

CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

MINUTES

1 OCTOBER 2014

Chairman: * Councillor Simon Brown

Councillors: * Christine Bednell * Kairul Kareema Marikar
* Margaret Davine * Janet Mote
* Mitzi Green

* Denotes Member present

9. Attendance by Reserve Members

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

10. Declarations of Interest

The following interests were declared:

- Councillor Simon Brown declared a non-pecuniary interest in that his daughter was now employed by Central and North West London NHS Foundation Trust;
- Councillor Kairul Kareema Marikar declared a non-pecuniary interest in that she was employed as a Safeguarding Coordinator, and had a background in safeguarding Looked After children;
- Councillor Janet Mote declared a non-pecuniary interest in that her daughter is employed as a nurse at Northwick Park Hospital.

11. Minutes

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meetings of 28 April 2014 and 23 July 2014 be taken as read and signed as a correct record.

12. Public Questions, Petitions and Deputations

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

RESOLVED ITEMS

13. Report on Housing for Care Leavers

An Officer presented a report about Housing for Care Leavers, which included the following:

- the London Borough of Harrow had a legal obligation to support Looked After Young People to independence, and this included the provision of housing,
- the Life Skills Training included financial training to help young people manage their own finances, and language training under the LINAB programme;
- the Pathway Plan was a very important plan for young people, and was implemented 3 months before their 16th birthday;
- this plan included support with education, health, employment and finances as well as with family or religious issues;
- difficulties faced by young people included rent arrears, substance abuse, and a lack of available placements, but there would be discussions between Children's Services and Housing Services to try and address the latter;
- young people were placed through the YMCA, and unaccompanied minors were placed at Gayton, which was semi-independent and had provisions for language training;
- 61 young people had their own tenancies, 79 were living in semi-independent accommodation such as Gayton, and 80 were still in foster care placements;
- not all asylum seekers are entitled to their own tenancies, depending on their status;
- young people were of the view that the Independent Living Grant was not enough, the Grant had then been increased accordingly and the young people had reported their satisfaction.

After taking questions and comments from Officers and Members of the Panel, Officers reported that:

- Housing Services were under pressure and were looking for alternatives for all groups, not just Care Leavers;
- Housing Services were keen to offer assistance but would not be unable to increase the quota, and it was likely that the quota may be decreased further;
- young people who were in private tenancies would not be eligible for the same amount of support once they reached the age of 22, and the shortfall in the support they receive could amount up to £100 per week;
- the gap between benefits that young people are eligible for and rental prices is considerable in London boroughs;
- care leavers who are attending university would no longer risk losing their offer of accommodation;
- an option for shared accommodation would be a one-bedroom flat with the living room converted into a second bedroom, as two brothers were interested in sharing accommodation;
- the YMCA hostel was in Harrow-On-The-Hill, and since April 2014 had been taken over by Targeted Services through Supporting People;
- young people staying at the YMCA received regular key work support and assistance with their Pathway Plan;
- the service providers at Gayton were private companies, and overall feedback on the services provided was good as the staff were supportive and cooperative;
- there was also a lot of peer support for unaccompanied asylum seekers at Gayton, which benefited them;
- young people would be happy if Councillors attended the Beyond Limits events, as the evening time schedule of Corporate Parenting Panel meetings made it difficult for them to attend;
- most local authorities set their Independent Living Grant at £2,000, as did the London Borough of Harrow;
- individual agreements were put in place for each child and each placement to ensure that private providers were meeting the needs of Looked After children;
- Targeted Services could put pressure on providers to ensure good value for money and high standards for service were being met, and there were structures in place to hold service providers to account;

- a lot of work had been done to increase the number of in-house fostering placements, however this was not always possible;
- Care Leavers sharing larger properties was a good idea, and three- or four-year leases may be possible with some properties;
- the hostel unit at the YMCA was modern and spacious, and could accommodate 29 young people, including two units for mothers of babies;
- short-term placements for outside of term times could be arranged for students;
- the young people who were missing were from asylum seeking backgrounds, and their disappearance had been reported to the police;

Members of the Panel commented that they would be happy to move meetings of the Panel to an earlier start time, in order to accommodate young people who wished to attend.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

14. Activity and Performance Report

An Officer presented the report of the Interim Corporate Director of Children and Families, which included the following:

- Performance Indicator figures published by DfE were rounded and hence there would be small differences in local Harrow calculations and data published by DfE;
- last year the number of children with Child Protection Plans had risen, but was now fairly consistent, though higher than the national average;
- there had been little change in short-term and long-term placement stability data;
- in previous years, rates of Child Protection Plans had been lower than statistical neighbours, had fallen in line last year, and now were higher;
- the rates of Child Protection Plans had risen due to an increase in the population of children under 5, changing demography, and better reporting.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

15. Update on Annual Health Report

The CLA Designated Nurse presented the report, which included the following:

- Northwick Park and Ealing Hospital Trust had come together and been promised an increase in performance;
- Initial Health Assessments had not improved significantly, but administrative processes had greatly improved between social workers and health professionals to ensure better communication and better outcomes for young people;
- quality had not been an issue for these assessments, but had improved, and young people were aware of their lead health professionals;
- 85% of Review Health Assessments had been completed on time, which was below target, but the quality had improved;
- only a handful of young people did not attend their health appointments, but this was still an issue as it caused a backlog and impacted the data;
- the Clinical Commissioning Group and Harrow Council were both aware of the shortcomings with the current process and encouraged tighter monitoring;
- a business plan would be put to Central and North West London NHS Foundation Trust later this week.

