

CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

MINUTES

12 JANUARY 2010

Chairman: * Councillor Janet Mote

Councillors: * Husain Akhtar * Mitzi Green
* Miss Christine Bednell * Mrs Myra Michael
* Mrs Margaret Davine

* Denotes Member present

94. Attendance by Reserve Members

RESOLVED: To note that there were no Reserve Members in attendance at this meeting.

95. Declarations of Interest

RESOLVED: To note that there were no declarations of interests made by Members in relation to the business to be transacted at this meeting.

96. Minutes

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 5 October 2009, be taken as read and signed as a correct record.

97. Public Questions, Petitions and Deputations

RESOLVED: To note that no public questions, petitions or deputations were received at this meeting under the provisions of Advisory Panel and Consultative Forum Procedure Rules 16, 14 and 15 respectively (Part 4E of the Constitution).

RESOLVED ITEMS

98. Care Matters Update Report

An officer presented a report of the Corporate Director of Children's Services which set out the position and progress of the Care Matters agenda in Children's Services that aimed to improve life chances and outcomes for children looked after (CLA).

The officer highlighted a number of key points as follows:

- a permanent full time Personal Education Plan (PEP) Co-ordinator had been appointed. The co-ordinator chaired the initial PEP meetings and supervised how the PEP allowance was paid to CLA;
- school attendance records of CLA had a direct impact on the CLA Education performance indicators. In response, the Educational Welfare Service had commissioned "Welfare Call" to monitor the attendance of CLA on a daily basis and had recruited an Educational Welfare Officer to improve school attendance records of CLA particularly those young people placed outside the borough;
- three Virtual Head Teachers (VHT) had been employed to champion and promote the educational needs of CLA. A VHT, present at the meeting, reported that the role allowed him to become involved with the educational needs of CLA at a macro level. He added that 2010 was a key year to compare and contrast how the VHT role contributed to the Care Matters agenda;
- care leavers who pursued higher education had received a one-off Higher Education Allowance payment of £2,000 as per government guidance;
- Personal Education Allowances were a discretionary payment that were tailored to the particular needs of CLA;
- the Letterbox Scheme helped and encouraged foster carers to use evenings and weekends to improve the literacy and numeracy skills of CLA;
- an Independent Visitor (IV) Co-ordinator had been appointed in partnership with Harrow Association of Voluntary Schemes (HAVS) to recruit and match IVs to CLA;
- officers considered re launching the Chance to Shine homework club in 2010 following consultation with Harrow Foster Care Association;
- educational attainment & achievement for CLA would continue to be recognised;

- the Care Matters Grant which funded the above initiatives was time limited and the Council would need to consider how and in what form they would be funded thereafter.

In response to questions raised by Members of the Panel, the officer confirmed that:

- a report on the role of the PEP Coordinator would be presented to the next Panel meeting;
- Welfare Call also recorded the school attendance of CLA who had been placed outside of the borough;
- a report on the role and progress made by VHT since their appointment in September 2008 would be provided to the next meeting;
- a Designated Teachers' Forum event had been planned for February 2010;
- the Letterbox Scheme would form part of the training offered to foster carers in the future;
- an informal reward scheme for educational achievement and effort was in place;
- a report on how future initiatives could be financed would be reported to a future meeting.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

99. INFORMATION REPORT - Activity and Performance

The Panel received a report of the Corporate Director of Children's Services that set out key data relating to Children Looked After (CLA) and Children with Child Protection Plans (CPP). The report also included a performance position for National Indicators (NI) for Children's Social Care for the end of November 2009.

An officer stated that:

- Harrow had performed better than its statistical neighbours against the majority of Social Care National Indicators;
- there had been a gradual increase in the number of CLA. The number of CLA nationally under the age of 18 was at 55 per 10,000 children under 18, Harrow was significantly lower with a rate of 31 CLA per 10,000 children;
- the score for the "emotional health" of CLA Indicator for Harrow was 13.4%. This was higher than the 11.8% figure reported for London;

- the Core Assessment rate of CPP in Harrow was 87 per 10,000 children. It was noted that this figure was not as high as 120 per 10,000 reported by Harrow's statistical neighbours;
- referral rates were also discussed. The computer system used by Harrow records contacts and referrals separately as per statutory guidelines.

Following a discussion by Members on the data included in the report, officers responded to a number of points raised as follows:

- the Improvement in Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4 results for CLA was influenced by a number of factors, such as, the level of support provided by foster carers and the Care Matters Programme;
- the number of children with CPP in Harrow and other local authorities had risen. Harrow had employed a part time review officer to manage the increasing workload. Officers were overseeing the increase to ensure that decisions were based on specific needs.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

100. Any Other Business

Foster Care

Following a request by the Panel at the last meeting, officers provided an oral report on the role of foster carers and the support provided to teenagers. An officer reported that it was hard at times to place teenagers with difficult behaviour into foster care. He added that an officer had been employed to consult existing foster carers and to develop and deliver a training programme with particular focus on foster carers who cared for children.

In addition, the officer advised that colleagues had identified that it would be advantageous for a specialist multi-agency scheme which included Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHs) and the social care team to offer support to foster carers and teenagers in order to manage and address challenges effectively. In the discussion that followed, it was agreed that an update on the training programme would be provided to the next meeting.

The Chairman on behalf of the panel congratulated CLA and those that supported them in attaining the recent good results at Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4.

Following a request by the Chairman, officers agreed to report back on a number of matters.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the update be noted;
- (2) the following reports be presented to the next Panel meeting:

- an update report on how the VHT role had contributed to the Care Matters agenda;
- a performance update on the Childcare Matters team that would highlight the type of childcare matters identified by childcare officers;
- an update on the progress of the Foster carers training programme;
- a report on the Annual Independent Reviewing Officers report.

(Note: The meeting, having commenced at 6.03 pm, closed at 7.15 pm).

(Signed) COUNCILLOR JANET MOTE
Chairman

APPENDIX 1

**Officers in
attendance:**

Daniel Brown

Performance Officer

Dipika Patel

Senior Performance Officer
(Childrens Services)

Peter Tolley

Service Manager – Family
Placement Service

Andreas Kyriakou

Senior Coordinator, Practice
and Performance - Children
Looked After