

CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

MINUTES

28 APRIL 2014

Chairman: * Councillor Christine Bednell

Councillors: * James Bond * Janet Mote
* Margaret Davine * Mrs Rekha Shah (2)
† Zarina Khalid

* Denotes Member present
(2) Denotes category of Reserve Member
† Denotes apologies received

158. Attendance by Reserve Members

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

Ordinary Member

Reserve Member

Councillor Mitzi Green

Councillor Mrs Rekha Shah

159. Declarations of Interest

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

160. Minutes

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 17 December 2013 be taken as read and signed as a correct record.

161. Public Questions, Petitions and Deputations

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

162. Celebration of Achievement Awards

The Panel received the report of the Interim Director, Children and Families. The report comprised an account of the recent Celebration of Achievement Awards on Wednesday 19 February 2014, including the following:

- the Divisional Director of Targeted Services and the Mayor presented the awards to the young people;
- the event was well-received by the young people and guests, and the new venue of Harrow Arts Centre was larger and better quality than the previous venue.

Members of the Panel commended the hard work of Officers, social workers and the young people that had made the event a success.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

163. Information Report - Activity and Performance

The Panel received the report of the Interim Director, Children and Families which set out key data relating to Children Looked After and Children with Child Protection Plans, including the following:

- outcomes for care leavers are a high priority, and work was being done by the Leaving Care team in conjunction with the Virtual School Difficulties relating to young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) tend to increase as young people get older;
- there had been an increase in the number of children on Child Protection Plans compared to 2013 as thresholds had been lowered and there had been an increase in Section 47 investigations and referrals;
- the number of Children Looked After had sharply increased by 25 children in the last two years, but long-term placement stability is on target;
- re-referrals were lower than they had been in the past, which is encouraging;
- although 10 out of 76 children had fixed-term exclusions since September 2013, there had been no permanent exclusions to date and the Virtual School was working hard on reducing the number of fixed-term exclusions;

- the number of Child Protection Plans in the under 1 age group has risen dramatically, while the 1-4 age group and 5-9 age group has also risen, which could be the result of higher intervention as well as population increases in these age groups.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

164. Care Leaver Strategy Action Plan

The Panel received the report of the Interim Director, Children and Families, which comprised the actions being taken to fulfil responsibilities to Care Leavers, including the following:

- Harrow Council's vision for Care Leavers;
- Harrow Council's pledge to Care Leavers;
- an Officer reported that it was of great importance to ensure that different agencies that support care leavers work together to ensure the best outcomes for them.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

165. Update on Annual Health Report

The Panel received the report of the Designated Doctor and Nurse for Children Looked After. The report summarised the delivery of healthcare services to Children Looked After from April 2013 to March 2014, including the following:

- Initial Health Assessments;
- Review Health Assessments;
- CLA Designated Nurse and Doctor.

Having considered the report, a Member expressed concern that young people are reluctant to consent to examinations by health professionals, Members were advised that a clinic may be preferable to a hospital as it may be considered less intimidating.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

166. Member Development Action Plan for Post-election Training

Officers and Members of the Panel commented that the role of Councillors as Corporate Parents should be emphasised and brought to the forefront, and that all Councillors should feel responsible for Children Looked After in Harrow.

RESOLVED: That the comments be noted.

167. Participation Strategy

The Panel received the report of the Divisional Director, Targeted Services. The report outlined the Participation Strategy, and included the following:

- there would be a Children Looked After Fair in July 2014, which would give the children and young people an opportunity to meet the agencies that would be providing services to them;
- the Participation Team were hoping to set up a Mentoring scheme for children and young people;
- at an upcoming Let's Talk session there would be the opportunity for Children Looked After to discuss with Councillors and build relationships.

After taking questions from Members, an Officer commented that:

- an event for Councillors in July would feature a stall dedicated to CLA and Councillors' roles as Corporate Parents;
- the mentoring scheme would be regularly evaluated.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

168. Virtual School Report

The Panel received the report of the Interim Corporate Director, Children and Families. The report comprised an update on the Virtual Schools programme, and included the following:

- Virtual Headteachers would visit all Harrow Children Looked After in Harrow and London schools at least once a term, and would visit Children Looked After out of the borough annually.
- from April 2014, the Pupil Premium would be increased to £1,900 per year, from the day they entered care;
- a cookery course had been held for Children Looked After and Young Carers, which was a success and well-received by the children and young people;
- future events included a 2-day Drama Workshop, a camping trip and trips to universities to raise the aspirations of young people.

In response to questions from Members, an Officer commented that:

- Educational Champions do not meet the children personally, but rather discuss their needs with their social workers and other professionals.

A Member of the Panel commented that it would be hugely beneficial if Educational Champions' training was included in the Member Development Programme.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

(Note: The meeting, having commenced at 7.30 pm, closed at 8.55 pm).

(Signed) COUNCILLOR CHRISTINE BEDNELL
Chairman