

<b>LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN</b>	<b>WARDS: ALL</b>
<b>REPORT TITLE</b> Young Inspectors Report 2023: My meetings - children and families experience of social care meetings	
<b>REPORT OF</b> Director of Children’s Prevention, Family Help and Safeguarding	
<b>FOR SUBMISSION TO</b> Children, Schools and Families Scrutiny Committee	<b>DATE</b> 18 January 2024
<b>SUMMARY OF THE REPORT</b>  This report sets out the findings, key messages, and recommendations of the Young Inspectors inspection of children and families experience of social care meetings.  The main focus of the young inspection was: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To find out about experiences of children, young people and parents/ carers in their participation in children looked after review meetings, child protection conference and child in need review meetings.</li> <li>• To identify main themes based on the feedback from focus group discussions and responses to questionnaires from children, young people, parents/carers and social workers.</li> <li>• To develop parents and young people’s meetings standards/ wishes to help ensure that they are more actively involved, have more ownership of the meetings and are supported in shared decision making.</li> <li>• To develop recommendations for the service based on the responses from families and professionals.</li> </ul> <p>The conclusions that emerged from the Young Inspectors gave rise to eight key recommendations for Camden’s social care service.</p> <p><b>LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 – ACCESS TO INFORMATION:</b>          No documents which require listing were used for this report.</p> <p><b>CONTACT OFFICER:</b>          Rashida Baig, Director of Children’s Prevention, Family Help and Safeguarding          5 Pancras Square, London N1C 4AG  <a href="mailto:Rashida.Baig@camden.gov.uk">Rashida.Baig@camden.gov.uk</a></p>	
<b>RECOMMENDATIONS</b> The Children, Schools and Families Scrutiny Committee is asked: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To consider and note the content of the attached Young Inspectors report.</li> <li>2. To note the next steps as outlined in paragraph 7.3 and 7.4 of the report.</li> </ol>	



Signed:

Rashida Baig, Director of Children’s Prevention, Family Help and Safeguarding

Date: 28 December 2023

## 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Young Inspectors programme of inspections has been providing input to service planning and development in Camden for the past fifteen years. Every year, a team of Young Inspectors undertake research into the views of service users and professionals about the services provided by social care and partner agencies responsible for safeguarding children.

The views gathered from the young inspections and the analysis thereof form the core of this report and service recommendations.

This year, the team of six Young Inspectors aged 18 - 24 applied their own experience of Camden services in the design and conduct of this research.

- 1.2 The Young Inspectors programme provides an opportunity for young people to give their views on children's services, make recommendations for change, and informs the co-design of services. The programme offers opportunities for the members of the Young Inspectors team to gain an insight into the world of work, learn new skills, gain confidence and to attain a sense of achievement. These can, in turn, help improve access to education, employment and training.

The achievements by members of the Young Inspectors team, provides an inspiration to other young people to participate in future inspections of services and other engagement initiatives.

This is what Young Inspectors said about their experience of being involved in the project:

*"Meeting the new team and getting to know each other was one of the highlights of the project. Working as a team and learning about our experiences really consolidated the relationship and experience. Being a part of this project has reaffirmed my passion to work in Camden."*

- Jenny, Young Inspector 2023.

*"I found interviewing senior members of staff quite challenging as a very introverted person. However, gradually, I became more confident and soon found myself to be comfortable asking questions to senior members of staff."*

- Kacey, Young Inspector 2023.

*"I enjoyed doing focus groups discussions with young people and with parents".*

- Hussain, Young Inspector 2023.

*"I enjoyed the teamwork, sharing ideas and working together. The project has helped me to get more confidence to speak English and share my ideas in the group. I have learnt about social care service and different areas of social work."*

- Fyori, Young Inspector 2023.

*"The most challenging for me was interviewing parents face to face as parents often have much more to say. The project sparked my passion and showed me that I can do much more than I expected of myself. It also gave me a taste of the office environment which is rare opportunity for young people to experience".*

- Kyrah, Young Inspector 2023.

## 2. RECENT INSPECTION – EXAMPLES OF POSITIVE IMPACT ON THE DEVELOPMENT AND QUALITY OF SERVICES

The annual Young Inspectors programme continues to undertake inspections of a wide range of statutory services with recommendations being used to adapt and improve services and processes.

These are a few examples of outcomes of Young Inspectors recommendations from the young inspection of kinship care last year in 2022.

