

Corporate Parenting Panel

Minutes

20 October 2022

Present:

Chair: Councillor Hitesh Karia

Councillors: Simon Brown Chetna Halai
Matthew Goodwin-Freeman Sasi Suresh

**Non-voting
Advisory
Member:** Valerie Griffin Foster Carer

**Officers (in
attendance):**

Senel Arkut	Corporate Director, People Participation Officer
Joy Bell	Head of Service – Corporate Parenting
Jacinta Jain	Assistant Headteacher
Sarah Moriarty	Named Nurse for Children Looked After In Harrow
Christine Nichols	Interim Designated Nurse Safeguarding Children and LAC (Harrow)
Kathryn Robinson	Advisory Teacher
Peter Tolley	Divisional Director Children's Services
Mellina Williamson-Taylor	Virtual School Headteacher

15. Attendance by Reserve Members

RESOLVED: To note the attendance at this meeting of the following duly appointed Reserve Members:-

Ordinary Member

Reserve Member

Councillor Aneka Shah-Levy

Councillor Sasi Suresh

16. Declarations of Interest

RESOLVED: To note that the following interests were declared:

All agenda items

Councillor Hitesh Karia declared a non-pecuniary interest in that he worked for an organization that provided certain children's services. He would remain in the room whilst the matters were considered and voted upon.

17. Minutes

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 13 July 2022 be taken as a read and signed correct record.

18. Public Questions

RESOLVED: To note that no public questions had been received.

19. Petitions

RESOLVED: To note that no petitions were received.

Resolved Items

20. Deputations

RESOLVED: To note that no deputations were received.

21. Update from care experienced young people about their experiences

Members welcomed a care experienced young person who had recently graduated as a Social Worker and Joy Bell, the recently appointed Participation Officer. A further young person had been unable to attend due to previously scheduled maths tuition.

The Head of Corporate Parenting asked the young person in attendance to share what support Harrow had given her in her aspirations and what in retrospect might have helped, particularly given her more recent knowledge as a newly qualified social worker.

The young person reported on her experience of being looked-after by Harrow Council and receiving leaving care services. She stated that at the time of growing up in care she had been unaware of the active support that was given, for example listening to her request for a long term placement. It had been recognised that she wished to advocate for herself and lead meetings. She had received very good support during GCSEs, the Virtual school were aware of her motivation and provided support and extra-curricular assistance.

She expressed the view that many young people did not understand the concept of pathway plans, and doubted whether half of them read it. After the first review she had learned the benefit but it took four reviews before she realised people's roles. Her attendance at number of interview panels for social work staff had been very helpful both in showing how candidates were filtered and graded but also taught her how bias was taken out and what the candidates brought to the table. Her personal advisor was a turning point in life, someone who understood her.

In response to a question as to her experience of health assessments, she stated that she had not understood the intention, she had felt continually screened and at the time had not understood why she was withdrawn from class to, for instance, have weight and height checked. She welcomed the suggestion of a shadowing opportunity and it was agreed that the Named Nurse for Children Looked After in Harrow would offer this.

The Participation Officer stated that she had been the Social Worker for the second young person for three years. The young person had recently turned 16 and was studying at a performance arts college. He had felt well supported during his recent transition, had moved away from where he was living and aimed to attend university when 18. He considered that his aspirations were really well supported such as her attending university open days with him. The only area of disappointment was the timeliness of extra tuition in English and maths as they were not as quickly provided as he would wish, particularly during the pandemic. Now he was 16 he would like to lead reviews.

he Panel was interested that young people who were interested in speaking and advocating for themselves were given the opportunity when ready to lead meetings about their circumstances. It welcomed the flexibility of moving from generic processes in such cases but noted that not all young people wished to develop in this way.

Arising from the discussion, the Head of Corporate Parenting informed the Panel that the pathway plan was effectively the care plan. The officers would need to look at how to engage young people in connection with the plan and ensure that they understood its purpose.

The Head of Corporate Planning asked the young person what three things she considered the Council could do to improve.

The Young Person expressed the view that more regular logs would be beneficial. As a young person in care she had no photographs or memories and life story work from the foster carer and social worker would provide help going forward. She had requested her documents from Harrow Council and was disappointed that her name had been misspelt and the papers were out of date order.

The Head of Corporate Parenting stated that life story and records were considered important. The Head Teacher of the Virtual School informed the Panel that teachers were encouraged to show a piece of work that the child

had been proud of in order to provide memories at every PEP (Personal Education Plan) meeting.

Secondly, the Young Person suggested less use of jargon as it was confusing, for example RO, CLA review and pathway plans. The Panel considered that the need to break down jargon was important, with less acronyms and items such as IRO written in full with an explanation. There should be signposting regarding the understanding of everyone's roles.

