

CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

MINUTES

6 FEBRUARY 2019

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| Chair: | * Councillor Angella Murphy-Strachan | |
| Councillors: | * Sue Anderson | * Lynda Seymour |
| | * Janet Mote | * Mrs Rekha Shah (4) |
| | * Christine Robson | |
| Non-Voting Advisory Member: | * Valerie Griffin, Foster Carer | |
| In attendance: (Officers) | David Harrington | Head of Business Intelligence, Resources |
| | Paul Hewitt | Corporate Director – People |
| | Barbara Houston | Head of Service, Corporate Parenting |
| | Zoe Sargent | Associate Director of Children, CNWL |
| | Peter Tolley | Interim Divisional Director, Children and Young People |
| | Mellina Williamson-Taylor | Headteacher, Harrow Virtual School |
| | Alison Braithwaite | Head of Children’s Services and Operations – CNWL |
| | Sue Sheldon | Designated Nurse for Safeguarding and Children Looked After – Harrow CCG |
| | Priya Ganatra | People Services Commissioner |
| | Charlie Cable | Area Manager, SOVA |

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

21. Attendance by Reserve Members

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

Ordinary Member

Reserve Member

Councillor Maxine Henson

Councillor Rekha Shah

22. Declarations of Interest

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

23. Minutes

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 30 October 2018, be taken as read and signed as a correct record.

24. Public Questions, Petitions and Deputations

RESOLVED: To note that there were none.

RESOLVED ITEMS

25. Independent Visitors Service

The Panel received an information report of the interim Divisional Director of Children and Young People on the Independent Visitors Service. The Children's Act 1989 had placed a duty on Councils to appoint an Independent Visitor for any 'Looked after Child' if they believed this to be in the child's best interest and the young person had consented to the support.

The Chair welcomed the People Services Commissioner and the Area Manager of SOVA (Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults) for this item. Members were informed that SOVA had been contracted to deliver the Harrow IV (Independent Visitors) Project.

The Area Manager for SOVA reported that:

- it was not unusual to see a drop in relationships due to changes in providers;
- the organisation had been established some 40 years ago and since being awarded the contract, it had remodelled to match the tender;

- a member of staff was based once a week in the Council to help develop skills and take the service forward;
- of the 21 open referrals, 8 had been matched with IVs;
- logistical issues were being addressed and he made reference to those CLA placed outside the borough. He explained that in some areas such as Dover, SOVA did not have a footprint and the organisation was looking to reach out to volunteer bureaux with a view to training them.

Members asked questions about the length of the contract with SOVA, how successful the service was and its expectations. The People Services Commissioner explained that the contract was for 3 years and the Council was considering whether to extend it by a further year. The target was to match 30 CLA but the value of the contract was a challenge. Some volunteers had left and there was a need to train volunteers in Harrow. The national training programme was good but the process of recruiting, training, assessing and matching was a challenging journey and one which was exacerbated by part time working and the size of the contract.

The Area Manager for SOVA responded to questions from Members and stated that 20 volunteers had been trained and 8 relationships had been established. The CLA, with established relationships, met with the volunteer on a monthly basis. He was of the view that 2 matches per month were required. In response to further questions, he stated that the 80% of CLA were female and 20% male. The respective split in IVs was 70%:30% but he needed to check the data. He acknowledged that there was a need to engage additional male volunteers.

In response to additional questions, the Area Manager of SOVA explained how assessments with CLA were carried out. He informed Members that a complaints process had also been built-in to allow CLA to flag up areas of concern. Additionally, action plans and reviews were conducted with the IVs. He added that the feedback received from CLA had been positive and that they had stated that they would have been bored without their IV as the process provided them with a structure to their lives. The ages of referrals ranged from 8-24 years and were based on need. There had been no requests for an IV beyond the age of 24 years. It was noted that some IV services only provided a service up to the age of 18 years. It was acknowledged that Councils could do more to help beyond that age and Harrow had commissioned the service to also work with young people potentially up to the age of 25 years.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

Reason for Decision: To be availed of how the IV service was working.

