

CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

MINUTES

17 DECEMBER 2013

Chairman: * Councillor Christine Bednell

Councillors: James Bond Zarina Khalid
Margaret Davine * John Nickolay (3)
* Mitzi Green

* Denotes Member present
(3) Denotes category of Reserve Member

146. Attendance by Reserve Members

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

Ordinary Member

Reserve Member

Councillor Janet Mote

Councillor John Nickolay

147. Declarations of Interest

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

148. Minutes

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 21 October 2013, be taken as read and signed as a correct record.

149. Public Questions, Petitions and Deputations

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

RESOLVED ITEMS

150. Performance Report

The Panel received an information report which set out the latest performance position relating to Children Looked After (CLA) and Children with Child Protection Plans (CiN and CPP). An officer reported that the scorecard had been updated to ensure alignment with new legislation and statutory measurement.

In response to questions it was noted that there were approximately 80 to 100 children of school age. The young people preferred stability regarding their Social Worker and placement provided it met their requirements.

The Panel noted that despite the recruitment of 24 Social Workers, meeting timescales and achieving the required quality of assessments remained a challenge, in part due to the significant increase in workload resulting from external scrutiny support. Difficulty in the recruitment of experienced qualified Social Workers was being experienced both across London and nationally and staff turnover affected stability. The Divisional Director, Targeted Services reported that a large number of temporary staff was still being used and that it would take time to develop the less experienced staff. Approximately 80% of assessments had been completed according to target and the Chairman was due to discuss the situation with the officers in January.

It was reported that value for money for placements was sought through the Commissioning Group. The West London Alliance was working with independent fostering agencies and individual homes regarding cost and quality. Residential placements continued to be expensive and it was intended to obtain volume cost and use only for those children that really required it, preferring to use foster carers with training and support including a play therapist and virtual schools. Currently only four out of 44 placements were more than 20 miles from Harrow. Residential schools were being used for 10 children and these tended to be specialist provision for disabilities.

Initiatives to recruit foster carers included the Christmas Fair in Harrow, tweeting and articles in Harrow People. The Panel was pleased to note that the recruitment campaign for foster carers in September/October had resulted in an increase of 3 times as many queries and a potential 15 additional foster carers. Retention was also good and the Council was aiming to develop current foster carers to enable them to assist more difficult children.

In response to a question, the Divisional Director, Targeted Services stated that, in order to demonstrate and measure the process of positive change, case studies would be used in preparation for inspection, additional support would be provided to children in need to help reflective theory and practice, and file audits. The quality of consultation and thinking regarding change that she had observed at meetings had been impressive.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

151. Corporate Parenting Display

Feedback from the Panel was sought regarding the Corporate Parenting Display on 14 November 2013 in order to provide the officers with information as to whether any changes should be made to the arrangements for the next display. The Panel received a report on the Display, the aim of which was to promote and raise the profile of Children Looked After and Beyond Limits.

The Panel was pleased to note that the Mayor of Harrow and 62 Members of the Council had stopped by the display and met the young people before attending the Council meeting that evening. It suggested that it should be an annual summer event and that reference material be placed next to the stall.

Members considered that there was a need to build relationships to enable the young people to feel more comfortable in attending the event. It was important that they had contact with Councillors in their role as Corporate Parents. It was agreed that training new Councillors in their Corporate Parenting responsibilities was an essential part of the induction process. The young people needed to give consideration as to why they were at the event and be prepared as to what they wanted to say. Those attending had particular concerns to express and some of the young people had raised items in connection with their placements and these would be followed up by the officers. Members felt that consideration needed to be given to how to obtain a more representative attendance of the care population.

A Member of the Panel stated that there should be more opportunities for Panel members to meet with the young people and proposed that the officers ascertain the arrangements made by other Councils for less formal venues than Panel meetings.

Overall, it was agreed that the display had been good but that a more informal event at a venue frequented by the young people would be more successful.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the report on the Corporate Parenting Display be noted;
- (2) the officers liaise with the Panel in the arrangement of an informal meeting at a venue frequented by the young people for attendance by Panel Members.

152. Care Leaver Strategy

Consideration was given to the Care Leaver Strategy, a cross-departmental government strategy for young people leaving care. An officer introduced the report stating that it was a detailed strategy to work in a collaborative way. The strategy set out the government's commitment to remove some of the practical barriers that care leavers faced as they progressed into adulthood. It outlined the actions the government was taking to specifically address areas of concern for care leavers.

RESOLVED: That an action plan on the implementation of the Care Leaver Strategy be submitted to the next meeting of the Panel.

153. Response from the CCG on Mental Health Services and Referrals for LCA

The Panel received a verbal update from the Mental Health and Disability Manager on the CNWL CAMHS (Children and Adolescents Mental Health Services.) He informed the Panel that his role was to hold CNWL CAMHS service much more to account. He was working with the CAMHS commissioning cluster with the aim of securing more rigorous reporting in the 2014/15 contract as the current information was patchy and anecdotal.

