

Corporate Parenting Panel

Minutes

13 July 2022

Present:

Chair: Councillor Hitesh Karia

Councillors: Simon Brown Chetna Halai
Matthew Goodwin-Freeman Aneka Shah-Levy

**Non-voting
Advisory
Member:** Valerie Griffin Foster Carer

**Officers (in
attendance):** Anupameya Jain Assistant Head Teacher,
Virtual School
Jacinta Kane Head of Service – Corporate
Parenting
Christine Nichols Named Nurse for Children
Looked After in Harrow
Kathryn Robinson Assistant Headteacher
Virtual School
Peter Tolley Interim Corporate Director,
People
Shellian Campbell Senior Housing Needs
Team Manager
Teresa Chisholm Clinical Service Manager
Bridget Owen Interim Designated Nurse
Safeguarding Children and
LAC (Harrow)

**Apologies
received:** Maria Luscombe Mellina Williamson-Taylor

1. Welcome by Chair

The Chair welcomed those attending to the first meeting of the new Administration.

2. Attendance by Reserve Members

RESOLVED: To note that there were no Reserve Members at the meeting.

3. Appointment of Vice-Chair

RESOLVED: To appoint Councillor Simon Brown as Vice-Chair of the Corporate Parenting Panel for the 2022/2023 Municipal Year.

4. Declarations of Interest

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

5. Minutes

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 1 February 2022 be taken as a read and signed correct record.

6. Public Questions

RESOLVED: To note that no public questions were received.

7. Petitions

RESOLVED: To note that no petitions were received.

8. Deputations

RESOLVED: To note that deputations were received.

Resolved Items

9. Dates of Meetings of the Panel for the remainder of the Municipal Year 2022/23

RESOLVED: That the following dates be agreed for the remainder of the Municipal Year 2022/23:

3 October 2022
31 January 2023
27 March 2023

10. Update from Care Experienced Young People about their Experiences

Members received an update from three young people on their experience of being looked-after by Harrow Council and receiving leaving care services. The Head of Corporate Parenting asked them to share their experiences,

what could be learnt from those experiences and any suggestions as to what could be done differently or better in the future.

One of the young people reported that he had received quite a lot of support whilst moving on from CLA, first on independent living and then after a year or so into a Council flat. The good advice and support was ongoing including a personal assistant for regular contract regarding any queries such as tenancy support. He was grateful that Council tax was paid on his behalf until 25 years of age. In response to a question from the Advisory Member as to support from foster carer, he stated that it had been absolutely fantastic and that he was still in touch.

He further stated that, as the transition from CLA to semi-independent and then to full independence were key moments and timings were important, the young person should be able to take more of a lead in setting out the timetable rather than it being based on age. In his experience there was sometimes pressure to take the next steps earlier than he would have wished and he had encountered pushback from the managers of his Social Worker. The Interim Corporate Director, People, stated that there was a need to learn from his experience and that it was important that personal plans were based around individuals so they felt that their feelings were incorporated.

In addition, he stated that when he contacted his social worker on her return from maternity leave he was informed that she had been told not to contact her previous cases and could not receive her caseload back. This had upset him as this meant that his former social worker was unable to see his flat despite visiting a young person in the flat below. The Interim Corporate Director, People stated that continuing positive relationships was important and that he would take the matter up with the managers concerned.

Another of the young people informed the Panel that, during his 11 months in Harrow, the social worker had helped him with schools, improving his English, and housing. He was hoping to study A levels the following year. The Virtual School had been helpful and had made a difference

The third young person had been in Harrow for nearly four months. The social worker had provided him with a lot of support.

The young people were asked regarding their aspirations and how they could be supported. It was further asked whether an element of independent support as a bouncing board to air their needs would be helpful. The young people responded as follows:

- It would be helpful to have such an advocate. Coming out of the pandemic, now was the first opportunity to really relax, he was enjoying his job and had settled into his flat. His long term aim was to buy his flat through Right to Buy.
- He wanted to become a doctor so would be looking at exams and to work a little before starting university.
- His aim was to enrol in Harrow College to study computer studies. In response to a question he stated that he had been supplied with a laptop.

In response to a question from a Member of the Panel, the Interim Corporate Director, People stated that an update item containing feedback on the points raised by the young people would be submitted to the Panel. In addition, the Head of Corporate Parenting undertook to circulate an update on the points raised regarding personal plans being based around the individual and contact with the social worker after her return from maternity leave. The young people would also be updated. The Chair stated that it was critical to ensure that the young people attending Panel meetings were aware of follow through.

