

Corporate Parenting Panel

Minutes

31 July 2024

Present:

Chair: Councillor Hitesh Karia

Councillors: Matthew Goodwin-Freeman Krishna Suresh
Vipin Mithani Sasikala Suresh

Officers (in attendance):	Paula Arriazu	Psychologist
	Catherine Clarke	Managing Director Coram Adoption and Families
	Sara Dawson	Clinical Psychologist
	Kate Dexter	Assistant Director – Corporate Parenting
	Maria Luscombe	Head of Harrow Children’s Services, CNWL
	David McNulty	Director of Housing
	Christine Nichols	Named Nurse for Children Looked After in Harrow
	Bridget Owen	Designated Nurse Looked After Children
	Diane Saunders	Children's Social Care Service Manager
	Hellan Timothy-James	Coram Ambitious for Adoption Service Manager
	Joanna Tortipidis	Senior Education Officer
	Meryl Westlake	Senior Data and Performance Analyst
Mellina Williamson-Taylor	Headteacher, Harrow Virtual School	
Apologies received:	Councillor Simon Brown	Councillor Chetna Halai
	Valerie Griffin	Councillor Aneka Shah-Levy

92. Attendance by Reserve Members

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

Ordinary Member

Councillor Chetna Halai
Councillor Simon Brown
Councillor Aneka Shah-Levy

Reserve Member

Councillor Vipin Mithani
Councillor Sasi Suresh
Councillor Krishna Suresh

93. Appointment of Vice-Chair

RESOLVED: To appoint Councillor Simon Brown as Vice-Chair of the Corporate Parenting Panel for the 2024/2025 Municipal Year.

94. Declarations of Interest

RESOLVED: To note that there were no declarations of interest made by Members

95. Minutes

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 18 March 2024 be taken as a read and signed correct record.

96. Public Questions

RESOLVED: To note that no public questions were received.

97. Petitions

RESOLVED: To note that no petitions were received.

98. Deputations

RESOLVED: To note that deputations were received.

Resolved Items

99. Update from Participation Service and Care Experience Young People

The Panel heard a presentation presented on behalf of the participation officer that confirmed:

- 33 young people connected with free gym memberships.
- The team ran the first-ever Care-Experienced Residential Holiday, which included spending five days and four nights in the Isle of Wight with ten young people.
- Hosted seven events and activities for children looked after – with twenty-four attendees between 12-25.

- Planned eight events and activities for July and August.
- Continued to roll out Transport For London's 18-25 Care Leaver Discount to over 250 care-experienced young adults – with 41 applications currently being progressed.

It was highlighted that between 30 March to 3 April, the Participation Service's first-ever residential holiday for care-experienced young people was facilitated. This included ten teenagers who visited the Isle of Wight Outdoor Activity Centre – at no cost to the London Borough of Harrow. This fully funded experience was inclusive of coach and ferry travel to/from the Isle of Wight; food; accommodation and a host of activities. Young People were able to establish new friendships, stepped outside of their comfort zones, met other care-experienced young people, overcame anxieties, and build self-esteem. This proved to be a successful event. Such events will be continued to be organised in the near future.

Discussion centred around health and safety and it was confirmed that risk assessments were carried out for each individual who attended activities, as well as a group dynamics risk assessment, which ensured that their needs are met, all were safe, as well as identifying what additional support would be required. The participation officer also worked with the activity leaders to ensure that all health and safety considerations for each activity were considered.

The Chair and Members thanked the Officer for a positive report.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

100. Update and performance for Corporate Parenting Service

The Assistant Director of Corporate Parenting presented a report to the Panel, which covered areas such as Performance Scorecard Visits, Supervisions and Pathway Plan Performance as well as Plans to address immunisations for Children Looked After (CLA) and Plans for the weeks ahead.

It was highlighted that in March 2024, 70.6% of children had an up-to-date immunisation. This had fallen below SN and National Averages, therefore, an immediate plan had been put in place to address this. CLA health team have sent letters to Carers / young people to encourage up to date health checks. CLA health team tracked when children attended and completed the immunisations.

It was noted that the report which highlighted at the end of June 2024, CLA with latest supervision in timescales was 56%, however the officer confirmed that due to the effort put in by the team and changes to expectations, this figure had increased to 90% by the end of July 2024.

