

CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

MINUTES

20 OCTOBER 2015

Chair: * Councillor Mitzi Green

Councillors: * Christine Bednell * Janet Mote
* Simon Brown * Mrs Christine Robson (3)
* Jo Dooley

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

59. Late and Urgent Reports

The Chair of the Panel commented that some reports for this meeting had been circulated after the main agenda, and Members had not had enough time to read some of the reports in depth.

The Chair requested that officers ensure that all reports were received by Democratic Services by the deadline set. She emphasised that these deadlines and reminders were circulated well in advance.

60. Attendance by Reserve Members

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

Ordinary Member

Councillor Kairul Kareema Marikar

Reserve Member

Councillor Christine Robson

61. Declarations of Interest

RESOLVED: To note that there were no Declarations of Interest made by Members.

62. Minutes

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of 7 July 2015 be taken as read and signed as a correct record.

63. Public Questions, Petitions and Deputations

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

RECOMMENDED ITEMS

64. Virtual School Report

An Officer presented a report regarding the performance of the Virtual School. Members expressed their appreciation of the way the report presented numbers of children in each cohort rather than just percentages as this gave a greater understanding of the achievement.

The report included the following:

- Every local authority had a Virtual Head Teacher, to scrutinise partners in education in their provision of services to Children Looked After;
- Fifty-five per cent of the 145 pupils on roll in the Virtual School were educated in Harrow;
- Eighty per cent of the pupils educated outside of Harrow, and eighty-eight per cent of the pupils educated in Harrow, were attending schools rated Good or better by Ofsted;
- Twenty-one percent of post-sixteen Children and Young People Looked After were not in education, employment or training, but this figure was recorded in September when students had only recently received their exam results;
- Harrow allowed young people to remain in their placements until the end of the academic year of their eighteenth birthday, to minimise disruption to their education;
- The educational progress and achievements of Children and Young People Looked After were celebrated and emphasised, even when they did not meet age-related expectations for the child.

Following questions from Members, the Virtual Head Teacher advised that:

- At the next meeting, anonymised case studies could be provided to build narratives;
- Children Looked After were only included in the figures if they had been in care for over a year;
- Children Looked After who were in permanent placements were no longer considered to be in the care system and so were not included in the figures;
- There were various reasons for low attendance among Children Looked After, including delays in obtaining a school place, and feelings of disengagement among older children;
- Partnership work was taking place with schools, parents, advocates and young people to help increase school attendance;
- The Virtual School could ask for assessments of children with potentially undiagnosed special needs;
- The Virtual School worked very closely with educational psychologists and the Special Educational Needs Team.

In response to concern by the Panel that no CLA had achieved 5 A-C grades, the Virtual Head Teacher provided an explanation as to the issues around this and the achievements made.

Resolved to RECOMMEND (to Cabinet)

That the report be noted.

RESOLVED: That (1) the report be noted and that the Panel continue to monitor the work of the Virtual School;
(2) a more in depth report on what was being done to increase attendance be submitted to the next meeting.

RESOLVED ITEMS

65. Activity and Performance Report

An Officer presented a report regarding activity and performance for Children Looked After (CLA) and children with Child Protection Plans (CPP), which included the following:

- There had been an increase of Child Protection Plans of 30% since March 2014, and Harrow Council had more Child Protection Plans than statistical neighbours;
- The timeliness of putting CPPs in place had improved and the number of children with a CPP lasting more than two years remained low;

- There had been one permanent exclusion from school in Academic Year 2014/15, and there had been one so far in 2015/16;
- Long-term placement stability had significantly improved;
- There had been six adoptions and nine Special Guardianship Orders last year.

In response to questions from Members, Officers commented that:

- The rate of unaccompanied asylum seekers had risen from about two per month to four, and if this rate was sustained or increased this may cause problems but was being managed by dedicated staff;
- The relevant teams were aware that numbers of asylum seekers would increase on a national level in the near future, and were planning for this;
- To date, all unaccompanied asylum seekers had been given a placement;
- There was a slight overlap between increased numbers of asylum seekers and increased numbers of older teenage males who were Looked After;
- Unaccompanied asylum seekers received the same support as all Children Looked After, including references to Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services where necessary;
- The rise in the instances of emotional abuse could be due to situations that comprised neglect and/or domestic abuse being classified as emotional abuse;
- Some people living in the UK came from a culture where some degree of domestic abuse was normalised;

Members commented that they wished to see more work being done with communities to tackle domestic abuse. A Member also commented that according to Harrow's Borough Commander for the Metropolitan Police, domestic abuse takes place in all cultures and is not significantly more prevalent among any particular demographic.