On behalf of the Panel, the Chair thanked the three young people for their participation and sharing their experiences and suggestions.

RESOLVED: That the update be noted.

11. Update and Performance for Corporate Parenting Service

The Panel received a presentation from the Head of Corporate Parenting including key updates on feedback from the recent Children in Care Council, the performance scorecard, demographics and disproportionality, the Independent Care Review, and challenges and achievements.

The Head of Corporate Parenting updated the Panel on the performance scorecard to the end of quarter 3, up to March 2022 and made particular reference to the following:

- With regard to timeliness of reviews of Looked After Children, the percentage had been affected by long term sickness absence. However, the appointment of agency staff was expected to put it back on track.
- There was concern that 13.8% of CLA had experienced three or more moves in a year. There had been some positive moves such as achieving a long term placement on the third move and the statistics had been affected by foster carers catching covid and other illnesses.
- The setting up of a Placement Stability Panel was under consideration to monitor those CLA being looked after for more than two and a half years and in the same placement for two years.
- Performance in relation to dental checks and NEET is significantly better than the statistical neighbour and national averages, and this is something to be proud of.

A Member of the Panel asked other Members to encourage colleagues to attend the appropriate training and events to celebrate the achievements of the young people as all Members of the Council were corporate parents.

It was agreed that background references to the performance scorecard would be useful as the numbers of CLA referred to in the areas shaded red could be small and therefore the percentages could be distorted.

RESOLVED: That the presentation be noted.

12. Virtual School Performance Update

The Panel received an update on the performance of the Harrow Virtual School from the Assistant Headteachers for CLA and CLA.

In response to questions, it was noted that all those who needed to be in school during the pandemic were in attendance. Laptops were purchased for all pupils to ensure that they had access to online learning.

The Panel referred to the statistic that 55% of pupils were educated outside of Harrow spread across 23 local authorities and asked the reasons for this, what monitoring challenges this presented and whether visits were made to the schools concerned. The Interim Corporate Director, People, reported that the key national indicator was for those pupils educated over 20 miles from home. There were various reasons for this including placement with family members outside the area, foster carers who had moved out of the area, and a home address closer to a school in a neighbouring authority. The officers informed the Panel that prior to the pandemic officers had made termly visits for PEPs but during the pandemic monitoring was by teams and online communication. The importance of visiting was recognised.

Members stated that it would be useful to understand the strategies and the plans for the next four years. It was also suggested that information in tabular form would make it easier to identify issues. The officers undertook to provide a more detailed report including maps and a breakdown of location.

In response to questions regarding the enrichment offer, it was noted that due to the small number of children sometimes all were able to attend an activity but sometimes attendance was based on need, who would benefit most or those who had not done things. The caseworkers would be involved in identifying those who would benefit from particular activities. Going forward more varied activities would be considered as would reaching those not currently participating.

RESOLVED: That the presentation be noted.

13. Update and Performance on Health for Children Looked After

The Panel received a presentation from a representative (Named Nurse for CLA Harrow) of the Central and North West London NHS Foundation Trust. The presentation outlined the key performance indicators for Harrow CLA, exception reporting, and further areas of assistance provided to the Council.

The Named Nurse reported that a Saturday clinic had been operating since 9 July 2022 to provide more choice and flexibility and would be reviewed after a

short period. She further stated that a page containing data had not been included with the agenda.

A Member of the Panel enquired whether the CLA had access to someone to advocate for them on health issues if they were unable to do so themselves. The Named Nurse informed the Panel that once the health assessment had been undertaken a lead health professional, for example a health visitor, school nurse or GP if they were not in school, would assist them.

The Panel considered that it would be helpful to receive further information on DNAs and young people who refused would be helpful. The Named Nurse undertook to provide further detail on exception reporting in the next report.

It was noted that for those CLA placed outside the Borough monitoring meetings took place with each provider and there was regular communication with administrators and those monitoring. Members of the Team travelled up to 20 miles from Harrow but if appropriate would also discuss online or undertake another assessment earlier than planned. Escalation to the Integrated Care System would take place should it be considered that the child needed to be seen locally and discussion would take place with the local CCG. The Interim Corporate Director, People stated that there was high level scrutiny on health plans and appropriate action would be taken.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

14. Any Other Urgent Business

RESOLVED: To note that there was no other urgent business.

(Note: The meeting, having commenced at 6.00 pm, closed at 8.05 pm).

(Signed) Councillor Hitesh Karia
Chair