It was confirmed that changes to the service are underway to increase participation of looked after and care leaver young people within Corporate Parenting Panel, which will support Members and senior officers to routinely hear the voice of children. The plan included:

- Exploration of frequency and timing of Corporate Parenting Panel to make it more accessible to children and young people.
- Reframing the meeting as Corporate Parenting Board
- A focus on all Member Training regarding what it means to be a Corporate Parent
- A focus on reinvigorating the Children In Care Council, including comms opening the Children in Care Council to all Looked After and previously Looked After children, including Care Leavers
- Continued development of the Care Leavers Forum
- Creation of a Drop In Centre for Care Leavers and older Looked After Children
- Consideration of a Quality Mark awarded by Children and Young People when introducing new policies or approaches affecting Looked After Children and Care Leavers
- Review of the Pledge for Looked After Children
- Review of the Care Leavers Local Offer.

In response to a question, it was confirmed that Ofsted inspection should be every 3 years, we were found to be a good Authority in 2020. However, due to the pandemic, there had been a backlog of inspections and some have been delayed. It was also confirmed that annual engagement with Ofsted had not been disrupted, this continued as usual.

In response to the question about ethnic grouping, this will be confirmed at the next Panel. However, work is undertaken to support different child's needs as well as their culture and identity. Social workers are skilled in working with young people closely, allowing them to support such children's diverse identity needs.

Discussion centred around timeline of fully implementation of plans, and it was noted that some of the processes such as identifying drop-in centre locations had already started and other areas such as pledge for Looked After Children to start by September 2024.

The Panel thanked the officer for the enhanced report and noted the high achievements of the team.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

101. Coram Adoption Annual Report

The Panel received a presentation about Children with a plan for adoption (ADM) decisions & Placement Order which confirmed that:

- The number of ADM decisions in respect of adoption plans made in Harrow dropped from 8 in 2018/19 to 2 in 2021/22 and 2022/23. This increased to 13 in 2023/24.
- The number of Placement Orders granted decreased from 8 in 2020/21 to 3 in 2021/22 and 2 in 2022/23, this increased to 8 in 2023/24.

- ADM decisions fluctuate annually but are gradually increasing in number.
- Placement Orders granted are fluctuating with a slight increase in numbers.

It was noted that one child was placed in the last financial year, they waited 1519 days between entering care and moving in with their adoptive family, this exceeded the adoption scorecard target of 426 days and due to the small numbers of adoptions, had a significant impact on performance data. 4 Early Placement (EP) placements were made, these children waited on average 167 days between entering care and EP placement.

The Officer informed the Panel that during 2020 families in Harrow with adopted children or those with special guardianship orders benefitted from additional online therapeutic support made available from the Adoption Support Fund COVID-19 scheme facilitated by the Coram RAA Ambitious for Adoption.

Following discussion around the statistics, members noted that figures were small, and that one child would make a difference to the statistics, however, the Panel welcomed a national comparison of statistics at the next Panel.

In response to a question the officer confirmed that although it may seem that the number of prospective adopters from Harrow were low, it depended on how the adopter self-declares. This issue was acknowledged and had been tackled by offering information evenings on how to complete such self-declaration forms.

The team are working closely in planning each child's journey and were involved with other teams to identify which child was likely to have a care-plan of adoption. This has made the process smoother for the children.

This year 4 out of 5 children went into early permanent placements, which was a very positive outcome for the children.

It was noted that the team would like a greater presence in Harrow to allow them to raise the profile for adoption by advertising beyond the information evenings, targeting different communities. It had been noted that more children are coming into the adoption service and therefore, far more trained adopters are required to be available for Harrow's children, as well as more engagement from the local community.

In response to a question by a Panel member, it was confirmed that, in addition to Harrow, Coram works with a number of Local Authorities, which included Slough, Hillingdon, Redbridge and Waltham Forest, agencies and partners. Coram works with children from Barnet, Brent and many more where ideas are shared.

The Panel thanked the officer for the enhanced report.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

102. Missing Children's Report

The Panel was presented with a report that captured missing children activity for the period that covered Jan to May 2024 following from the previous report that ended December 2024. Data had been obtained from the Children's Services Electronic Database (Mosaic), the weekly Missing Children meeting with police, the monthly MACE meeting, and Return Home Interviews.