	KEY RECOMMENDATIONS	OUTCOMES
<p>Young inspectors 2022</p> <p>Kinship care support</p>	<p>To ensure that prior to making any kinship care arrangement, a Family Group Conference always offered in order to make a Family Network plan to support the child and the parent(s) and provide support to ensure that the plans are carried out by family members.</p> <p>To ensure that all children and young people in a Kinship care or Special guardianship arrangement are provided with age-appropriate information, including what to expect from living with a family member, contact arrangements with parents and what happens at 18.</p> <p>More consideration to be given to providing preparation groups and workshops for applicants wishing to become kinship carers or special guardians.</p> <p>To provide access for kinship carers and</p>	<p>FGC have been promoted to all prospective Kinship carers. Work has been undertaken to develop the recording system for FGC that will encourage SWs to ensure that all Kinship carers receive the offer of an FGC.</p> <p>Currently, more than a third of FGC plans carry offers of long- term family care. We have started to monitor FGC plans in response to YI recommendations and track family network contributions.</p> <p>Work is underway to develop age-appropriate leaflets for CYP in Special guardianship and Kinship arrangements.</p> <p>A team away day was held on 11<sup>th</sup> October 2022 where planning was undertaken on the development of training and preparation groups for special guardians/ kinship carers.</p> <p>Training that is currently available for Foster carers is open to Special guardians and Kinship carers. The North London Fostering and Permanence consortium also</p>

	<p>special guardians to undertake a wide range of training including understanding trauma, non- violent resistance, life story work and managing contact and conflict with family members.</p> <p>To set up a regular meeting space for a support group for kinship carers and special guardians and to advertise the support group.</p>	<p>provide a training programme that is open to all special guardians. The programme will be updated and reviewed at the SG/Kinship carers support group.</p> <p>A support group for guardians and kinship carers was set up in November 2022 following the YI recommendations. The group meets monthly.</p>
--	--	--

### 3. YOUNG INSPECTION 2023 “My MEETINGS – children and families experience of social care meetings”.

#### THE AIMS

*“Partnership with families has a long history in services for children and families and partnership principles underpin the 1989 Children Act. Moreover, the right for children and families to be involved in decision making about their lives, and for the plans to be focused on their individual needs is well argued in social work literature and practice “ (What works for Children’s Social care 2019).*

An important additional consideration to supporting children’s right to participation in decisions that affect their lives is linked to the Children’s Act 2004.

*“This involves understanding how and when to involve children and young people in meetings, and how, if they are not in attendance at the meeting, their views are represented, and influence decision-making.” (What works for Children’s Social Care- Shared decision- making meeting programme theory).*

The Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child states that *every child has the right to express their views freely in all matters affecting them, and to have their views considered and taken seriously.*

The above underpinning principles of involving children, young people and families in decisions affecting their lives have provided the focus of this Young Inspection.

# The aims



## Exploring the experiences of social care meetings

- 1** To find out about experiences of participation in children, young people and parents / carers of children looked after review meetings, child protection conference and child in need review meetings.
- 2** To identify main themes based on the feedback from focus group discussions and responses to questionnaires from children, young people, parents/carers and social workers.
- 3** To develop parents and young people meetings standards / wishes to help ensure that they are more actively involved, have more ownership of the meetings and are supported in shared decision making.
- 4** To develop recommendations for the service based on the responses from families and professionals.

## 4. YOUNG INSPECTORS – APPROACH





Young inspections involve a range of research tools such as: desktop research, interviewing professionals, consultation via questionnaires and focus groups to explore the views of young people who use the service as well as staff members.

This year, the process of gathering information included the following:

# Approach



## The young inspectors' approach to their investigation

-  **Interviewing managers** of Independent Reviewing Service, Family Group Conference, Children in Need Independent Reviewing Officer, Child Protection Conference chair to understand professional's perspective and experience of children and parents/carers participation in meetings.
-  **Focus group discussions** with young people and with parents to learn about their experiences of participating in meetings and what makes a good meeting.
-  **Research of publications** and videos relating to children, young people and parents/carers meaningful participation in meetings.
-  **Obtaining feedback** from children, young people, parents/carers and social workers to questionnaires developed by the Young Inspectors team.

## 5. YOUNG INSPECTION - EMERGING THEMES

The “Shared decision making” report by What Works for Children’s Social Care (2019) identifies three key stages and processes that have crucial influence on how shared decision making could be facilitated in order to achieve best outcomes for children and families.

The three stages are as follows:

**Pre-meeting preparation;** to ensure that the family understands the purpose of the meeting and are involved in the planning.

**The meeting itself;** time in the meeting to develop a plan for the family.

**Follow up after the meeting;** time after the meeting including reviews and adjusting the plan.

Young people and parents discussed the three stages and have developed the following meetings standards and wishes.

### 5.1 MEETINGS STANDARDS AND WISHES BY YOUNG PEOPLE

# Emerging themes

From focus group discussions

## Meetings standards and wishes by young people

**BEFORE THE MEETING** (Children looked after after review meetings)

✓ Social workers to meet with young person and prepare together a list of topics for the agenda.	✓ Young person to have the opportunity to discuss the social worker’s report before the meeting.
✓ Social worker to discuss with the young person the key people that need to attend and who they would like to invite to attend the meeting.	✓ Young person to meet the chair in person or have the contact with the chair via email / telephone before the meeting.
✓ Discuss with the young person who they would like to invite to support them to express their views at the meeting.	