26. Activity and Performance

The Panel received an information report of the Corporate Director of People, which set out the activity for Children Looked After (CLA) and care leavers as well as provisional performance position at Quarter 3, 2018-19. National and

comparator data had also been included, where appropriate, to provide context.

An officer introduced the report and outlined the following key points, which were detailed in the report:

- in comparison to other local authorities, the number of CLA in Harrow was low. The low figures were as a result of the implementation of successful permanent solutions and preventative measures;
- absence and persistence absence rates in education remained high whilst achievements had improved. Personal Education Plans (PEPs) had been carried out on a timely basis;
- there had been some challenges around initial health assessments and immunisation but he was confident that these would improve;
- health and dental reviews for CLA were now in line with neighbouring authorities;
- percentage of care leavers in suitable accommodation remained high at 90.5%. At the end of December 2018, the number of care leavers who were not in education or training had improved from 35.8% to around 28% and this direction of travel ought to be welcomed;
- number of CLA that were 'missing' had dropped. The percentage 'away from placement without authorisation' was higher when compared with neighbouring boroughs;
- offending data for Harrow's CLA had not altered and there were three CLA who were 'known' to the Youth Offending Team (YOT).

Members commended the work being carried out by officers and partners, particularly in the following areas: PEPs for children placed within Harrow and outside the borough, health checks, offending, and housing where, historically, there had been concern about the type of accommodation provided.

In response to a question from a Member, the designated nurse reported that SDQs referred to a strengths and difficulties questionnaire and that all 14-16 year old CLA would have an SDQ carried out. The questionnaire would normally have been carried out by social worker or a carer who may not have known the child well. However, changes had been made and the questionnaire was now completed by a teacher which had helped to ensure a triangulated score and provide a more accurate picture of the child in question. The Corporate Director stated that SDQs had been introduced as some of the CLA who left care often went into the mental health system and this tool had helped to intervene early.

The interim Corporate Director of People reported that SDQs had been introduced and the early intervention had shown to be a useful tool. The interim Divisional Director of Children and Young People thanked Members

for commending partnership working which had helped to improve the overall performance of CLA.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

Reason for Decision: To be availed of performance as Corporate Parents.

27. Harrow Virtual School: End of Academic Year Report : 2017-2018

The Forum received a report of the Corporate Director of People, which included an overview of the performance and standards of Children Looked After (CLA) at the end of Key Stages 1, 2 and 4; an analysis of their attendance data; an overview of the work of the Virtual School; and the development priorities for the Virtual School for 2018-19.

The Headteacher for Harrow Virtual School introduced the report and outlined the various aspects of the report. Of particular note were:

- whilst the overall CLA numbers on Roll of Harrow Virtual School had dropped, there had been an increase in the numbers at Key Stages 2 and 3;
- employment and training – since the last report, one child had met expected standards across writing, reading and maths;
- 9.5% of pupils had an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP), which was an increase from the previous year and this was due to the involvement of an EP (Educational Psychologist). The work done in schools to identify learning needs of CLA had improved;
- attendance – was of concern in both the Virtual School and across the Directorate. An action plan had been put in place to address the issue and the report included a number of recommendations;
- in the previous year, no CLA had been the subject of a Permanent Exclusion but Fixed term Exclusions remained an issue, particularly in Year 11. She was looking at strategies to address this issue;
- PEPs (Personal Education Plans) were at 90% but the aim was to reach 100%;
- enrichment projects had been extended as a result of the funding received from the John Lyon's Charity;
- restructure of the Virtual School had been completed and included a range of skills and expertise and with more teachers on board.

In response to questions from Members, the Headteacher for Harrow Virtual School clarified that of the children with an EHCP, 94% were making good progress. The number of CLA placed in mainstream education was 6%. The two points above were not related.

A Member referred to paragraph 5.5 of the report and enquired about top-up funding and how this would be calculated. In response, the Headteacher of Harrow Virtual School reported that schools received the pupil premium and 10% of schools applied for additional funding for 'other' needs. She undertook to provide further information in this regard together with figures for top-up funding received by schools.