Members noted that the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) was working with the Local Authority Children's Commissioner to map all CAMHS services and to present its findings in the new year to groups including youth parliament, schools, CAMHS service users, GPs and carers. An Emotional Wellbeing Group was identifying any shortfalls in provision. The Divisional Director, Targeted Services informed the Panel that the officers worked closely with adult services regarding mental health.

He was concerned at some of the figures reported to the last meeting of the Panel as they seemed low so work would be undertaken on this. The Panel was pleased to hear that he was probing.

In response to a question, he stated that he was surprised that schools could no longer refer pupils to CAMHS and that it had to come through GPs. He was working with the Lead GP regarding the Learning Difficulty CAMHS service and was proposing that schools be enabled to make referrals direct to CAMHS. He asked to be informed of any referrals that had been refused to enable him to investigate the circumstances.

The Chairman stated that CLA had traumatic experiences and CAMHS seemed reluctant to assess young people until they were settled in a placement but foster carer needed to be aware of the young person's circumstances.

A member of the Panel asked for information regarding specific psychotherapy or more tailored needs. The CCG representative informed the Panel that Hounslow Council had commissioned Tavistock for a specialist service. Psychotherapy was relevant to certain backgrounds and he would review the numbers, needs and capacity in the New Year. With regard to Outreach work, he had discussed the issue with Tribo? and would be investigating the capacity for more outreach work by CAMHS.

Discussion arose on the part played by schools in monitoring the situation and as appropriate working with the family, initially through universal services. The Council and CCG needed to effectively skill up staff in schools, who were not CAMHS professionals and who already worked with children, where the stage 3 threshold had been reached.

The Youth Parliament presentation on public health had publicised the need for wider health needs for school nurses.

A joint piece of work was being undertaken regarding children placed outside Harrow to ensure that their health needs were met.

RESOLVED: That the verbal report be noted.

154. Report on Champions for Young People in Education

The Panel received a report on the arrangements for the establishment of Education Champions for Harrow Looked After Children whereby every Champion was allocated a Year 11 pupil and had been encouraged to make contact with the Social Worker, to identify potential barriers to learning. It was noted that there would be no contact with the young person although they would be aware that they had an Education Champion.

The Chairman expressed interest in how the Homework Club was developing as she had heard that they were difficult to set up. An officer stated that young people would be assisted with transport to the Homework Club as far as possible. Should demand arise for another Club, the situation would be reviewed.

Individual plans were made with regard to education as there were different issues.

The Chairman stated that they would watch developments with interest.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the report be noted;
- (2) a report on the progress of the scheme be presented to the next meeting of the Panel.

155. Progress Report on NEETs Including Information on Work with the Carers' Adviser

The Panel received an information report updating the position of young people who were NEET (not in education, employment and training) and those who are EET (in education, employment or training). Each child had a detailed plan.

There had been an improvement in the numbers of those in education, employment or training and the current figure of 79.5% (148 young people) was good. With a view to reducing the number of NEETS to EET the situation was being reviewed, support required identified and an action plan created detailing supervision. Work would be undertaken to improve the quality of the care plan in order to identify the skills and experience of staff required to engage the young people and achieve success. A weekly management report would ensure that the situation was monitored.

A Care Advisor reported the arrangement of 1-1 interviews and the support provided to 19, 20 and 21 year olds. Colleges would be starting courses in January. If a young person started a course and withdrew as they did not like it then he would try to find an alternative for them. X16 was recruiting in January and approximately five care leavers had been identified for this

Action was being taken to find more suitable accommodation than bed and breakfast. The aim for accommodation for 16 to 17 year olds was fostering or shared units with their own tenancies to enable them to live independently. The Council provided support for six months subsequent to the commencement of tenancies.

The Panel were advised of case studies and the reasons why the young people concerned had been unable to take up the opportunities found for them. Officers endeavoured to harness the young people's strengths and support and engage with them. It was important to maintain contact with them even though they did not want to have anything to do with the officers.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

156. Agenda Tracker

Panel members discussed issues relating to the future work of the committee and confirmed that the following reports were to be presented at the next Panel meeting on 28 April 2014:

- Information report – Activity and Performance;
- Care Leaver Strategy Action Plan;
- Update on Annual Health Report – including feedback on issues in the summer with Ealing NHS;
- Participation Strategy;
- Report on Champions for Young People in Education;
- Member Development Action Plan for Post-election Training.

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

157. Any Other Urgent Business

CLA Nurse Service

In response to a question, it was noted that a response had not been received from Ealing Hospital Trust to the letter from the Portfolio Holder for Children and Schools regarding the lack of service by the CLA nurse.

RESOLVED: That a response to the letter from the Portfolio Holder be followed up and circulated to Members of the Panel.

(Note: The meeting, having commenced at 7.33 pm, closed at 9.02 pm).

(Signed) COUNCILLOR CHRISTINE BEDNELL
Chairman