After taking questions from Members of the Panel, the Designated Nurse commented that:

- three more School Nurses had been recruited, which was positive;
- most children with Child Protection Plans and Looked After Children were school-age, so having sufficient numbers of School Nurses was important;
- with regards to the Designated Doctor post, there had been challenges in the past but it would be beneficial to have a similar post to the Designated Nurse position;

Members of the Panel also commented that:

- it would be beneficial for the Portfolio Holder for Public Health, Equality and Wellbeing to be invited to future meetings at which Health Updates would be given;
- social workers should be regularly appraised to ensure they are following procedures regarding the healthcare of the young people they are responsible for;

- an update on School Nurses, as well as a general Health update, would be appreciated at the next meeting.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

16. **Children Looked After Education Attainment - Virtual School Report - Year 11 Results**

The Interim Headteacher of the Virtual School presented the report of the Interim Corporate Director of Children and Families, which included the following:

- there were far higher numbers of Looked After Children at Key Stage 3 than there were at Key Stage 2;
- the Department for Education collected data in a different way, which meant 13 children who had been in care for less than a year were not included in the report;
- this also meant that Year 11 pupils who had attained BTEC qualifications were not included in the report;
- two of the children who had achieved five GCSEs at A* - G grades were unaccompanied asylum seekers, and two had had no prior experience of education;
- all of the children had been placed in mainstream schools, which was a key to success in education;
- there had been no permanent exclusions of Looked After Children;
- several Looked After Children experienced mental health difficulties, which was by far the most significant need;
- the mental health of Looked After Children needed to be monitored from Year 9 onwards, and support was needed from their healthcare providers as well as from their schools;
- one child had not achieved any GCSEs, but had developed a love for learning despite having no prior experience of education.

After taking questions from Members of the Forum, the Interim Virtual Headteacher commented that:

- not all children had been entered for exams as three of them had arrived in the country too late.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

17. Care Leavers Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET)

An Officer presented the report of the Interim Corporate Director of Children and Families, which included the following:

- there were high numbers of NEET young people in the 20-year-old cohort, which was partly due to 18-year-olds leaving education and being unsure of what to do next;
- there were many barriers for Care Leavers that prevented them from entering or sustaining education, employment or training, and regular monitoring helped young people to overcome these barriers;
- a detailed plan was written up for each young person, and the young people were also encouraged to attend creative workshops that would help them build the required skills.

After taking questions and comments from Members of the Panel, an Officer commented that:

- after the age of 21, some support was still provided;
- childcare needs would not be a barrier as childcare would always be provided, and there were also mother-and-baby foster care placements for Looked After young people who are mothers;
- there were strong links in place with the Department of Work and Pensions to provide support to young people to help them sustain employment.

Members of the Panel also commented that:

- it was beneficial to encourage good working habits at a young age, as this would make it easier to stay in employment once it had been secured;
- young people were discouraged by high levels of unemployment and a shortage of jobs, so it was good that there was additional support available for Care Leavers.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

18. New Members Induction

The following points were raised in a discussion regarding new Council Members and their Corporate Parenting duties:

- a training session had been prepared at the beginning of September, but had to be cancelled due to insufficient numbers of Members signing up;

- it was difficult to schedule a date and time that was suitable for Members, as many of them worked during the day and attended meetings during the evening;
- the new IT system for Members to book into training sessions had proved difficult to use;
- Corporate Parenting was an apolitical responsibility of all Members, and all Members should be willing to collectively work to improve the lives of vulnerable children;
- the Mayor could remind Members about the sessions at Council meetings, and the Group Whip could also encourage attendance at training sessions;
- an evening training session with a few months' notice would be the best way to ensure attendance from Members.

RESOLVED: That the points raised be noted by Members of the Panel and Officers present.

19. Corporate Parenting Panel Forward Planner

The Panel received the latest Forward Planner, and requested the following updates at the next meeting of Corporate Parenting Panel on 2 December 2014;

- feedback on the next Beyond Limits event, due to take place on 13 October 2014;
- an update on the Health Report, including an update on CLA medical assessments and commissioning the new services;
- a Corporate Parenting Strategy;

Additionally, an update on Housing was requested for the meeting of 21 April 2014.

RESOLVED: That the Forward Planner 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 SIMON BROWN
Chairman

Officers in Attendance:

Naiha Ali – Senior Practitioner, Leaving Care
Jon Dalton – Service Manager, Housing Needs
Sue Dixon – Designated Nurse, Children Looked After (NHS)
Negus Gebeyehu – Team Manager, Leaving Care & UASC
Jane Munroe – Interim Headteacher, Virtual School
Dipika Patel – Business Intelligence Partner
Peter Tolley – Service Manager, Targeted Services