

CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

**Meeting held on Tuesday 13 October 2015 at 5.00pm in Room F10
The Town Hall, Katharine Street, Croydon, CR0 1NX**

DRAFT MINUTES - PART A

Present: Councillor Alisa Flemming (Chair)
Councillors Andy Stranack, Maria Gatland, Bernadette Khan, Shafi Khan, Matthew Kyeremeh and Maggie Mansell

Officers Paul Chadwick, Solomon Agutu, Lisa Fenaroli, Dionne Sang, Wendy Tomlinson, Oretha Wofford, Emily Collinsbeare

Apologies: Ian Lewis, Martin Williams (Foster Carers Association), Linda Galvin (SLaM) The Chair noted that Martin Williams had stood down from the Panel and asked for a vote of thanks to be recorded for his service.

Introduction

The Chair welcomed the panel and as there were many persons present she asked the attendees to introduce themselves

A17/15 MINUTES (agenda item 1)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting be agreed and signed by the Chair.

A18/15 DISCLOSURE OF INTEREST (agenda item 3)

None

A19/15 URGENT BUSINESS (agenda item 4)

The Adoption Statement of Purpose and the Fostering Statement of Purpose had not been published with the agenda papers and so the Chair agreed that the Adoption Statement of Purpose and the Fostering Statement of Purpose be taken a urgent business.

The Adoption Statement of Purpose sets out the aims and objectives of Croydon Adoption Agency. The Chair asked the officers to avoid using acronyms during the meeting as some of the attendees and in particular the young people may not be aware of their meaning.

Officers briefly explained the reason for the Statements of Purpose. Members indicated that they had a few questions based on the statements. As the documents were not part of the original work programme officers were asked if they would accept questions "offline" Officers stated that they would be happy to provide answers

to the any questions they may have and suggested that their questions be sent via email. The chair moved and it was agreed that the statements be both received

A20/15 EXEMPT ITEMS (agenda item 5)

. There were no exempt items.

A21/15 Children In Care Council Update (agenda item 6)

The Children in Care Council is a statutory requirement for the council as a mechanism for the Council to listen to the view of young people in its care.

The Community Voice Team has been tasked with developing a Children In Care Council. In order to meet the needs and challenges which are faced by young people in care they are trying to work towards developing a Children in Care Council with the following two elements:

- 1 .An informal group that meets monthly looking at the issues for young people in care but which also has an element of fun and social activities
2. A smaller more formal group selected by young people in the in care at meetings such as the corporate parenting panel.

The Officer explained to the Panel the efforts which had been put into getting the Children in Care Council off the ground including:

- Attending team meetings to promote the Children In Care Council to social workers and find out how best to support them in promoting it
- Writing to all foster carers to make them aware of the Children in Care Council and its opportunities
- Giving young people an opportunity to explore issues of being in care and to promote the Children In Care Council
- Asking IRO's to recommend young people they feel should participate in the Children in Care Council
- Holding social events over the summer to encourage young people to join

The Officer confirmed that from November 2015 the Children In Care Council would transfer to the Leaving Care Team and will build on the work done to date.

The officer was questioned about the use of Social Media, including having a Facebook page and what type of age ranges were participating to date. The Officer explained that the Youth Council does have its own Social Media presence and it is something that they could also look to do. The age range is generally from between 11-19 years old but attendees have been as young as 8.

Members also asked how 'health' had been incorporated into the project. It was confirmed that the Leaving Care Team are currently in a good place to take this forward.

One of the young speakers (Molly) explained that she had been to a meeting of the Children In Care Council. She felt that it really helped deal with individual issues was given the opportunity to voice her opinions. She thought that although social media has its place, there are great benefits in terms of engagement in face to face meetings. She went on to say that she has been in 'the system' since she was 4 years old. She feels that it also gives young people the opportunity to meet and speak with people who they may not normally have a chance to meet.

Another of the young speakers informed the Panel that other boroughs use their Children In Care forums to add value and negotiate issues and ideas. Officers explained that Nationally the Children in care Councils have not been successful, nevertheless, officers have been looking at how some successful Councils have been running theirs. This is where the idea of hosting within the Leaving Care Team came from.

Members noted that they found it really beneficial to hear the views of the young speakers and it was pleasing to hear their enthusiasm and their willingness to engage in these types of forums. In closing the item, chair noted that it was so refreshing to have young people contributing to the discussion and wanted to inform the Young people that they are welcome to attend future meetings of the Panel.

RESOLVED- to note the contents of the report and welcome the transfer of the Children in Care Council to the Leaving Care Team.

A22/15 Social Care Annual Complaints Report (agenda item 7)

The report provides information about complaints relating to children's social care received between 1 April 2014 and 31 March 2015.

The Council received a total of 130 complaints about children's social care during the 2014/15 financial year consisting of 102 stage1 complaints, 20 stage 2 complaints and eight stage 3 complaints.

The Officer gave an overview of the complaints procedures and explained that they were a statutory requirement. The Officer explained that the largest share of complaints are made by adults on behalf of children rather than from the children themselves.

They aim to respond to children within 10 working days after receiving their complaint but have fallen short of this target.