Thirdly, better support for moving on from care. There had been a moment when she had felt forgotten but this was then picked up by her personal adviser. It should be recognised that not all young people wanted to move onto independent living at the same age, some needed space and that they might not wish to attend university. The Advisory Member stated that the foster carer could assist in progress chasing and in her experience young people were ready to move on at different paces.

The Panel and officers thanked the young person for the very helpful feedback.

RESOLVED: That the update be noted.

22. Update and performance for Corporate Parenting Service

The Panel received a presentation from the Head of Corporate Parenting including the performance scorecard, demographics and disproportionality, participation service update, Ofsted regulations and impact on placement sufficiency, and challenges and achievements. Members were invited to the next CIC (Children In Care) awards.

With regard to the performance indicators, the Head of Corporate Parenting stated that Harrow had performed better than its statistical neighbours and England average on all twelve indicators. In response to questions Members were informed that the targets had been previously set by the Panel and could be revised if wished. It was noted that the targets for indicators 3 and 12 were accumulative. It was agreed that future such tables take the form of bar or pie charts.

Arising from discussion on the percentage of Children Looked After placed more than 20 miles away from home, the Divisional Director undertook to provide a breakdown as to the reason for the placements. In addition it was agreed that future such reports would indicate the number of young people in each indicator as some contained small numbers.

The Panel discussed the demographics and a Member suggested that it would be more meaningful to make comparisons with other London Boroughs rather than all local authorities. He also requested a keynote explanation for the number of 16+ CLA.

In response to a question regarding the costs of the Commissioning Alliance accreditation scheme, the Divisional Director stated that the cost impact was speculative.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the presentation be noted; and
- (2) future reports include graphs and further information as detailed above.

23. Virtual School Performance Update

The Panel received a presentation on the performance of the Harrow Virtual School for the 2021/22 academic year from the Headteacher for CLA (Children Looked After).

The Virtual Headteacher drew particular attention to:

- The Virtual School was particularly proud of the seven students beginning university;
- Post Covid, officers were again visiting schools;
- Those young people identified with Special Education Needs received Personal Education Plans which resulted in additional budget provision. PEP returns remained at 100%;
- The number of suspensions remained the same as the pre pandemic level. This was on par with the English average. The aim was to reduce the number of suspensions. It was unusual for more girls to be suspended than boys. A specialist project for girls would be put in place.
- 75% of students from White backgrounds achieved one or more GCSE passes compared to 100% of students from Asian and Other Mixed Backgrounds. Further support and specialist interventions for White/White British students were in place to ensure that this cohort makes proportional progress against their peers. It should be noted that as the cohort sizes were small the situation could change the following year.

In response to a question regarding suspensions it was noted that there was an Inclusion Pathway plan which was a document that schools could tap into. A Member stated that it would be useful to receive more detail on the reasons for suspension. The Director of Children's Services indicated that case studies would be provided in future reports.

The Panel congratulated the Virtual School team on the report. It expressed congratulations to the seven students achieving university places and noted the interventions with regard to the suspension of girls and performance of white young people.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the presentation be noted; and
- (2) future reports include case studies detailing reasons for suspensions.

24. Update and Performance on Health for Children Looked After

The Panel received a presentation from a representative (Named Nurse for Children Looked After in Harrow) of the Central and North West London NHS Foundation Trust. The presentation outlined the key performance indicators for Harrow CLA, exception reporting, and further areas of assistance provided to the Council.

The Named Nurse drew particular attention to:

- The situation regarding dental checks would be monitored and support provided when contact was made by the social worker. Checks would be made for out of area appointments;
- The reasons for in excess of 41 days between identification as CLA and completion of the Initial Health Assessment included hospitalisation, a large sibling group with one carer, and issues of consent. If appropriate for out borough assessments, there would be liaison with the specialist nurse for that area;
- The Nurse made phone contact the day prior to the appointment as a reminder. In the event the young person did not attend phone contact would be made to ascertain the reason and maybe alleviate worries in order to minimise the possibility of a second missed appointment;
- With regard to the case study, the statement that he had not been listened to had been followed up and the nurse had advocated for him.

The Panel thanked the officer for the comprehensive presentation. It was suggested that texting potentially be used to communicate with the young people. The case study indicated flexibility and willingness to go the extra mile such as the nurse attending both the assessment and LAC review.

RESOLVED: That the presentation be noted.

(Note: The meeting, having commenced at 6.00 pm, closed at 8.30 pm).

(Signed) Councillor Hitesh Karia
Chair