

# CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

## MINUTES

### 17 MARCH 2015

**Chair:** \* Councillor Mitzi Green

**Councillors:** \* Christine Bednell \* Kairul Kareema Marikar  
\* Simon Brown \* Janet Mote  
\* Jo Dooley (4)

\* Denotes Member present  
(4) Denotes category of Reserve Member

#### 33. Attendance by Reserve Members

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

Ordinary Member

Reserve Member

Councillor Margaret Davine

Councillor Josephine Dooley

#### 34. Declarations of Interest

**RESOLVED:** To note that the following interests were declared:

- Councillor Simon Brown declared a non-pecuniary interest in that his daughter was now employed by Central and North West London NHS Foundation Trust;
- Councillor Janet Mote declared a non-pecuniary interest in that her daughter was employed as a nurse at Northwick Park Hospital.

### 35. Minutes

**RESOLVED:** That the minutes of the meeting of 2 December 2014 be taken as read and signed as a correct record.

### 36. Deputations

**RESOLVED:** To note that no public questions were put, or petitions or deputations received at this meeting.

## RECOMMENDED ITEMS

### 37. Corporate Parenting Strategy

An officer presented the Corporate Parenting Strategy which had been updated to include the amendments suggested at the previous meeting. The officer added that the Action Plan was being reviewed and updated on a regular basis.

The Panel commented that a typographical error in paragraph 4.1 required correction. Members expressed the view that the partnership with Coram was positive due to the extensive support to children and the considerable training available to parents.

In response to questions from Members, the officers advised that foster care was provided on a short or long term basis, depending on the requirements of the child. Members were informed that an increase in potential adoptive parents had resulted from the Government promoting adoption. However there had been fewer children placed for adoption, as the Courts had been placing more children within their extended family networks.

The Chair and the Portfolio Holder emphasised that it was important that all Members were aware of the importance of the Strategy and it was

**Resolved to RECOMMEND:** (to Cabinet)

That the Corporate Parenting Strategy be approved and be recommended to Council for noting.

**Reasons for Recommendation:** To ensure that all Members were aware of their responsibilities as Corporate Parents and the Council's current strategy for caring for Looked After Children.

## RESOLVED ITEMS

### 38. Activity and Performance Report

An Officer presented the Activity and Performance Report, which included the following:

- last year the number of children on Child Protection Plans increased for Harrow, but it also increased on a nationwide level;
- almost 90% of assessments had been completed on time and there had been no permanent exclusions;
- the percentage of young people in care who were not in education, employment or training was 28%, which was lower than the national average (38%) and statistical neighbours (32%);

After taking questions from Members of the Panel, an Officer advised that:

- it would be very rare for a child to be placed more than twenty miles away from their home, unless they had additional needs;
- Key Stage 2 children had made amazing progress in maths and reading;
- it was difficult to meet timescales for health assessments for a variety of reasons including incomplete paperwork, limited resources at the hospital, and some young people not wanting to engage.
- young people would usually be accompanied to health checks by their foster carer, and staff in residential units were also advised to accompany young people;
- placement stability was 40%, which fell short of the target of 71%, however this was impacted by long-term foster carers obtaining special guardianship orders, and large sibling groups having a big impact on the figures in a small cohort.

The Panel requested that detailed figures about health assessments be presented at the next meeting of Corporate Parenting Panel, due on 7 July 2015.

**RESOLVED:** That the report be noted.

### **39. Feedback on Celebration of Achievement Event**

An Officer presented a report on the Celebration of Achievement Event, which included the following:

- 75 children and young people had attended the event;
- areas to focus on for future events included making sure there were enough things to do for younger children, and a clearer presentation style so the audience would know what each award was for.

Members of the Panel commented that:

- the awards ceremony was very worthwhile, and in previous years the Leader of the Council and the Borough Commander had attended;

- in previous years, there had been a stall outside the Council Chamber before a Council meeting to raise awareness of elected Members' responsibilities as Corporate Parents, and this would be a good idea to repeat this year.

