

CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL MINUTES

15 JUNE 2016

Chair: * Councillor Mitzi Green

Councillors: * Mrs Chika Amadi (1) Kairul Kareema Marikar
* Christine Bednell * Janet Mote
* Simon Brown

**Non-Voting
Advisory Member:** * Valerie Griffin

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

98. Attendance by Reserve Members

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

Ordinary Member

Reserve Member

Councillor Mrs Christine Robson

Councillor Mrs Chika Amadi

99. Appointment of Vice-Chair

RESOLVED: To appoint Councillor Christine Bednell as Vice-Chair of the Corporate Parenting Panel for the 2016/2017 Municipal Year.

100. Declarations of Interest

Agenda Item 13 – Health Report for Children Looked After in Harrow Central and North West London NHS

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.

101. Minutes

The Panel expressed the view that officers who attended the meeting should be included in attendance.

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 12 April 2016 be taken as read and signed as a correct record.

102. Public Questions, Petitions and Deputations

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

RECOMMENDED ITEMS

103. Terms of Reference for Corporate Parenting Panel

Members received a report of the Corporate Director of People which reviewed the current Terms of Reference for the Panel, together with suggested amendments in track changes.

Having considered the proposed amendments to the Terms of Reference (including purpose and membership), the Panel were of the view that the amendments be referred to Cabinet for approval.

Resolved to RECOMMEND: (to Cabinet)

That the revised Terms of Reference be approved and recommended to Council for inclusion in the Council's Constitution and that Council also be requested to agree any changes in Panel membership arising.

Reason: To ensure the Terms of Reference were reviewed and updated in line with good practice and guidelines.

104. Appointment of Adviser to the Panel 2016/17

Members received a report which proposed the appointment of an adviser to assist with the work of the Corporate Parenting Panel.

Resolved to RECOMMEND: (to the Portfolio Holder for Children, Schools and Young People)

That Valerie Griffin be appointed as an adviser to the Corporate Parenting Panel for the 2016/17 Municipal Year.

RESOLVED ITEMS

105. Information Report - Leisure and Culture Activities for Children Looked After

The Panel received a report regarding progress made ensuring Children Looked After (CLA) have access to a range of Leisure and Cultural activities.

The officer provided an overview of progress and drew attention to further details and evidence in the appendices. It was noted that:

- a review by the Development Team was underway to look at activities over the school holidays;
- 'Language is Not A Barrier' offered support to CLA;
- the Summer 2016 brochure would be published at the end of June 2016.

In response to questions from Members it was noted that:

- the evaluation form was useful as it gave young people a voice. The feedback was positive in that CLA expressed what activities they would like to do in the summer;
- the National Citizenship Challenge would be held in the summer, which was aimed at CLA in Years 10 and 11;
- although there was a general range of activities, there were some which were tailored for the individual. Children had been enthusiastic when attending all venues and asked about their preferred activity plans and hobbies;
- officers had been able to link into community resources such as local organisations and restaurants;
- various faith and ethnic groups had been approached as well as individual foster carers;
- it was confirmed that although the leaflet was advertised for children up to the age of 24 years and for those with additional needs, this was only a guideline and no one was turned away from any activity.

The Panel commented that the activities were popular and thanked the officers for providing young people with activities throughout the summer holiday period.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

106. Information Report - Activity and Performance

The Panel received a report which set out activity for Children Looked After and Care Leavers as of 30 April 2016. The report also set out the provisional performance position at the end of quarter 4 of 2015/16.

Members attention was drawn to the following:

- twelve children in CLA had been subject to Child Protection Plans (CPP), with 69 of the 184 CLA subject to a CPP in the last 5 years. Placement stability looked strong and the Children's Services team were thanked for their hard work;
- the health of CLA was a mixed picture, with information not being submitted to CNWL within deadlines. Although annual health checks had improved by 95% and immunisations were up to date, dental checks were not at the desired levels. Officers acknowledged that these were areas for improvement;
- community education data was reviewed and no permanent exclusions had been recorded towards the end of the current academic year 2015/16. 10 CLA had at least one fixed-term exclusion, nine of whom had been a CLA after one year or more;
- the attendance rate was at a similar level to the previous year, which was further reviewed by Virtual High School (VHS);
- of the 74 CLA aged 10 years or over looked after for at least a year, 11 had committed an offence, which was slightly higher than previously recorded. The Panel asked what type of cautions or offences had been committed, and if there was a trend and were advised that this could be a range of issues, and that the data needed to be cross-matched with youth offending and social care data. The Panel requested this information to include types of cautions, offences and any trends.

