

Item No. 9.	Classification: Open	Date: 12 July 2016	Meeting Name: Corporate Parenting Committee
Report title:		Update on Care Service Response to Issues Raised by Speakerbox	
Ward(s) or groups affected:		All	
From:		Director of Children & Families	

RECOMMENDATION

1. That the corporate parenting committee accepts the further response of the Care Service to the issues raised by Speakerbox at its meeting with corporate parenting committee on 27 October 2015.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

2. The corporate parenting committee meets termly with Speakerbox for the purpose of elected members hearing directly from young people in care and for care leavers to establish what the most important issues are for them. These are usually facilitated by Lucy Milich, Children's Rights Officer and attended by key officers responsible for services for children in care and care leavers.
3. On 9 February 2016 the council's cabinet agreed the Children in care and Care Leavers Strategy 2016-19. The first priority of this is "children and young people have a say and their voice is heard".
4. This report covers the key themes from the meeting on 27 October 2015 that Speakerbox shared with elected members and the response of the Care Service to date.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

5. The first theme was family, particularly sibling contact.

"sometimes we just want to see our siblings and no one else from the family"

"in LAC Reviews we should get to decide how much we want to see our siblings"

6. A workshop on sibling contact took place on 11 March 2016 facilitated by Celia Parker, Principal Social Worker for Children and Lucy Milich, Children's Rights Officer. 18 social workers attended. The feedback was very positive. There is a commitment to run 2 further workshops this year, the next one planned for September 2016 once the new Principal Social Worker for Children has settled into their role.
7. It is planned that Siblings Together, an organisation dedicated to promoting contact with siblings in care through holidays or weekend events, has been invited to meet with the Care Service management group with the intention of promoting this as a more flexible fun way where siblings can spend more time together. The organisation is already used by social workers for their sibling

groups, for example one group of 4 siblings in 2 different placements have been booked for a holiday together this summer.

8. It should be emphasised that sibling contact should be assessed as being in a child's best interests and there is a duty upon the social workers to promote such contact.
9. The second theme was communication between social workers, personal advisors and young people. The area of privacy was a particular concern.

"right to privacy"

"location where we meet....consider location"

10. A short film is being commissioned through Catch 22 with the purpose of engaging social workers and personal advisors on the importance of privacy and relationships to use as a tool to influence them to think more about the impact on children and young people and be used as a regular part of induction. The first meeting about this is planned for 20 June 2016.
11. Training was run for 15 social workers in their first year post qualifying (Assessed and Supported Year in Employment) on communicating with children in care in February 2016.
12. A feature article was put in the Speakerbox magazine which goes out to all children in care and care leavers about what to do if they don't feel listened too and how to contact an advocate or make a complaint.
13. Feedback about Personal Education Plan meetings and young people's experience of them as feedback to the Virtual School Head who reports she discussed issues of communication with young people fully within her team meeting.
14. The children's rights worker has to date attended four social work group meetings to share YP feedback .
15. The Care service is eagerly awaiting the refreshed Golden Rules set by children in care for how social workers work with them. Promoting these and measuring our Care Service against these rules is seen as a very important way to improve how we work in this area.
16. The third theme was placements. Particularly the standards and training of foster carers and how they are monitored.

"standards for foster carers"

"importance who you are living with"

17. The fostering service has renewed its approach to recruiting, training and supervising foster carers. The training aspect is set out in detail in another report for the July Corporate Parenting Committee.
18. The Young inspectors project is established – 6 young people have been recruited and linked with the lead of this project in Commissioning. This project is going to arrange for young people in care and care leavers to visit properties

(mainly semi-independent) and to rate them and feed back comments to commissioners.

19. There is now an agreement with the care service and housing department that wherever possible young people should be seeing property before they are placed there.
20. The children's rights service will be helping the fostering team to develop a new foster care guide with input from young people.
21. Children's rights co-ordinator is a member of the 16 plus accommodation group that feeds into the overall approach to improving young people's accommodation in Southwark. Southwark Commissioning Unit are undertaking a consultation event this summer with young people on a possible new model and approach for identifying and supporting young people in accommodation.

Community impact statement

22. Southwark is committed to ensuring children's voices are heard whatever part of the community they are from. The council has a dedicated children's rights team committed to making this voice heard.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
None		

AUDIT TRAIL

Lead Officer	Alasdair Smith, Director of Children & Families	
Report Author	Jackie Cook, Head Of Social Work Improvement and Quality Assurance, Children's and Adults' Services	
Version	Final	
Dated	30 June 2016	
Key Decision?	No	
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER		
Officer Title	Comments sought	Comments included
Director of Law and Democracy	No	No
Strategic Director of Finance and Governance	No	No
Cabinet Member	No	No
Date final report sent to Constitutional Team		30 June 2016