**RESOLVED:** That the report be noted.

#### **40. Beyond Limits Group**

An Officer presented a report regarding the Beyond Limits Group, which included the following:

- there had been a newsletter circulated among children who were Looked After containing the guidance on pocket money;
- computer access was particularly important for children in high school in order for them to complete their school work and revision for exams;

Members of the Panel commented that:

- there had been reports of drug dealing taking place outside the youth centre, which had made young people feel intimidated, and this was an issue that had been taken up with the Police;

A follow-up report was requested for the July meeting of Corporate Parenting Panel.

**RESOLVED:** That the report be noted.

#### **41. Virtual School Improvement Plan**

The Virtual Headteacher presented a report concerning the Virtual School Improvement Plan, which included the following:

- Electronic Personal Education Plans had been implemented and were much more robust than the previous system;
- persistent absence was an area that required improvement, and training for school staff was an issue that had been identified;
- the option of one-to-one tutoring with a professional tutor had been taken up by some young people, which was very positive as this would close gaps in their learning;
- Homework Club is also beneficial for the young people to catch up with friends, socialise and develop their social skills, as well as complete their homework;
- targets set by the Virtual School were ambitious;

- there would be a review at the end of the Spring Term.

**RESOLVED:** That the report be noted.

#### **42. Update for Corporate Parenting Panel regarding Children Looked After Health Service**

The Designated Nurse presented an update report concerning the Health Service for Children Looked After, which included the following:

- all posts had now been recruited to, including a specialist GP, who will attend the meeting of Corporate Parenting Panel in July 2015;
- the takeover would take place on 1 June 2015, and premises arrangements had been finalised;
- there would be fortnightly meetings to ensure that the handover goes smoothly;
- the new nurse had been trained in the system, and there was a lot of confidence in the new service provider;
- Hillingdon Council, who used the same provider, had completed 98% of their Initial Health Assessments on time.

After taking questions from Members of the Panel, the Designated Nurse advised that:

- the new nurse is an experienced professional and there were hopes to do more work for care leavers;
- the premises was located in South Ruislip;
- all health professionals would be aware of the traumas in a young person's life, and would assess all of their needs.

**RESOLVED:** That the report be noted.

#### **43. Housing for Care Leavers**

An Officer presented a report regarding housing provision for young people leaving care, which contained the following:

- the procedure was still a quota of 19 homes to be allocated to young people leaving care;
- homelessness was rising and this was exerting pressure on social housing;

- Harrow Council was not in a position to increase the quota, but could bring forward work on setting up shared accommodation for care leavers;

After taking questions from Members of the Panel, an Officer advised that:

- the number of young people leaving care every year would vary, and currently there was a backlog in providing homes;
- the site on Honeypot Lane was part of a bigger programme to provide long-term housing;
- young people can opt to “stay put” in their current placement until the age of 24, if this situation suits the young person and their foster carers;
- Harrow Council have a system for young people who want to share, and Targeted Services talk to young people and their friends in advance to assess their needs and options.

The Chair of the Panel requested an update at the meeting of Corporate Parenting Panel scheduled for 20 October 2015, including figures about how many young people choose to share.

**RESOLVED:** That the report be noted.

#### **44. Persistent School Absence for Children Looked After**

The Virtual Headteacher presented a report regarding persistent school absence in Children Looked After, which included the following:

- 10.3% of Children Looked After were classed as persistently absent (was absent for 15% of school days);
- persistent absence had risen to 20.4%, which was unacceptable, and all cases of persistent absence had been investigated;
- some other factors could contribute to the child’s absence record, for example, one child had been placed in London Borough of Brent, and Brent Admissions Service had not been recording the child’s attendance correctly;
- the Virtual School was willing to provide transport to children if this was required;
- the Virtual School knows the children and their circumstances, and had developed an action plan for each child that considered their needs.

**RESOLVED:** That the report be noted.

#### **45. Agenda Tracker**

**RESOLVED:** That the Agenda Tracker be updated in line with Members' comments.

(Note: The meeting, having commenced at 7.30 pm, closed at 9.25 pm).

(Signed) COUNCILLOR MITZI GREEN  
Chair

#### **Officers Present:**

Jon Dalton – Service Manager, Housing Needs  
Sue Dixon – Designated Nurse for Safeguarding and Children Looked After  
Jane Munroe – Headteacher, Virtual School  
Dipika Patel – Business Intelligence Partner  
Kamini Rambellas – Divisional Director, Targeted Services  
Peter Tolley – Service Manager, Targeted Services