

CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL MINUTES

27 MARCH 2018

Chair: * Councillor Aneka Shah-Levy

Councillors: * Simon Brown * Lynda Seymour
* Janet Mote * Anne Whitehead
* Mrs Christine Robson

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

* Denotes Member present

† Denotes apologies received

177. Welcome

The Chair welcomed Dr Bina Chauhan, Designated Doctor for Children Looked After (CLA), to her first meeting of the Panel.

The Chair also welcomed Paul Hewitt to his first Corporate Parenting Panel meeting as the newly appointed Interim Corporate Director of People.

178. Attendance by Reserve Members

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

179. Declarations of Interest

RESOLVED: To note that the following interest was declared:

Agenda Items 7- 10 – Activity and Performance, Harrow CLA Health (CLA) Report, Children’s Services – IRO Annual Report 2016/17 and Foster Carer Payments

Councillor Lynda Seymour declared a non-pecuniary interest in that her children were being schooled in Harrow. She would remain in the room whilst the reports were considered and voted upon.

180. Minutes

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 9 January 2018 be taken as read and signed as a correct record, subject to the noting of belated apologies from Councillors Janet Mote and Lynda Seymour.

181. Public Questions/Petitions/Deputations

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

RESOLVED ITEMS

182. INFORMATION REPORT - Activity and Performance

The Panel received a report of the Interim Corporate Director of People which set out activity for Children Looked After (CLA) and care leavers as at February 2018 as well as provisional performance position at end of January 2018. The report also included national and comparator data to provide context.

An officer introduced the report and highlighted the following key aspects of the report:

- the number of CLA had decreased from 179 to 160 since the matter was last reported to the Panel;
- overall, health indicators of CLA remained positive except that improvements in immunisation and SDQ (emotional health) were required;
- attendance at school of CLA needed to be monitored closely, including the number of fixed term exclusions;
- the percentage of care leavers in suitable accommodation had increased since last quarter to 86%. Currently, 29% of care leavers were not in employment, education or training, which was greater than in quarter 2. All efforts were made to help young people gain skills and training through Xcite and other similar projects. However, data showed that Harrow was performing better than its statistical neighbours and the average in England;
- comparator data showed that the percentage of CLA in Harrow who had had been 'missing' during 2017 (14%) was higher than the England average (10%), but in line with the Council's statistical neighbours (14%). The percentage of CLA with a 'missing' incident

and those away from placement had remained stable since the last quarter;

- quarter 3 data showed an increase in CLA offending and that, currently, eleven CLA were under the care of the Youth Offending Team (YOT).

The officer and the Interim Corporate Director of People responded to questions from Members as follows:

- the frequency of fixed term exclusions compared to the Council's statistical neighbours was high. It ranged from 15-16% compared to 13%;
- whilst CLA were placed within the borough, it was accepted practice that some would be placed outside the borough and up to a distance of 20 miles or further to ensure suitability of accommodation. Rigorous reviews were carried out to ascertain the suitability of any placement. It was important that peer group pressures on CLA were managed which could involve placing the child away from Harrow. Children with disabilities were placed in suitable accommodation possibly outside Harrow and consideration was also given to requests from parents on placements. A care plan and family contact was facilitated;
- key staff in the People Directorate met on Mondays to discuss and identify the next steps in relation to those children who had gone 'missing' from their placements. Where the frequency was high, discussions would continue with the police and the placements. The Interim Corporate Director acknowledged the risks involved and reported that the situation was monitored closely and was stringent. Various vehicles were used to monitor the child in question and, additionally, a bespoke worker was assigned to assist in changing behaviour patterns;
- all children, including CLA, who were considered to be 'missing' or had safeguarding issues were reported through the Multi-Agency Sexual Exploitation (MASE) agency.

The Interim Corporate Director suggested further reports on the key issues raised by Members and it was

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the report be noted;
- (2) a report on how Children Looked After (CLA) accessed various services, including Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) when placed outside the borough be submitted to a future meeting of the Panel;

- (3) a report on the safeguarding issues relating to all children, including CLA, be submitted to the next meeting of the Panel and that the Interim Corporate Director of People invite a 'bespoke' worker(s) to the meeting.

Reasons for Decision: To be availed of performance as Corporate Parents. To seek additional information relating to safeguarding of children.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected: None.

183. INFORMATION REPORT - Harrow Children Looked After Health (CLA) Report

The Panel received a report of the Head of Children's Services and Operations, Central and Northwest London NHS Foundation Trust, which set out the delivery of health services to Harrow's Children Looked After (CLA) during December 2017 to February 2018. The report also reviewed performance indicators and the clinical work undertaken by the CLA health team.

Emma Hedley, named nurse for CLA, introduced the report and was applauded for achieving 100% in the carrying out of health assessments within statutory timescales. She informed Members that the good partnership working arrangements between the social workers and the CLA health team had helped to achieve this figure. Members were informed that:

- bi-monthly monitoring meetings between the Council and the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) relating to CLA would cease and the group would now meet on a quarterly basis;
- the CLA health team had attended all strategic and partnership meetings to support the health needs of CLA;
- training on the health needs of CLA had been delivered to Health Visitors and School Nurses studying at Oxford Brooke's University;
- a further report would be submitted on the client satisfaction survey 'Voice of the Child and Care Leavers' once the responses had been analysed;
- the Council's website had been updated to allow CLA to access details about the CLA health team
- partnership working had helped to address specific challenges with CLA. Emma Hedley provided an example of the issue and the positive outcome reached;
- the annual report would be presented to the Panel in autumn.

