

CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

MINUTES

12 JANUARY 2016

Chair: † Councillor Mitzi Green

Councillors: * Christine Bednell (Vice-Chair in the Chair) * Kairul Kareema Marikar
* Simon Brown * Janet Mote
* Jo Dooley * Mrs Christine Robson (3)

Non-Voting Member: * Valerie Griffin

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

71. Welcome to Non-Voting Member

The Chair welcomed Valerie Griffin to her first meeting of the Panel.

72. 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 Christine Robson

73. Declarations of Interest

RESOLVED: To note that the following interest was declared:

Agenda Item 13 – Health Update on Looked After Children

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

74. Minutes

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 20 October 2015, be taken as read and signed as a correct record.

75. Public Questions, Petitions and Deputations

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

RESOLVED ITEMS

76. INFORMATION REPORT - Activity and Performance

The Panel received a report which set out activity for Children Looked After and Children with Child Protection Plans as at 30 September 2015 as well as the provisional performance position at the end of quarter 2 of 2015-16.

Members were informed that, as quarter 3 data was not yet available, the quarter 2 information presented at the last meeting had been updated. The evidence suggested that the increase in numbers would continue, impacted by incoming population and welfare reforms.

Attention was drawn to the following:

- the indicator for Care Leavers and EET required the recording of status at the time of the young person's birthday rather than the latest position. The indicator would therefore differ from the Leaving Care Team's report on status at December;
- CNWL was meeting 100% against the service specification for CLA health checks. However, the indicator values for initial health checks and reviews, whilst improved, were not 100% because not all cases were presented to the Trust within timescale;
- Harrow monitors and reports data for all CLA whereas the DfE requirement was for the publication of data for those looked after for more than one year, which would tend to be better.

In response to questions:

- the officer undertook to ascertain how referral to CAMHS or mental health for NEETS identified as having mental health difficulties was recorded. It was noted that CAMHS was being reorganised;

- a child reaching the age of 18 who was already part of CAMHS should experience a smooth transfer to adult mental health. For those without experience of CAMHS, the transition should be addressed through a link to the plan;
- research had shown that the achievement of 5 A-C grades at GCSE sometimes took place post 16 years. Systems were set up to track the educational arrangements for post 16s and their potential achievements. All four children who sat GCSEs the previous year had achieved at least 5 GCSEs A-G grades;
- the new Virtual Head teacher was working with partners to reduce absence for CLA;
- the data for the suitability of accommodation was measured around the young person's birthday and could therefore differ from the current state.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted,

77. Care Leavers Employment, Education and Training (EET)

An officer presented a report which informed the Panel of the NEET (not in employment, education or training) and EET (in employment, education or training) figures for care leavers between the ages of 16-21. It was reported that 77.8% were in employment, education or training. The Panel was advised that the report did not have legal clearance but as it was an information report and no decision was required, discussion could continue without the clearance.

The officers outlined the support available through the Care Leavers and UASC section, Social Workers, Social Care Assistants, and Career Advisor. Examples of case studies and data giving reasons for NEET for each age range were presented.

In response to questions, it was noted that:

- for one child listed as 16 years old, the Home Office had disputed the age claim. It was noted that should the child institute a legal challenge it could take some time to resolve. If a child was a lot older than they claimed it could result in a safeguarding risk for other children in foster placement, schools etc;
- with the aim of providing support from people from the same ethnic background as the child there was a mentoring team and a group of independent visitors. On occasion the young person has not wanted to engage in this initiative;
- the assessment was holistic and based on individual needs. Young people who had been at Gayton for some time offered support to new children;

- a good response had been received for referrals for a complete mental health assessment to CAMHS, assisted by the Designated Nurse;
- care leavers who pursued education were supported until 24 or 25 years of age. A young person in prison who was released before 21 years of age and was in full time education could be supported until 24 or 25 years of age.

The Panel considered that there was encouraging evidence of joined up working and mechanisms and strands to use imaginative techniques such as board games.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted and a future report be submitted in six months.

78. Adoption Statement of Purpose and Fostering Statement of Purpose

The Panel received a report containing the Adoption Statement of Purpose and Fostering Statement of Purpose. The Panel was advised that, in the absence of legal clearance, the statements could not be recommended for approval as requested in the report. The report was therefore submitted for information with the Panel's comments being noted and the Statements of Purpose would be the subject of an officer report to the appropriate decision-maker.

An officer outlined the aims and objectives of the Statements of Purpose and the key responsibilities of each division. Particular attention was drawn to it being the 10th year of the partnership with Coram, for which a celebratory event was planned to commemorate the innovation.

In response to a question from a Member, the officer outlined the procedure for fostering of a baby. It was noted that a Special Guardianship Order ensured that the birth parents did not lose permanency.

Members drew attention to the work of the Fostering and Adoption Panel and the aim to have a responsive, flexible and effective post-permanency support offer to families. Members expressed appreciation of the flowcharts and staffing charts which they found useful.

