

Ordinary Member

Reserve Member

Councillor Chetna Halai

Councillor Vipin Mithani

59. Declarations of Interest

RESOLVED: To note that the following interests were declared:

- Councillor Simon Brown declared a non-pecuniary interest in that his daughter had started working for Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CNWL). He remained in the meeting while the items were being discussed.

60. Minutes

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 7th June 2023 be taken as a read and signed correct record.

61. Public Questions

RESOLVED: To note that no public questions were received.

62. Petitions

RESOLVED: To note that no petitions were received.

63. Deputations

RESOLVED: To note that deputations were received.

Resolved Items

64. Update from Participation Service and update from care experienced young people about their experiences

The Panel heard a presentation from the Participation Officer who confirmed that children aged 4-17 had the opportunity to provide independent yearly feedback. The responses included many positive comments regarding the social workers. The presentation also highlighted that:

- To date, 50 Young People received free gym memberships.
- Integrated training from care-experienced young adults into the Social Work Academy – delivering sessions for international Social Workers and Newly Qualified Social Workers.
- Hosted events and activities for children looked after – where 34 young people attended at least one outing, which included day out to Kidzania, Thorpe Park and Go Ape.

- In September 2023, two care-experienced young adults generously delivered training to the Social Work Academy.

The Panel welcomed two care experienced young persons, who shared their experiences of being looked-after by Harrow Council and received leaving care services. One of the young person stated that she will be graduating this year, she found it very challenging and felt that she had to work harder than other children who were not in care, as had lack of funding and support. She wanted to stay at the foster family home with her younger sister, therefore, applied for universities in that area. However, plans with her foster family had changed and she felt betrayed and had to deal with this stressful situation led her to fail 2 modules in the first year of university. She had received very good support from her social worker and had a good circle of friends who helped her and guided her. She had faced a number of challenges during her time in foster care and believed that at times, foster cares should be challenged by the social workers and that children in care should be advised of what they are entitled to.

In response to a question by a member the young person commented that she felt no one had her back, she had applied for an advocate, however, did not receive any response. She had regular Positive Intervention Programmes (PIP) however, these meetings were all educational and discussions were short. She was not aware that she can raise personal issues during these meetings. She was under the impression that domestic affairs should be kept outside of school.

She was pleased to note that Social workers planned activities and day outs with children and believed that this will have a very positive effect on the children.

It had been recognised that she is now in a better place and is looking forward to graduating as a Social worker. Her experiences motivated her to work in the social care industry.

On the other hand the second young person had a different experience, she had recently graduated from University with a degree in Agriculture. She had lots of support from her foster parents and social workers. She mentioned that she had moved out of the family home, however, kept contact with her foster family and lived very close to them.

The Panel and officers recognised the importance of early interventions of social workers, schools and thanked the young persons for sharing their experiences and the very helpful feedback.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

65. Update and Performance for Corporate Parenting Service

The Panel received a presentation from the Assistant Director of Corporate Parenting which covered a number of areas such as performance scorecard, Policy and Practice updates, Pilots and Innovation and Commissioning updates.

With regard to the performance indicators, Assistant Director of Corporate Parenting stated that Harrow had performed well and achieved the target in all indicators, apart from two areas. One indicator was Children Looked After with up to date dental records at 82%, it was highlighted this is good compared to the neighbouring boroughs. The other indicator was Children Looked After with at least 1 missing episode at 7.5%. Officers were reassured that as the year progressed this indicator will also increase.

Arising from discussion on the percentage of Children Looked After placed more than 20 miles away from home, it was noted that Joint work was underway in the Children & Young Adults with Disabilities Service (CYADS) and commissioning to improve placement sufficiency for children with disabilities requiring residential care so that children could be placed closer to or within Harrow. It was noted that this will be discussed in detail at the next Panel meeting.

Members were informed that Harrow and Coram Ambitious for Adoption had been awarded the Early Permanence Quality Mark, which was awarded to adoption agencies that demonstrated the quality of their service, and their commitment to delivering early permanence for children where adoption is in their best interest. It was noted that three permanent places were already filled.

Housing partnered with Centrepont to provide intensive, relationship-based support for 5 Harrow care leavers with complex needs and high risk of homelessness. Projected to result in c.£156-£208k savings per year.

The Panel thanked the officer for the detailed report and noted the positive outcomes.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

66. Virtual School Performance Update

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

The Virtual Headteacher drew particular attention to:

- Harrow Virtual School tracked and monitored the attendance of CLA on a daily basis. The Attendance Officer received and responded this information and any anomalies in attendance, and is communicated to social workers, carers and other key professionals in good time.
- Pupils who were emotionally- based school avoiders are also supported by professionals in the Virtual School to include learning mentors, educational and clinical psychologists. Key assessments are conducted in a timely manner and a planned programme of support can be put in place early.

- Overall attendance had increased slightly from 80% -82%.
- 52% (23/44) of pupils with attendance below 90% has an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) or are in receipt of SEN support.
- The ratio of boys to girls with PA is approximately 1:1
- The number of pupils with at least 1 suspension has reduced from 11% (2021-2022) to 8% (2022-2023). Harrow's figures were below the England average which was 10%.
- The national average for Persistent Absence (PA) was 19.1% for children in care for 1 year plus. It was noted that one of the major factor was mental health issues. The ambition was to reduce this to 10% or less.

The Panel acknowledged the positive aspects of the report.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

67. Update and Performance on Health for Children Looked After

The Named Nurse for Children Looked After in Harrow, introduced the report which outlined the key performance indicators for Harrow CLA Initial Health Assessments (IHA) and improvement plans.

It was noted that the CLA Team:

- Record and report dates of dental checks following health assessment
- Update immunisation status of each CLA following health assessment where possible
- Record and report dates of Optician Checks
- 47% of Initial Health Assessment's (IHA) were received outside of timescales. 7 of the 19 late requests were completed within timescales.
- 2 young people refused health assessments.

It was confirmed that the telephone call reminder to carers and young people has been replaced to a text message reminder to confirm their appointment.

The Panel heard a positive case study where a Young Person who had experienced trauma and abuse received a major improvement following an officer review. The CLA nurse had liaised with the young person's social worker which helped to continue to correctly support the young person. This resulted in the Young Person receiving the correct help and guidance to encourage medical treatment.

The Panel thanked the Named Nurse for their comprehensive presentation.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

(Note: The meeting, having commenced at 6.10 pm, closed at 8.10 pm).

(Signed) Councillor Hitesh Karia
Chair