It was noted that the majority of missing children were 15-year-old males. There had been a slight increase in missing children across the community. Missing children continue to be discussed weekly at the Missing Children's Meeting. It was confirmed that strategy meetings were completed within the first 72 hours of a child going missing and return home interviews (RHI) were completed within the first 72 hours of a young person's return home or to placement. However, young people sometimes refuse the RHI or may have gone missing again before an RHI is completed. The RHI has proved to be a useful tool as it captures the voice, thoughts and feelings of the young person which enables the social worker to understand each young person's situation.

Members expressed concern over the RHI completion performance and what mitigations were being conducted following the return of missing children. The Panel welcomed a detailed report to fully understand the main areas of concern specifically for looked after children as well as what mitigations were in place to avoid repetition of missing episodes.

Discussion centred around mitigation and repetition of the same children having multiple missing episodes, the Chair requested that the statistics focus on Looked After Children and Care Leavers and that the data highlight recurring trends, key issues and what mitigations are in place to avoid/improve such behaviours.

Members agreed that information and data to be presented in more detail to understand the full capacity of missing children, mitigation and factors of such behaviour and case studies.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

103. Virtual School Performance Update

The Panel heard a presentation that confirmed that a Clinical Psychologist was appointed following a high level of unmet mental health needs in Harrow. Within the first year, over 50 young people were provided with direct input or network support through this initiative. Due to an increase in demand, and additional funding via CNWL another psychologist was recruited on a 4 days per week for 1 year. This expansion resulted in more direct assessment and therapy, more training, more consultation, and more support overall were offered to the vulnerable Young People.

It was highlighted that support to Young People and carers was provided through phone, online, and in-person. Fortnightly online foster carer forums were available.

Each forum focused on a particular topic, that involved presenting information and group discussion. A wide range of topics were presented at that forum such as ADHD, Autism, trauma, attachment, social media use and many more. Positive feedback was received from foster carers.

To further support Young People, 30-minute consultation meetings had been provided to schools, which was used to discuss mental health concern within their student population, but priority had been given to vulnerable Young Persons.

The officer stated that between February 2023 to May 2024, 37 consultation appointments had been provided to staff across 24 schools in Harrow and feedback had been overwhelmingly positive.

The team faced many challenges such as meeting the high level of demand, therapy room shortage as well as funding challenges, the Chair highlighted that there are many businesses and faith organisations who would be willing to help with space/therapy rooms.

The Chair confirmed that support can be provided for other resources such as office space if required by the team.

In response to a question, it was confirmed that a report will be provided with case studies demonstrating the positive outcomes for children, also including data regarding the impact the service has been having on Children.

The Panel thanked the Officer for an intensive and positive report.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

104. Update and Performance on Health for Children Looked After

The Named Nurse for Children Looked After in Harrow presented the Panel with a report that highlighted:

- 9 out of 15 requests for initial Health Assessments (IHA) were received outside timescales, the timescale is 72 hours after children enter care. 4 of the 9 late requests were seen in timescales.
- 35 out of 43 requests for Review Health Assessments (RHA) were completed within timescales. The main factor contributing to completing RHA's outside of timescale were carers declining appointments, young people placed outside the borough and young people not attending their appointment.
- 26/43 requests for RHA were received outside timescales. In 20 out of the 26 late requests, the RHAs were completed in timescales.

It was noted that there was an increase in prevalence of complex mental health issues and incomplete immunisations as well as the on-going challenge with dental checks, which is both a local and national challenge.

The Panel heard a positive case study where a Young Person aged between 16-18 years who had experienced significant trauma during childhood and a

history of drug use, went through a major transformation, with the intervention from a CLA Nurse. The Nurse liaised with allocated social worker and obtained direct contact with the Young Person. The CLA Nurse supported and encourage the Young Person, who has since attended her RHA appointment and engaged with CAMHS.

Members acknowledged the hard work and the dedication from the team.

The Panel thanked the Named Nurse for the informative presentation.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

The Chair thanked the presence of the Housing Director and welcomed their input and comments in the Panel meetings ahead.

It was acknowledged that the administration challenge and any associated costs will need to be assessed but any innovative solutions to improve the Panel are welcomed.

(Note: The meeting, having commenced at 6.05 pm, closed at 8.55 pm).

(Signed) Councillor Hitesh Karia
Chair