The Panel expressed the view that submission of the Statements of Purpose to Cabinet gave more weight to the initiatives.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

79. School Attendance for Looked After Children

A report summarising the Autumn 2015 attendance figures for Children Looked After and an analysis of DfE National Data over the previous three years was discussed by the Panel. At the last meeting the Panel had requested a more in depth report on what was being done to increase attendance.

It was reported that Welfare Call contacted schools on a daily basis to check attendance. Internal monitoring of attendance took place from the point of entry into care whereas the DfE indicator monitored children on a school roll who had been in care for a year or longer. Harrow's attendance had improved during the last three years but was still slightly higher than its statistical neighbours and nationally. Harrow Admissions Team had been helpful.

The Panel considered the information presented on education synopsis and virtual school intervention to be helpful. It was noted that a number of absences were due to waiting for procedures such as getting a school place. For those being educated outside Harrow, attendance at schools closer to Harrow would be beneficial.

In response to a question, it was noted that appropriate absence during festival periods would be classified as authorised absence. The figures were expected to improve as the year progressed provided the child attended the school.

The Panel supported the presentation of rewards for improved attendance. It was suggested that the awards be for exemplary attendance and not a percentage so as not to preclude those for whom a small increase in attendance would be a significant step. The arrangement of an awards day was considered to be a motivator to encourage increased attendance.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

80. Independent Reviewing Officers Report

The Panel received a report which detailed information about the children looked after activity in Harrow during the period 1 April 2014 to 31 March 2015 and was an evaluation of the work of the Independent Reviewing Officers.

An officer introduced the report and it was noted that the children were allocated to one of four Independent Reviewing Officers, all of whom had a wealth of social worker experience and were often the consistent person for the child during their time as a looked after child. A number of different ways of quality monitoring were used such as dispute resolution protocol. The next report submitted to the Panel would have a complete year of data.

In response to questions, it was noted that there had not been a significant change in the number of children looked after. A Member drew attention to the fact that the number of children adopted was low (4%) compared to the national average (17%) and statistical neighbours (9.9%). The officer stated that this had been a temporary deviation from the norm and that for 2015/16 the number was expected to double.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

81. Placement Sufficiency Strategy

A report was received on the Placement Sufficiency Strategy which focused on plans to meet the placement needs of children who were in care, young

people who had recently left the care of the local authority and those who might be in care in the future.

The Panel was pleased to note that the percentage of in-house foster carers had increased and that Harrow had particularly reliable emergency foster carers. An officer stated that Harrow promoted the ethos that foster carers were professional partners and their skills were recognised and valued. The Advisory Member expressed agreement with this, saying that she felt valued.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

82. Health Update on Looked After Children

The Panel received a report which detailed the health services provided to Children Looked After. It was noted that the targets for the previous three months had been exceeded, and had subsequently been increased.

Particular attention was drawn to:

- a £500 grant had been secured for tuberculosis work including screening for all UAS and anyone at risk. There would be an initial health assessment and then referral to TB nurses with records of all children screened and those who required treatment;
- 20 health assessments had been undertaken for UASC;
- monthly reports were submitted to the LA and CCG with three monthly reports to the Panel;
- monitoring meetings with the CCG continued and the CLA service had been removed from the Harrow CCG risk register.

In response to questions, it was noted that:

- a catch up immunisation service was provided in conjunction with Hillingdon LAC service at Eastcote clinic. The 38% of LAC children up to date with immunisations in October 2015 could have been the result of a large sibling group who had not been immunised. The record for December 2015 had been 100%;
- interpreters were used to enable the communication of health concerns. A crib sheet was made available to translators on topics to be discussed. One of key translating requirements was for puberty books in another language.

The Panel discussed the difficulty being experienced in recruitment to the Designated Doctor post following the retirement of the previous post holder. It was a consultant post and there was a lack of people to work one day a week who had the skills required. It was reported that the LA and CCG were aware that this could result in a breach of targets and a written mitigation report of risk had been produced. It was noted that an advertisement for a locum was

being advertised that day on NHS jobs. Initiatives being undertaken to ease the situation were noted.

The Panel noted the appreciative comments from UASC, Care Leavers and Carers.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

83. Any Other Urgent Business

The Panel considered the Agenda Tracker under Any Other Business in order to confirm the reports that the Panel wished to have submitted. The calendar of meetings for the 2016/17 would be approved by Cabinet at its meeting

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

	Agenda
12 April 2016	
First meeting 2016/17	Update/progress on Leisure and Cultural Activities for Looked After Children
6 monthly reports in approximately July 2016	Care Leavers Employment, Education and Training (EET) School Attendance for Looked After Children
To be allocated	Annual Report on the Virtual School Annual report on Housing for LAC

(Note: The meeting, having commenced at 7.30 pm, closed at 9.44 pm).

(Signed) COUNCILLOR CHRISTINE BEDNELL
Vice-Chair in the Chair