In response to questions, Emma Hedley, named nurse for CLA, and Zoe Sargent, Head of Children's Services and Operations at CNWL NHS Foundation Trust, replied as follows:

- Compass was a drug and alcohol service;
- where CLA were placed outside the borough, the CLA health team, accompanied by a specialist nurse, would visit them provided they were within a 20 mile range. Where CLA were placed further away, the relevant local authority would liaise with the team at Harrow. Quality assurance reports were exchanged and the authority would be asked to revisit them if the Harrow team were not satisfied with the report produced;
- where another local authority had placed its CLA in Harrow, the health team would carry out visits in accordance with the Harrow timetable but it would prioritise the health needs of Harrow's children. It was noted that the other local authorities had commended the CNWL for its health reports;
- meetings were held to monitor CLA and experiences were shared amongst different teams to improve outcomes and learning.

Members congratulated the CNWL team for their work and welcomed the Designated Doctor to the team.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the report be noted;
- (2) a report on the analysis relating to the satisfaction survey 'Voice of the Child and Care Leavers' be submitted to the next meeting of the Panel;
- (3) it be noted that the annual report would be submitted to the October 2018 meeting of the Panel.

Reason for Decision: To be availed of health service delivery, including targets met.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected: None.

184. Children's Services, IRO Annual Report 2016/17

The Panel received a report of the Interim Corporate Director of People, which set out information about the Children Looked After (CLA) activity in Harrow during the period April 2016 to March 2017, including an evaluation of the work of Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs). It was noted that the Independent Reviewing Officers were required by law and their role was to ensure that the local authority provided a quality service to its Looked After population.

An officer introduced the report and outlined the following key aspects of the report:

- the Council's IRO team had been stable and this had helped to oversee the journeys of some long term CLA;
- the role of the IRO was to review care plans, which on occasions included acting as a 'critical friend' to professionals working with a child or a young person. Their role was to challenge social workers and managers where required and ensure that the various professionals worked together for the benefit of CLA. More recently, the IROs had become more proactive in asking questions about the breakdown of care packages and placement costs for children including the rationale behind care packages;
- IROs met with the child or young person before the review meeting and the IRO's contact details were also given to CLA. Their remit included being clear about a child's schooling arrangements and attendance.

The officer responded to Members' questions as follows:

- IROs were qualified social workers but their role was different to that of the child's social worker. Their roles were essentially to review care plans, hold review meetings with CLA, their parent and/or carers, provide an independent overview of the care planning for CLA and check if their recommendations were being implemented;
- IROs also played a role in challenging practice and standards through the use of the Dispute Resolution Protocol, which were generally resolved at Stage 1;
- IROs involvement ceased when a young person reached the age of 18 years but the young person could access the services of an 'advocate' if they so wished at any age. The officer cited examples of instances when age assessments would be required, including the processes used to safeguard children. She added that there was a small cohort of CLA who were challenging but it was important that all professionals providing care were open and honest with them. It was important that expectations were not falsely raised for CLA, particularly if promises could not be kept;

Members thanked the officer for a comprehensive report and were pleased with the improvements made to the support system provided to CLA. They acknowledged that the journey in establishing the Harrow Virtual School had been difficult but were pleased with its workings.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted and that regular reports be submitted to the Panel.

Reason for Decision: To ensure that a quality service was provided to CLA. To ensure that there were Independent Reviewing Officers reviewing the care plans for CLA.

Options Considered and Rejected: None.

185. Foster Carer Payments

The Panel received a report of the Interim Corporate Director of People, which updated Members on the proposals for fostering payments for 2018 – 2019 following consultation with the Harrow Foster Carers' Association.

The Interim Corporate Director of People introduced the report and informed Members that:

- the rates of payments were in line with the National Fostering stocktake. The report outlined expectations of how foster carers would spend their payments to ensure that the day to day needs of Harrow's Children Looked After (CLA) were met and that they were provided with a wide range of opportunities and experiences;
- the payments were competitive. The tiered rates recognised the varying complexities of need. This meant that children previously placed in higher cost residential and Independent Fostering Agencies could now be placed with in-house foster carers.

Members were informed of the importance of retaining existing foster carers and recruiting more as they made a big difference to the lives of CLA. The Corporate Director was pleased to report that the number of Harrow's children being cared for by foster carers had increased and it was important to incentivise them. It was also important that their 'careers' were developed and that a scheme would be implemented in April 2018.

Members were pleased with the proposals and they recognised that foster carers needed to be rewarded and recognised for their work as they provided a much need 'home' to CLA.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the report be noted;
- (2) it be noted that the Award Ceremony for foster carers would be held on 26 April 2018 at 6.30pm and Members and officers present at the meeting were invited to attend the event.

Reason for Decision: To be availed of the payments system for foster carers and the range of activities it covered.

Options Considered and Rejected: None.

186. Meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel - Municipal Year 2018/19 - Urgent Business

RESOLVED: That the dates for future meetings of the Panel be noted:

Monday 11 June 2018 at 7.00 pm
Tuesday 30 October 2018 at 7.00 pm
Thursday 31 January 2019 at 7.00 pm
Monday 25 March 2019 at 7.00 pm.

187. Vote of Thanks

The Chair stated that this was the last meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel under the current administration and she thanked all Members and Officers for their contributions to the work of the Committee, including the support given to her.

(Note: The meeting, having commenced at 7.01 pm, closed at 8.14 pm).

(Signed) COUNCILLOR ANEKA SHAH-LEVY
Chair