spots Survey. This survey sought to better understand Care Leavers' experiences and sense of well-being.

RESOLVED:

That the update on Brent's Local Offer for Care Leavers 2018-2020 be noted.

13. **Any other urgent business**

None.

The meeting closed at 6.30 pm

COUNCILLOR MILI PATEL
Chair