



## **Mayor of London's A City for all Londoners - Response by The Cornerstone Partnership**

### **Dec 2016**

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#### **Introduction**

The Cornerstone Partnership is a social enterprise currently working with local Government (14 local authorities) as well as central Government (DfE). Our mission is to improve the lives of children touched by the care system. Founded 18 months ago, we have already impacted the lives of over 175 families across Berkshire and London while generating over £3.5m savings to local authorities.

Through our work we have identified the need to address planning and housing policy in London to improve the life chances for those in the care system.

For this reason, we welcome the opportunity to comment on the Mayor's consultation on The City for All Londoner's document. Our response to this consultation is informed by Cornerstone's direct experience of working with London Boroughs to find suitable foster and adoptive families for children in need.

#### **Housing**

While we commend your vision to tackle the housing crisis including making housing more affordable through a 50% affordability target and the launch of a new No Nights sleeping Rough Task Force recognising that the most vulnerable people in London are often the city's rough sleepers, we feel that the issue of children in the care system and unaccompanied minors has been overlooked.

While the onus is on the local authority to deliver its sufficiency strategy – there is no mention as to how the Mayor can take a leadership role in preventing children being left in the care system with no permanent home.

As you may already know, looked after children's life chances are significantly impacted by the speed and quality with which they achieve a permanent stable home. This is put into sharp focus by the truly dreadful statistics that over 65% of people in young offender institutes have been in the care system and the fact that children who wait longer than 12 months for a permanent family ultimately do worse in terms of education, health, career opportunities, teenage pregnancy and so on.

The situation will be further exacerbated with the growing refugee crisis adding pressure on local authority fostering services to find suitable homes for the many unaccompanied minors entering the country.

The existing housing situation in London adds pressure on the ability of families to meet the necessary criteria of having a spare room to be able to foster or adopt.

Across London there is a significant shortfall in the number of local authority ("in house") foster carers to meet the needs of London's growing population of looked after children. Recent estimates show that across London an additional 1000 households are needed.

Consequently, children are having to be sent outside of London often to foster carers provided by Independent Fostering Agencies (IFAs), away from their support networks and having to move schools etc at great personal cost to the child.



Unsuccessful placements and constant instability can in turn lead to homelessness for those most vulnerable.

We feel strongly that this should be addressed in your plans and children in the care system/unaccompanied minors should be included as a group in addition to those already identified as most vulnerable.

The barriers that children in care and unaccompanied minors face should be explicitly identified with actions how these obstacles will be removed outlined in the plan.

## **Economy**

### Children and Young People

We share the Mayor's view that every child in London should have the best possible chances for health, happiness and success, and applaud the leadership role that the Mayor seeks in bringing together the organisations that shape our young people's education.

However, too often the needs of children with attachment issues – such as those who are fostered or adopted, those on the autistic spectrum, those who have suffered loss etc are neglected by the system. These children can then become more susceptible to their life chances being significantly impacted. We would urge the Mayor to recognise these issues and use his leadership to support children, young people and families who may fall in to this category. Academic excellence and quality childcare are only part of the jigsaw and the failure to focus on other aspects hinders the positive multiple outcomes that might otherwise be achieved.

## **A city for all Londoners**

### Health Inequalities and Mental Health

We share the Mayor's vision for London that strives to be a more socially integrated city and welcome the first step in focusing on policy areas that directly affect the quality of people's lives and have an impact on how we all live together, particularly for those who feel excluded from London's success. While we recognise that the Mayor has both statutory and non-statutory strategies that can impact health outcomes e.g health inequalities strategy and mental health strategy – once again we think the Mayor could be more ambitious in removing the barriers that looked after children and unaccompanied minors face.

We would like to explore with you possible solutions to ensure that a generation of children do not lose their chance of a stable, happy and successful life as a result of the failure to break the cycle of entry/re-entry into the care system and the criminal justice system.

We believe there is a leadership vacuum that the Mayor could fill linking this agenda with health and social care in a purposeful way to tackle inequality, improve outcomes and reduce cost for local authorities.

We would welcome the opportunity to explore these areas further and outline how the Mayor can deliver what is best for all Londoners, particularly improving the life chances of all our children and young people.