In terms of the rate of adoptions and Special Guardian Orders (SGOs) which saw a big increase and the highest number in a single year which was a positive note. However, one adopted child had returned. This was due to a breakdown in the relationship and a change of circumstances. Children Services had provided support, but the adopted parents had found this difficult. The Panel were informed that adoption breakdown was rare due to the support in place. Children Services continued to look into long term stable placements and ensured contact was maintained with adoptive families. There was one SGO breakdown, where the child had been placed in the guardianship of a relative, through the child's teenage years which the relative had found difficult.

The Panel requested clarification about CPP and if this was the result of domestic violence or abuse. The officer indicated that usually about 50% was

domestic abuse. It is difficult to ascertain since recording of incidents had only been done recently, and the apparent rise in domestic violence incidents was the result of better recordings. Domestic homicide was recorded, whereas lower level domestic abuse is not usually recorded.

The Panel questioned the use of agencies for foster carers. Officers explained that it was difficult to recruit foster carers due to matching issues, and there had been a slow take-up with approximately ten foster carers a year. This had been discussed with agencies who recruited based on level of needs, such as complex and challenging behaviour. Two children under the age of 10 years had been placed in residential care due to their high level of needs. The Council was not losing carers, but some had taken children long-term. Recruitment initiatives had been ongoing through Foster Carers Fortnight and local advertising. However, barriers to fostering had been due to housing limitations and work commitments.

The Panel asked how Children Services managed young people, and if there were placement agreements regarding allowances, school journeys and permission to go out. It was explained that a range of professionals worked within the team. Young people from troubled backgrounds had a significantly higher rate of offending, and last year it was 15% for CLA. Offending was linked to school attendance, as children not in school were more likely to commit offences. Foster carers were able to advise, encourage and get children involved in activities but not control school attendance. Foster carers had used rewards and sanctions to manage behaviour, but it was important to know what was motivating the child and their learnt behaviour.

The Panel asked about Children Missing and sought clarification in relation to recording and locating them. The Department of Education (DfE) recorded all children missing, even if their whereabouts were known. Concerns were raised about children classified as absent (whereabouts known) and those who were missing long term (whereabouts unknown). The Panel were informed that in most cases the whereabouts were known, and that there was a headcount every Monday morning. A specialist worker dealt with runaway children, checked where they had been, obtained intelligence and had protection plans put in place so they were not at risk. This was dealt with weekly, but was of great concern for foster carers.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted and information requested be provided at the next meeting of the Panel.

107. NEET/EET Report for Care Leavers

Members received a report which detailed the NEET/EET figures of CLA and Care Leavers aged 16-21 years old.

The officer advised that:

- the figures were 80.8% EET and 19.2% NEET, which was an improvement from the previous year of 77.8% EET and 22% NEET;

- Children Services worked on referrals to sustain placements, with opportunities looked at after a guidance interview, and a 6 month follow up. Meetings with senior directors in the Council had been planned in order to look at all options, including apprenticeships;
- CLA visited Kingston University in order to look at what university has to offer. They had an opportunity to sample the film making course, attend a workshop using the film making equipment, and produce a video.

The Chair expressed serious concerns about children in care going to prison, and asked if there was contact and support for a good transition. Officers had spoken to the opportunity to speak to the Youth Offending team and worked with them to prevent children in care going to prison. The Panel suggested that young persons could visit a prison in order to see the consequences of their actions, and if those who had recently been released could speak to other CLA.

The Panel requested a report on Prison and Young People from the Youth Offending Team. This should include what work was done so young people were not in custody, activities to prevent offending, the background of going to prison, and what happened to young people following release. The Panel thanked officers for the report and use of case studies to illustrate issues.

The Panel noted that there were more young people going into higher education and congratulated the young people flourishing in university. It was requested that these children speak to others about their experience, and keep in contact as long as they were in care. They could share their journey through letters or by attending a Panel meeting.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted and information requested be provided at the next meeting of the Panel.