# Emerging themes



## From focus group discussions

### DURING THE MEETING

- Make the environment of the meeting friendly and relaxing.
- Support the young people to feel listened to and included in decisions.
- Support young people to participate in the meeting, regardless of their age.
- Use a strengths-based approach, highlight what is going well.
- Make meetings solution-focused, aimed at supporting young people to grow and develop their full potential.

### AFTER THE MEETING

- Social worker or the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) to meet with the young person to reflect on the meeting, explain what will happen next and when; also to discuss how the young person felt about the meeting.
- Social Worker or IRO to check with the young person if there is anything else they would like to ask or discuss after the meeting.
- Once the meeting has finished, allow the young person time to relax and unwind.

## 5.2 MEETINGS STANDARDS AND WISHES BY PARENTS AND CARERS

# Emerging themes



## From focus group discussions

### Meetings standards and wishes by parents / carers

#### BEFORE THE MEETING (Child protection conferences and children in need review meetings)

- ✓ Chair to meet with parents/carers prior to the child protection conference/ child in need review meeting to build trust and ensure engagement for ongoing contact and dialogue.
- ✓ Social worker to ensure that parents have seen the social work report prior to the meeting and are given the opportunity to discuss and give their views.
- ✓ Social worker and parent to work together on a collaborative assessment of risk in the lead up to the meeting.
- ✓ Parent routinely offered an advocate and efforts made to include family members in the meeting.



# Emerging themes



## From focus group discussions

### DURING THE MEETING

- Social worker to ensure that only key members of the network attend the meeting so that it is less intimidating for parents.
- Chair and other professionals involved in meeting to ensure that no jargon is used and that signs of safety terms like Harm and Safety statement are fully explained.
- Make the environment of the meeting relaxing to promote productive and positive discussion.
- Family Group Conference plan option to be on the agenda of the meeting.

### AFTER THE MEETING

- Social worker to meet with the parent/carer to reflect on the meeting and to discuss next steps and support.
- Social worker/IRO/Advocate to make sure that parents/carers understand what has been discussed and the decisions made.
- Report to be written in accessible language and to consider providing a shorter, simplified report for parents and families.

## 6. YOUNG INSPECTORS' RECOMMENDATIONS

The main recommendations which emerged from the analysis of responses to questionnaires, focus group discussions and interviews with service managers are as follows:

- I Team managers to give further consideration to **embedding a culture** of supporting children and families to attend meetings and **enable participation in shared decision-making**. Enabling dialogue between professionals and family members.
- II **Better pre-meeting preparation** to ensure that children and families understand the purpose of the meeting and are involved in the planning.
- III Social workers to ensure that **only key members of the network attend** the child protection and children looked after review meetings, to make them less intimidating for parents and children.
- IV Social workers provide **timely reports** to the family and the professional network to enable a better understanding of the support for the family.
- V **Support for and communication** with children, young people and families **after the meeting** to ensure that they understand the plan and to give them an opportunity to reflect and comment on the proposal.
- VI Make **child protection conferences** more supportive for parents and consider simplified, easy to understand reports and plans.
- VII Promote **meaningful participation for Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children** and ensure reports are provided in a more creative way so they are easy for young people to understand.



VIII **Training** for social workers, managers, Child Protection Officers and Independent Reviewing Officers on best practice around planning and supporting children and families to participate in meetings.

## **7. RESPONSE OF THE CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD AND HOW THE FINDINGS WILL BE TAKEN FORWARD**

7.1 The Corporate Parenting Board discussed the initial findings and key recommendations at their meeting held on the 18 October 2023. The meeting took the opportunity to acknowledge the work and extend thanks to the young people for carrying out the inspection and for producing an excellent report.

7.2 The Young Inspectors key findings and messages for services supporting young people and families to enable participation in shared decision making will inform further service developments.

7.3 The Director of Children's Prevention, Family Help and Safeguarding will, after considering comments from the Camden Corporate Parenting Board and the CSF Scrutiny Committee, make a decision on the Young Inspectors' recommendations.

If the Director decides to proceed, then she will devise an action plan in respect of all the recommendations made by the Young Inspectors. The proposed action plan and a report on progress will be presented to the Corporate Parenting Board in January 2024.

7.4 The Director for CSSW will be responsible for monitoring the implementation of the young inspector's recommendations and will report on its progress to the Corporate Parenting Board.

## **8 COMMENTS OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR FOR FINANCE**

The Director of Finance has been consulted on the contents of this report and has no further comments to add.

## **9 THE LEGAL COMMENTS OF THE BOROUGH SOLICITOR**

The Borough Solicitor has been consulted on the contents of the report and has no comments to add to the report.

## **10 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS**

There are no environmental implications in this report.

**REPORT ENDS**