

CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

MINUTES

3 JULY 2018

Chair:	* Councillor Angella Murphy-Strachan	
Councillors:	* Sue Anderson	* Janet Mote
	* Maxine Henson (2)	* Christine Robson
	* Dr Lesline Lewinson (1)	
Non-Voting Advisory Member:	† Valerie Griffin	
Officers:	Paul Hewitt	(Interim Corporate Director, People)
	Barbara Houston	(Head of Service, Corporate Parenting)
	Jacinta Kane	(Team Manager VVE, CSE Co-ordinator)
	Zoe Sergeant	(Associate Director for Children, CNWL)
	Peter Tolley	(Interim Divisional Director Children & Young People)
	Mellina Williamson-Taylor	(Headteacher Harrow Virtual School)

- * Denotes Member present
- (1) and (2) Denote category of Reserve Members
- † Denotes apologies received

1. Attendance by Reserve Members

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

Ordinary Member

Councillor Simon Brown
Councillor Lynda Seymour

Reserve Member

Councillor Maxine Henson
Councillor Dr Lesline Lewinson

2. **Declarations of Interest**

RESOLVED: To note that the following interests was declared:

All Agenda Items

Councillor Maxine Henson declared a non-pecuniary interest in that she had been in care. She would remain in the room whilst the matters were considered.

3. **Appointment of Vice Chair**

RESOLVED: To note that Councillor Janet Mote be appointed Vice-Chair for the 2018/19 Municipal Year.

4. **Minutes**

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 27 March 2018 be taken as read and signed as a correct record.

5. **Public Questions, Petitions & Deputations**

RESOLVED: To note that there were none.

RESOLVED ITEMS

6. **Activity and Performance**

The Panel received a report of the Corporate Director, People, which set out activity for Children Looked After and care leavers and the provisional performance position at 31 March 2018.

Following questions & comments from Members, an officer advised that:

- with regard to those CLAs (Children Looked After) with at least one missing episode a year, he did not have to hand figures regarding what proportion of those children, once they had been found, remained in care and what proportion eventually returned to their families. He undertook to circulate this information to the Panel after the meeting. He added that children did better within a stable environment and that any strategy was based on an assessment of each child's long-term needs;

- the data in the report included those CLAs who had been placed out of borough. The officer confirmed that there were no major issues related to those placements as they were tightly monitored and reviewed;
- there were no major patterns emerging in relation to the reasons for CLAs going missing. It should be noted that teenagers with complex needs could often be difficult to manage. OFSTED had specific expectations with regard to how missing CLAs episodes were managed and had indicated that there should be an agreed process for practice and for recording the episodes;
- the high proportion of care leavers who were NEET (not in education or training) related to challenges around engaging young people, or could be due to other reasons, for example, because they may be in custody. It was important to note that 10% of Harrow's care leavers went on to university;
- there was a Virtual School in every borough in England and Wales. The school provided educational support to all CLAs and worked closely with their foster carers, social workers and designated teachers. The head teacher of the Virtual School worked closely with relevant stakeholders and key partners to monitor and improve pupils' attainment, progress and attendance.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

7. Harrow Children Looked After

The Panel received a report of the Head of Children's Services and Operations at Central and North West London NHS Foundation which set out the delivery of health services to Harrow's Children Looked After during March-April 2018.

Following questions & comments from Members, an officer advised that:

- the Client Satisfaction Survey had revealed that 95% of CLAs felt that the care they received was excellent. The remaining 5% had indicated that they would prefer to be with their families rather than be looked after;
- the CLA health team had given a presentation at the Royal College of Nursing Conference (which was an example of excellent partnership working) and this had been well received. As of 1 July 2018, CNWL had commenced providing the 0-19 healthy child programme in Harrow (health visiting and school nursing). Members would be invited to the forthcoming launch event in the Autumn term;
- with regard to the broader survey, the Health Assessment questionnaire had been reviewed and amended and the results of the survey would be reported to the Panel in 2019.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

8. Missing Children Looked After

The Panel received a report of the Corporate Director, People, regarding Children Looked After missing from care.

Following questions & comments from Members, an officer advised that:

- in cases where a CLA refused to return to their placement or foster family following an incidence of going missing, a Return Home Interview and an Assessment of Need would be carried out and the child's views would be taken into consideration. It was rare for children to request a new placement and children would only be returned to their families when it was safe to do so;
- there were no permanently missing CLAs in Harrow. One child had returned to their family in Ethiopia, and Children's Services had (after visiting him in Ethiopia) confirmed that there were no safeguarding issues in relation to that child;
- most of the CLAs who went missing were repeat offenders and were therefore well known to the Service. Because they often had a good rapport with their social workers, who were familiar with their habits and hangouts, they were often easy to locate. When a CLA went missing, 'Grab packs' containing key information about the child would be shared with the police to enable them to speedily locate the child;
- there were 10 children who accounted for well over 50% of missing episodes for CLAs and care leavers. Their circumstances were well known and the risks were managed through a weekly meeting attended by all heads of service.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

9. Children's Services Self Assessment

The Panel received a report of the Corporate Director, People, regarding the Children's Services Self Assessment which provided an update on progress made since the previous inspection in 2017.

Following questions & comments from Members, an officer advised that:

- the report showed four key areas for improvement, which would be the subject of a pro-active action plan and would be monitored through the Improvement Board;
- the Self-Assessment report had been the subject of a sector-led peer review. Harrow's strong performance and value for money had been noted across West London as part of the review;

- the leaving Care Team was responsible for all CLAs up to the age of 25. Care leavers were supported in a number of ways in preparation for independent living, for example, they could access supported lodgings and other residential and housing options; a training programme that included managing finances, relationships, education, employment and training, health and accommodation. Additionally, CLAs in Harrow were now exempt from paying Council Tax.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

10. Updated corporate parenting strategy

The Panel received a report of the Corporate Director, People, which provided an update on the Corporate Parenting Strategy.

Following questions & comments from Members, an officer advised that:

- the provision of a Later Life letter was a statutory requirement for all children placed with adoptive parents. These were more detailed and contained more personal history than a social worker's case notes. They were written by the child's Social Worker in conjunction with the adopters' Social Worker and were given to prospective adopters. The expectation was that the letter would be addressed to the child, but given to the adoptive parents for safe keeping. The letter provided the child with an explanation of why he/she was adopted;
- 'Letterbox books' was an initiative whereby across the UK, young CLAs received their own parcel of books, stationery and other high quality materials once every month for six months, from May to October. For many children, it was the first time they had received a letter or a parcel through the post and for some it was the first time they have had books of their own. Research had shown that this initiative had led to improved reading ages among these children. There was a similar scheme for older children.

A Member stated that the inclusion of a foster carer as an adviser to the Panel had proved fruitful and suggested that a second foster carer should be invited to join the Panel as a reserve to the current adviser. She added that the current adviser should be formally written to confirm her re-appointment to the Panel. This was agreed by the Panel. An officer undertook to seek nominations for a reserve adviser.

Members were of the view that the participation of CLAs at previous Panel meetings had been fruitful and a cohort should be invited to participate at a future meeting of the Panel in 2018/19. An officer undertook to arrange this. He added that the Corporate Parenting Strategy would be submitted to both Cabinet and Council for approval later in the year.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted and endorsed for presentation at Cabinet in September 2018.

(Note: The meeting, having commenced at 7.00 pm, closed at 8.27 pm).

(Signed) COUNCILLOR ANGELLA MURPHY-STRACHAN
Chair