108. Information Report - Harrow Virtual School Attendance Report December 2015

The Panel received a report which summarised Harrow's Children Looked After school attendance and engagement figures for the Autumn and Spring terms 2015-16, including an analysis of the Department of Education (DfE) national data over the last 4 years. Data was tracked by the welfare education officer and the Harrow Virtual School (HVS) kept in contact with schools, carers and social workers.

The officer drew Members' attention to the following:

- 102 school children were on roll, with an attendance rate of less than 90%. Pupils' attendance were monitored by HVS from their first day of school, whereas the DfE monitored children in care from one year plus;
- the breakdown of figures indicated that children not attending in KS4 was similar to other local authorities;

- Harrow Council reported all attendances, with authorised and unauthorised absences recorded. Although there was still work to do, the Council had improved in keeping children engaged and attending school;
- the VHS had used initiatives to improve school attendance through school meetings and visits with social workers and foster carers. There had also been contact time on weekends and holidays to help children want to go back to school.

The Panel was informed that children required support throughout their education through 1:1 talks and to understand how they could manage their feelings better. Children were sometimes not ready to learn due to trauma or abuse. It was suggested that training be provided for teachers and support staff in handling emotional and social concerns.

The Panel were informed that HVS worked with SENCO, who liaised with the educational psychology team. The Panel thanked HVS for the work and stated that it was important that children in care received a good education with the possibility of going to university.

The Panel noted that a number of schools were some distance away from Harrow, making contact difficult. These schools may provide residential care for specialist needs, such as mental health issues. The distance was sometimes necessary in order to break contact with gangs and bad influences.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

109. Celebration Event for 10th Year of Harrow/Coram Adoption Partnership

The Panel received a report which set out the plans to hold a celebration event for the 10th Year Anniversary of Harrow Coram Partnership on 20 September 2016. Officers had been working with other departments to promote this event, which was in the early stages of planning.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

110. Health Report for Children Looked After in Harrow - Central & North West London NHS

The Panel received a report from Central North West London NHS (CNWL) with details of health assessments for Children Looked After.

It was noted that:

- targets had been met for March and April 2016. CNWL worked closely with the Local Authority, and referrals had been processed more quickly;

- CNWL had monthly meetings with the Youth Offending team, and provided training to foster carers on drug and alcohol withdrawal, which had received positive feedback;
- only three children attended the Beyond Limits Group;
- a specialist nurse held monthly drop in sessions for unaccompanied asylum seeking children;
- the health passport was being redesigned, and the health booklet which provided advice on diet, exercise and smoking had been produced in different languages;
- CNWL had received a grant of £500 to promote Tuberculosis (TB) awareness, which was a concern for unaccompanied children. TB posters and leaflets had been distributed to surgeries and GPs;
- it was noted that immunisation figures were lower, with 58 children not up to date. Letters would be sent to the carers of these children. The safeguarding GP checked boosters for asylum seeking children;
- the CNWL team recently had an internal peer review which resulted in a positive outcome.

The Panel were alerted to potential risks in that information was not shared with all providers, and they could not see each others records. This was a London wide issue, and CNWL met monthly with other health providers in order to share health recommendations. The NHS was planning to develop one national system.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

111. Agenda Tracker

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

Meeting Date	Agenda
25 October 2016	<p>Full Report on Results and Annual Report on Virtual Schools.</p> <p>High Costs Placements Monitoring: Review and Update.</p> <p>Health Report for Children Looked After in Harrow.</p> <p>Report on Progress for Care Leavers.</p> <p>Report on Missing Children.</p> <p>Report on Youth Offending and Prison Terms.</p>

10 January 2017	
28 March 2017	Corporate Parenting Strategy.
To be allocated	Annual report on Housing for LAC.

(Note: The meeting, having commenced at 7.30 pm, closed at 9.08 pm).

(Signed) COUNCILLOR MITZI GREEN
Chair

Officers present:

Harrow Council Officers:

- Paul Hewitt - Divisional Director of Children & Young People Services
- Peter Tolley - Head of Service, Corporate Parenting, People Services
- David Harrington - Head of Business Intelligence
- Mellina Williamson-Taylor - Virtual Head Teacher
- Saimmah Ali - Careers Adviser, Care Leavers/LAC Team

Health Authority Representatives:

- Zoe Sargent - Head of Children's Services and Operations CNWL
- Emma Hedley - Designated Nurse for CLA