

CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

MINUTES

7 JULY 2015

Chair: * Councillor Mitzi Green

Councillors: * Christine Bednell * Kairul Kareema Marikar
* Simon Brown * Lynda Seymour (1)
* Jo Dooley

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

46. Attendance by Reserve Members

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

Ordinary Member

Councillor Janet Mote

Reserve Member

Councillor Lynda Seymour

47. Declarations of Interest

RESOLVED: To note that the following interests were declared:

Councillor Kairul Kareema Marikar declared a non-pecuniary interest in all items in that she worked for a Mental Health company. She would remain in the room whilst the matter was considered and voted upon.

Agenda Item 11 – Update on Individual Health Assessments

Councillor Simon Brown declared a non-pecuniary interest in that his daughter was employed by CNWL NHS Foundation Trust. He would remain in the room whilst the matter was considered and voted upon.

48. Minutes

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 17 March 2015, be taken as read and signed as a correct record.

49. Public Questions

RESOLVED: To note that no public questions were received.

50. Petitions

RESOLVED: To note that no petitions had been received.

51. Deputations

RESOLVED: To note that no deputations were received at this meeting under the provisions of Executive Procedure Rule 50 (Part 4D of the Constitution).

RESOLVED ITEMS

52. Activity and Performance Report

The Panel received a report, which they considered as an urgent item for the reasons set out on the supplemental agenda. The report set out activity for Children Looked After (CLA) and Children with Child Protection Plans. The report also detailed the provisional performance position at the end of quarter 4 2014-15 and provided national and comparator data published by the Department for Education for the year ending 2013-14.

In introducing the report, the officer highlighted the key points and explained the key indicators and provided some background to them. He stated that it was unclear as to why there had been a drop in the number of Child Protection Plans in Harrow but that it would continue to be monitored.

The officer reported that he was satisfied that action was being taken in relation to long term placement stability for CLA as steps were being taken to minimise placement changes. The Panel were advised that some moves were good for young people and that 23 of the 29 CLA had been in the same placement for 12 months or more and that the small number of CLA was partly due to the success of special guardianship orders. Members were reassured that there was a monthly Care Planning Group which considered all children entering the care system and that those children were linked to carers at the earliest possible time.

The Panel noted that targets in terms of care leavers were not being met and would continue to be monitored. The Divisional Director of Children and Young People Service advised that X16 was proving to be a successful project in supporting young people into both education and work.

A Member questioned the increase in the number of children with child protection plans. The Divisional Director of Children and Young People Service advised that the numbers had plateaued but that the thresholds were never static. The numbers were also impacted by changes in social care staff who may hold different opinions/views on interpretation and application of thresholds.

Referring to performance in relation to attendance at school, the officer reported that as at end March 2015 11% of sessions had been missed by CLA. The aspiration was to reduce this figure to 3-4%, the same as for the rest of the school population. He undertook to provide an update report and real time figures at the next meeting.

A Member commented that the category of abuse appeared to have changed and that there may be cultural factors. The Divisional Director of Children and Young People Service advised that domestic abuse remained a significant issue but that Harrow was good at identifying this. It was likely that families with issues of domestic abuse would exhibit other features of concern such as substance misuse and therefore children were more likely to suffer abuse. The officers responded that the figures would be considered, including some analysis of any cultural factors, and that feedback would be provided to the Panel.

In response to a Member's question as to the identity of Harrow's statistical neighbours quoted throughout the report, the officer undertook to provide this information to the Panel. The Chair also requested that a report be submitted to the January 2016 meeting of the Panel on care leavers, with a particular emphasis on X16.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

53. Protocol for the relationship between Harrow Safeguarding Children Board and Corporate Parenting Panel

The Panel received the protocol which outlined the functions and responsibilities of Harrow Safeguarding Children Board and Harrow's Corporate Parenting Panel. It aimed to promote co-ordination and development of business planning between these bodies so that they worked effectively together in the pursuit of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people in Harrow.

The officer reported that an area of particular interest was missing children and that CLA featured in these figures. The next meeting of the Harrow Safeguarding Children Board on 17 September 2015 would focus on CLA and the Chair of the Panel would be receive a formal invite to attend.

