

CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

MINUTES

21 OCTOBER 2013

Chairman: * Councillor Christine Bednell

Councillors: † James Bond * Zarina Khalid
* Margaret Davine * Janet Mote
* Mitzi Green

* Denotes Member present

† Denotes apologies received

137. Attendance by Reserve Members

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

138. Declarations of Interest

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

139. Minutes

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 8 July 2013 be taken as read and signed as a correct record.

140. Public Questions, Petitions and Deputations

RESOLVED: To note that no petitions were received, questions put or deputations received.

RECOMMENDED ITEMS

141. INFORMATION REPORT - Activity and Performance

The Panel received an information report containing performance statistics and key data relating to Children Looked After (CLA) and Children with Child Protection Plans (CPP).

The Divisional Director, Targeted Services, drew attention to the increase in numbers for both categories which reflected both an increase in the number of referrals, and the lowering of thresholds for intervention. She also explained that some methods of recording data skewed the performance figures – for instance, children moving into a permanent placement were shown as a 'move', which suggested less stability, even though the outcome was positive.

An officer informed the Panel of a serious issue in respect of the CLA nurse service, which should have been covered by Ealing Hospital Trust during the summer months, but no service had been provided. This had resulted in a backlog of 16 outstanding assessments, and 19 outstanding reviews. The Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) had been asked to issue a query notice and provide a full report to explain the lack of provision. This report would be shared with Panel Members.

Members expressed serious concerns about the lack of service, particularly as children entering the care system often had health problems which needed to be addressed quickly. A member proposed that a recommendation be made to the Portfolio Holder to write to Ealing Hospital Trust on behalf of the Panel, both to express concern and request an explanation.

Members examined the data in relation to numbers of children in care or on protection plans, and breakdowns according to age, gender and ethnicity.

The Divisional Director, Targeted Services, explained that numbers for young children should be low as these children were moved quickly into permanent placements. Numbers for older children were also likely to be low as these children were harder to place and settle, and often had better outcomes in a residential care situation. The higher proportion of boys in care could be a statistical result of higher numbers of boys with autism in residential care. Differences in ethnicity could reflect the particular demographic of the borough. She stated that when the figures demonstrated a sharp divergence in trend or significant difference to 'statistical neighbours', this would be investigated. Members were informed that a recruitment campaign for foster carers was underway.

The Panel then considered the educational performance of CLA and options for improving engagement and achievement, including alternative curriculum and training options, and the use of 'champions' to support individuals.

Members noted the aim to place children locally, and that placements outside the area tended to be for specialist provision which was not available in Harrow.

Resolved to RECOMMEND: (to the Portfolio Holder for Children and Schools)

That the Portfolio Holder write to the Ealing Hospital Trust to express the Panel's concern that no service was provided, as had been agreed and expected, during the summer months.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

RESOLVED ITEMS

142. Housing for Care Leavers - Update Report

The Panel received a report giving an update on housing assistance for care leavers.

An officer stated that the allocations quota for care leavers remained at 20. An alternative option of shared housing had been explored, which would be financed and managed either by the Council, or through partnership with Genesis. A Service Level Agreement had to be decided upon, along with processes for allocation and support.

Members received the following responses to queries:

- officers would look into matching candidates for shared housing;
- maintenance and repairs would be covered under existing agreements;
- a housing officer would be available to support young people in accommodation.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

143. INFORMATION REPORT - Care Leavers Employment, Education & Training (EET) & Care Leavers Suitable Accommodation

The Panel received a report outlining statistics for CLA and their employment, education or training status.

The Divisional Director, Targeted Services, stated that suitable employment and housing were fundamental to securing stable outcomes and futures for young people leaving care.

An officer explained that the figures provided were changing constantly, and were not entirely representative of the situation as young people who had been deported or gone missing were reported as 'NEET' (not in employment, education or training). He added that it was also important for the team to work with EETs (young people employed, in education or training) in order to maintain their progress and achievement. Once a young person reached the

age of 21 and three months, their case could be closed, although older young people would remain on file if they remained in education.

Members discussed the issues arising for young people who were missing or at risk of deportation, and young mothers who also had childcare to consider.

A newly-appointed officer described his task and responsibilities in engaging with and supporting young people in accessing suitable training or employment. He had a case list of 10-11 young people and was working with a variety of agencies, training providers and support workers to identify the best means of equipping and supporting a young person in availing of training and employment opportunities. He added that timing could be difficult as, once standard school terms had started, it was difficult to establish a suitable start time on courses. He was supported by a colleague, who worked with 6 young people, while he retained those with whom it was harder to engage.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

144. Corporate Parenting Display

The Panel received a report on the Corporate Parenting Display, which aimed to promote and raise the profile of Children Looked After and Beyond Limits.

An officer apologised for the delay in organising the display, which would now take place before the full Council meeting on 14 November. She explained that the display provided an opportunity for young people to meet their councillors and for councillors to understand their role as corporate parents. Previous displays had been well received, and this year's display would include information about achievement awards, photographs of activities and events, leaflets and other information. Refreshments would be provided.

The Chair asked that all Panel Members encourage their colleagues to attend and engage with the young people.

Members were informed that the LCA awards would take place on 27 November, and invites had been issued.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

145. Agenda Tracker

Panel members discussed issues relating to the future work of the committee, and the need to prepare for transition in the light of the local government elections in May 2014.

A member queried the absence of young people's representatives from Beyond Limits, and commented that it was important for Panel members to be aware of their views when considering matters that affected them. She suggested that if it were difficult to arrange their attendance for the meeting itself, then consideration should be given to organising an informal meeting beforehand, when Members could hear their views and experiences.

An officer informed the Panel that a donation of £15k had been made by John Lyon to be used for extra-curricular activities. The donation had not yet been fully signed-off, but was expected to go through without a problem.

The Panel confirmed that the following reports were to be presented at the next Panel meeting on 17 December:

- a report on 'Champions' for young people in education;
- a progress report on 'NEETs', to include information on work with the careers adviser;
- a report on the response from the CCG on mental health services and referrals for LCA;
- a report on the Participation Strategy;
- a follow-up report on the Corporate Parenting Display to be set-up before the Full Council meeting on 14 November 2013;

RESOLVED: That the work programme be updated in line with the Panel's comments.

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

(Signed) COUNCILLOR CHRISTINE BEDNELL
Chairman