The Corporate Director of People referred to paragraph 2.3 of the report and the reference to 67 CLA from other local authorities who were educated in Harrow schools and the duty of care owed to them. The Headteacher of Harrow Virtual School outlined the type of advice and information provided such as where CLA should be placed, sourcing of schools and accommodation.

The Chair made reference to paragraph 10.5 of the report relating to fixed term exclusions, particularly if these applied to those in Year 11 which she considered to be an important time in the life of children that age. She asked if any strategies were being considered to reduce the number of exclusions in that year. The Headteacher of Harrow Virtual School informed Members that work with schools was ongoing, particularly in relation to the behaviours being displayed in schools. She added that the top five schools with a high number of fixed term exclusions had been identified and a company had been engaged to support these schools. The company provided advice on how to work with children using techniques such as life studies. Additionally, the number of PEP (Personal Education Plan) meetings had been increased and schools had been asked to contact her before excluding CLA and that this message had been taken on board.

RESOLVED: That the performance of, and standards achieved by, Harrow's CLA, in particular the improved performance of CLA at the end of Key Stage 4 together with school attendance data, be noted.

Reasons for Decision: To be availed of outcomes for CLA in discharge of duties. To be availed of the performance of CLA pertaining to attendance which remained below England's averages for CLA. To be availed of attainment and progress at the end of Key Stage 4 which remained a priority for Harrow Virtual School.

28. Harrow Children Looked After Health (CLA) Report

The Panel received an information report of the Associate Director of Children's Services, which set out information on the delivery of health services to Harrow's Children Looked After (CLA) during September – December 2018. The report reviewed performance indicators and clinical work undertaken by the CLA Health Team.

The named nurse for Harrow's CLA, referred to the appendix to the report and informed Members that:

- her next report would clarify the columns relating to the table on targets met for initial and review health assessments. She explained that there had been a downward trend in September 2018 on the numbers seen

within set timescales and explained the reasons for this trend. She added that standardised flowcharts had been introduced to identify trends in health assessments and where improvements had been made and/or were required;

- monitoring meetings with Harrow CCG and the Council would continue as set out in the report;
- the work undertaken, as set out in the report, had also involved participation in an interview panel for the post of a clinical psychologist;
- on a positive note, social workers from the UASC (Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children) team had agreed to book interpreters for TB screening appointments. The alteration in the booking system had helped to deal with the issue of interpreters not attending appointments;
- various training sessions had been held, as set out in the report;
- Voice of the Child: up to 50% of CLA by Harrow had participated in the annual client satisfaction survey. The results were currently being analysed and would be presented at the next meeting of the Panel. A large sample would help to ascertain what the CLA were thinking about in relation to their health needs.

In response to a question from a Member, the named nurse for Harrow's CLA explained why there had been a delay in carrying out health assessments for CLA placed outside the borough. She added that the delay was due to those local authorities prioritising their own looked after children.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

Reason for Decision: To ensure that Members, in their roles as Corporate Parents, were availed of how the different needs of CLA were being met.

29. Other Business

(1) Events

Members were reminded of two events – Coram Event and Carer Awards Ceremony - that they may want to attend. It was noted that the invitations would be sent to Members by the People Directorate.

(2) Date of Next Meeting

Members were reminded that the next meeting of Panel would be held on 3 April 2019 at 7.00 pm instead of 25 March 2019.

(3) Items for Future Meetings

Members were invited to suggest topics that the Corporate Parenting Panel might want to consider. The interim Divisional Director of

Children and Young People Services asked Members to email him with suggestions.

Members were informed that reports on the following items would be submitted to the next meeting: impact of Brexit on Children Looked After (CLA), Fostering, Adoption, Performance and Housing.

(Note: The meeting, having commenced at 7.01 pm, closed at 7.55 pm).

(Signed) COUNCILLOR ANGELLA MURPHY-STRACHAN
Chair