The Chair also requested that this report be brought to the attention of the Portfolio Holder for Community, Culture and Resident Engagement so she could note the report and consider its findings when carrying out her remit in relation to domestic abuse.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

66. Independent Reviewing Officers Report

Members commented that this report had been published and circulated on 20 October 2015, and they had not had time to read the in-depth report thoroughly. As such, it was:

RESOLVED: That this item be deferred to the next meeting of Corporate Parenting Panel on 12 January 2016.

67. Placement Sufficiency Strategy

An Officer presented a report about Children Looked After and children “on the edge” of care to outline demographic information and needs, which included the following:

- A child’s home life had a considerable impact on their life chances and transition into adulthood;
- Harrow Council provided in-house foster carers who could cater for a wide range of needs, and external services were tailored to complement this;
- Long-term stability of placements had improved because of good matching and a wider range of available placements;
- The team had formulated work plans to prevent young people entering care where possible;
- Harrow Council had a well-established adoption arrangement with the adoption charity Coram.

Following questions from Members, Officers commented that;

- There were different ways of engaging children at different points in the placement process, and young people entering a ‘planned’ placement (rather than an ‘emergency’ placement) were given the opportunity to visit the placement and be introduced to the carers;
- The figures pertaining to the proportion of children who had moved placements more than three times had dropped, which was positive and indicated improving relationships between young people and staff;
- Semi-independent accommodation covered a wide range, and each child or young person would have their own individual plan;
- Coram have a support network to help prevent breakdown of placements.

RESOLVED: That the above points arising from this report be noted, and the remainder of the report be deferred to the next meeting of Corporate Parenting Panel on 12 January 2015.

68. Children Looked After Health Report

The Designated Doctor and Nurse for Children Looked After presented a report regarding health services provided to Children Looked After, which included the following:

- The launch of the new service provider had taken place on 1 June 2015 and had been successful;
- Mutual quality assurance took place between the Harrow team, the Hillingdon team and the Clinical Commissioning Group;
- Stronger links were being formed with general practitioners and social workers to manage long-term health conditions;
- Requests for Review Health Assessments were being received almost three months in advance, which was an improvement;
- The team were recruiting a Band 3 Administrator and the Designated Doctor would retire in December 2015 so her post was also being advertised;
- Ongoing screening for tuberculosis was taking place and the team had applied to Harrow Voluntary Action Group for a tuberculosis grant and been successful;
- The team had adopted a child-centred approach to engage with hard-to-reach families and this had been effective.

The Designated Nurse also referred to Appendix 2 of the report and clarified that the percentage figure for up-to-date immunisations for August 2015 should read 66%, not 100%.

Members acknowledged the work of the Designated Doctor and Nurse and congratulated the team on their achievements since the launch.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

69. Foster Parent Observer for Corporate Parenting Panel

The Chair advised that other Local Authorities appointed a foster parent to the Corporate Parenting Panel as a non-voting Member. Following a brief discussion, all Members unanimously agreed that this was a good idea and that Officers from Democratic Services and Children Looked After and Placement Services be requested to make the necessary arrangements.

RESOLVED: That a foster parent would be appointed to the Corporate Parenting Panel as a non-voting Member in time for the next meeting on 12 January 2016.

70. Agenda Tracker

RESOLVED: That the agenda tracker be updated in line with Members' suggestions to include:

	Agenda
12 January 2016	Care Leavers (focus on x16) Independent Reviewing Officers Report – Deferred from 20 October 2015 Placement Sufficiency Strategy – remainder of report from that discussed on 14 October be deferred to the next meeting
12 April 2016	
First meeting 2016/2017	Update/progress on Leisure and Cultural Activities for Looked After Children

(Note: The meeting, having commenced at 7.30 pm, closed at 9.05 pm).

(Signed) COUNCILLOR MITZI GREEN
Chair