A Member stated that she could not recall the Panel considering the Statement of Purpose for the Adoption and Fostering Services. The Divisional Director of Children and Young People Service undertook to look into this issue and at the terms of reference. The Panel were advised that the Council's Constitution required both documents to be considered by the Panel before being recommended to the relevant Portfolio Holder or Cabinet.

The Chair stated that specifics in relation to the roles of the Portfolio Holder and the Chair of the Corporate Parenting Panel should be included in the protocol and that she would like to see the protocol included in the Corporate Parenting Strategy. She added that the Strategy should be forwarded to the Harrow Safeguarding Children Board.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

54. Beyond Limits Group - Follow-Up Report

The Panel received an oral report from the Chair and officers following a second meeting with a group of young people from Beyond Limits. It was reported that the discussion had been helpful and had covered topics such as IT, pocket money, mobile phones and how placements were made. In addition to this, a young person had attended the Member training event held the previous evening which had been useful.

A Member commented there had been positive feedback in relation to the meeting with young people and it was apparent that seemingly minor issues could, in fact have a significant impact. The importance of matching a foster carer to a child should not be underestimated.

The Chair indicated that she would welcome the continuation of the meetings with the group of young people, currently 4 a year, and added that the young people were also welcome to attend the Panel meetings. She requested that a further training session for Members be arranged following Council on 24 September 2015 and that an exhibition in relation to the Corporate Parenting Strategy be available for Members to view on the evening of the meeting.

RESOLVED: That the oral report be noted.

55. Leisure and Cultural Activities for Children Looked After

The Panel received a report which outlined opportunities for participation in leisure, sporting and cultural activities available to Young People and Children Looked After. The officer reported on the Leisure and Youth Development Offers for Looked After Children and care leavers.

The Panel welcomed the report and were advised that young people had provided input into the 'Offers' via evaluation forms and due to the close links with the Youth Parliament and Beyond Limits. The Divisional Director of Children and Young People stated that the aim was to ensure that all CLA had a hobby or interest as well as a personal development plan. The officer added that work was underway to promote swimming for CLA and work was being done with the leisure provider to actively support this. Work was also being done to see if the Virtual School could be accredited as a Duke of Edinburgh Award provider.

The Chair requested that an update on progress be submitted to the Panel in a year.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

56. Update on Individual Health Assessments

The Panel received an urgent tabled report, for the reasons set out on the supplemental agenda, which provided information about the health of children and young people who met the criteria as Children Looked After (CLA) by Harrow Council in accordance with the role of Corporate Parent.

The Designated Nurse for Safeguarding and CLA outlined the content of her report in detail advising that there had been a move to a new provider on 1 June 2015 as the community and acute providers had not functioned well. To date the initial health assessments had been completed, the IRO had been positive and there had not been any of the delays previously experienced. Although there was an increased rate of CLA, Harrow continued to have a relatively low number. There was a high proportion of older CLA and it was a challenge to do their health assessments as they did not wish to attend.

The Designated Nurse reported that the timeliness of health assessments had been poor and that the new provider was looking at this issue. She advised that the local authority was sometimes late in providing the paperwork but that this did not account for all lateness. The timeliness of health assessment reviews had improved and the CLA nurse had visited a number of children placed out of borough.

The Panel were advised that quality assurance had been a positive feature of the 2014/15 annual report. In terms of gaps in service, the Designated Nurse reported that she had flagged up unaccompanied minors and older adolescents to the Clinical Commissioning Group as there appeared to be a gap in services for these groups.

The Divisional Director of Children and Young People reported that the relationship between health professionals and social care was key and that young people needed easy access to services. This had been a key learning point.

The Chair requested that the initial health assessments be monitored.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

57. Agenda Tracker

RESOLVED: That the Agenda Tracker be updated in line with Members' comments.

58. Any Other Urgent Business

(a) Appointment of Vice Chair:

RESOLVED: That Councillor Christine Bednell be appointed as Vice Chair of the Panel for the 2015/16 Municipal Year.

(b) Corporate Parenting Panel Membership:

RESOLVED: To note the change in Reserve Members of the Panel notified by the Labour Group.

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

(Signed) COUNCILLOR MITZI GREEN
Chair