The Young people were asked how many of them knew about the complaints procedures and they all overwhelmingly indicated that they knew about them. The young people spoke about their experiences of the complaints procedures. The form was not considered to be adequate to record the complaints as it consisted of tick boxes..

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Felt that the response time to the complaint could have been reduced and didn't feel that the response was adequate. Thought that the process could have the potential of preventing young people from recording a complaint. One young person noted that when she submitted a complaint it was discovered that the Council did not even know that she was a Croydon resident. She has now left care and is determined to help as many children in care as she can to help make the procedures better.

The young people were asked what actions they thought would help to improve the process and welcomed their responses. It was agreed that the response time to complaints would be an area which should be addressed.

The officer was both happy and unhappy with the number of complaints from Young people. Happy because it showed that young people were using the procedures to have their issues dealt with. The Officer went on to say that it was important for young people to feel that adequate procedures are in place and that they feel that they are able to contact the authority with their concerns. He also confirmed that levels of judicial reviews had dropped dramatically and they had found that housing complaints are a major issue for care leavers and can be quite a complex area.

RESOLVED: that the report be noted and that a complaints report focusing only on LAC and LAC leaving care issues be brought back to the Panel.

A23/15 Verbal Presentations from Adopters, Foster Carers, Care Leavers, UASC and LAC

A number of verbal presentations were given.

Debbie (Adopter)

She has been a foster carer for 20 years and has enjoyed the experience and has recently been accepted as an adopter. She explained how she values the work she does as an adopter. When she recently asked to adopt a family of six siblings, she did not think that the Council was taking her seriously, but it was important to keep a large family together. Although this has been the case, she made the point of explaining the experience as being 'real family life' as she has had to address a lot of issues but has had a very positive experience.

Foster Carer

She has found being a foster carer both rewarding and challenging. She has fostered a number of children and has had a good relationship through the process with Croydon. She has particularly found the experience of empowering young men very rewarding.

Kieran (LAC)

He explained that it has been a very positive experience of care and feels that his foster carers are always there for him. He went on to say that he would not have achieved what he has achieved if it wasn't for their positive support and expressed a preference to be able to stay with his foster carers beyond the age of 18 years. "Why" he asked "do we have to leave a loving foster family we are 18?" An officer then explained the "Staying Put Policy", which has recently been put in place to enable LAC to stay with their foster families. He also went on to explain the importance of placing LAC with same religion families in order to avoid what he had seen when a child was placed with a family which did not share their religion.

Care Leaver

She expressed the importance of 'matching' young people with the right carer and also the right social worker. She liked the idea of young people and LAC sitting on this type of panel as their feedback could be useful when drawing up procedures. She said that the assessment of placement need to be done better. Why could the assessments not done a place like Nandos? Having them done in the home is not allowing the young person to be candid and the social worker is more likely to side with the Carer.

Molly (LAC)

She has been in care since the age of 4 years old. She has experienced several moves with foster carers. She expressed the opinion that the carer and the child should be closely monitored as they are bound to change over the long-term. Currently, there is no real assessment of the child or carer in relation to this. Everyone needs to strive for a professional and good relationship.

One of the worse experiences for her was living with a carer where there was a difficult relationship with but this is one of the situations where having a good social worker is paramount.

She is extremely happy with her current social worker and feels that she can rely on her. She said that her social worker really pushes her to be the best that she can be and looks for resources she needs.

Care Leaver

This care leaver was very complimentary about the placement he had got with KPMG. Before the placement he did not see himself as a KPMG style worker but has enjoyed the training immensely. He now wants to be able to help other Young people. He is really

passionate about helping young people especially those going through the Criminal justice system as he understands how easy it may be to end up in that situation. Growing up on a council estate he understands and has experienced the pressures in relation to 'gang culture' and experienced his friend being murdered which is the experience which changed his outlook and encouraged him to want to work to help others who are experiencing similar issues. He is willing to work with the Council in any voluntary capacity to help young people. Following a discussion of policing and criminal justice system it was proposed that this item should be on a future agenda.

Chanel (Care Leaver)

She was part of the Children In Care Council when it first started and found it valuable. She thinks the Leaving Care Team are great.

Many other issues were raised during this open forum including rapid changes in social workers and how this can be stopped as it is destabilising for placements. Young people sitting on matching panels. Same religion placements. Advocates to be able to assist at placement interviews.

The Panel asked the Young people to give say what had been bad and what had been good in their placements. The Panel was pleased to hear that many of the good things mentioned was the support received from Social workers.. A number of social Workers were mentioned by name and particular praise was given to Dionne Sang. Some young people mentioned the support they had received to progress to higher education, such as the LAC who went on to Buckingham University to study Nursing who emphasised the need to be positive. She was very complimentary about being placed with a same religion family which helped her to adapt.

RESOLVED: to note the many helpful comments from young people and every attempt be made to capture not only what they had said but also offers for help to other LAC and offers to be part of the Corporate Parenting Panel. (2) that Protocols for policing and young people be placed on the CPP agenda

A24/15 Corporate Parenting Work Programme Report (agenda item 9)

This item was not presented.

A25/15 Dates of Future Meetings and Work Programme

13 January 2016 at 5pm

9 March 2016 at 5pm

The meeting ended at 7.00pm