

CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

MINUTES

3 APRIL 2019

Chair:	* Councillor Angella Murphy-Strachan	
Councillors:	* Sue Anderson	* Christine Robson
	* Simon Brown (2)	* Lynda Seymour
	* Janet Mote	
Non-Voting Advisory Member:	* Valerie Griffin	Foster Carer
In attendance: (Officers)	Jon Dalton	Head of Housing Needs
	David Harrington	Head of Business Intelligence, Resources
	Emma Hedley	Named Nurse for Children Looked After, Harrow
	Paul Hewitt	Corporate Director, People
	Zoe Sargent	Associate Director of Children, CNWL
	Peter Tolley	Interim Divisional Director, Children and Young People
	Laurie Ward	Specialist Nurse for Children Looked After, Harrow

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

30. Attendance by Reserve Members

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

Ordinary Member

Reserve Member

Councillor Maxine Henson

Councillor Simon Brown

31. Declarations of Interest

RESOLVED: To note that the following interests were declared:

Agenda Item 7 – Harrow Children Looked After (CLA) Health Report

Councillor Sue Anderson declared an interest in that a member of her family identified as being non-binary. She would remain in the room whilst the matter was considered and voted upon.

Agenda Item 8 – Harrow Fostering Recruitment Plan 2019-2022

Councillor Angella Murphy-Strachan declared a non-pecuniary interest in that she was a member of the Harrow African Caribbean Association (HACAS). She would remain in the room whilst the matter was considered and voted upon.

32. Minutes

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 6 February 2019 be taken as read and signed as a correct record.

33. Public Questions, Petitions and Deputations

RESOLVED: To note that there were none.

RESOLVED ITEMS

34. Information Report - Harrow Children Looked After (CLA) Health report

The Panel received a report of the Associate Director of Children's Services and the Named Nurse Children Looked After (CLA) Harrow, which set out the delivery of health services to Harrow's CLA from January to February 2019 in line with national guidance.

The Named Nurse reported as follows:

- there continued to be improvements in initial and review health assessments completed within timescales that quarter, with figures rising to 83% in February, compared to 80% in January 2019. This was considered positive news which reflected the successes made through partnership working with social services;
- targets in relation to contractual conditions had reached 100% for both initial health assessments (IHA) and review health assessments (RHA), which emphasised the effort that social workers had been through to complete referrals on time, including for those CLA who had been based up to 20 miles away;

- over the past couple of months, the following work had been undertaken: regular quarterly meetings with Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), Independent Reviewing Officers Meetings and a permanency process was agreed in partnership with Coram – a children’s charity working with Harrow Council to help improve the borough’s service to children needing adoption;
- further training had been delivered to the First Response Team (FRT) and signposting for specialist training for Foster Carers was now in place;
- she had been asked for the health assessment paperwork by Wembley CLA to help improve best practice and was invited to contribute to the NICE (National Institute for Health and Care Excellence) draft scope consultation on CLA and young people;
- the Annual Client Satisfaction Survey results had been completed after an extended deadline, with over half of CLA respondents providing feedback on their health assessment experience between July and December 2018. The number of CLA who had rated their experience as ‘great’ or ‘good’ was 91% and 9% had rated it ‘ok’. She was pleased to note that there were no negative responses. All the children (100%) felt they were treated with respect during their health assessment which was an increase from before considering that numbers using the service had increased.

Members were pleased with the outcomes and congratulated the Associated Director and the Named Nurse for their achievements.

Following questions and comments from Members, an officer advised that:

- the success rate of the Annual Client Satisfaction Survey was due to the fact that children had been involved in the input of the design of the form which had made it user-friendly. A copy of the form was circulated to the Panel for their information.
- practitioners were responsible for verifying details of the respondents but all responses were ‘anonymous’. Members were of the view that the form should provide additional choices under the ‘gender’ section in order to give consideration to the number of children who were increasingly undergoing transition and identified themselves as non-binary. An officer advised that work had been done on this by the Young Harrow Foundation but no consensus had been reached on how best to identify those who were undergoing transition. It was suggested that Harrow CLA and other services should continue to make best efforts to consult with their users on this aspect to ensure all work was inclusive.

The Specialist Nurse relayed a case study about an unaccompanied asylum seeking child who had been diagnosed with Hepatitis B and the challenges surrounding this case as the child lived in a hostel with 30 other people of

various nationalities. She explained how collaboration by various health bodies had helped to resolve various issues to ensure safe outcomes for all those living in the hostel. The young people concerned were now awaiting their boosters since their initial vaccinations and three had been referred to Adult Services.

Members thanked all for their work and endorsed the ongoing value of joint working in public health.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

Reason for Decision: To ensure that Members, in their roles as Corporate Parents, were availed of the performance indicators and the clinical work undertaken.

35. Information Report - Harrow Fostering Recruitment Plan 2019 - 2022

The Panel received the report of the Corporate Director of People which set out the Harrow Fostering Recruitment Plan 2019 – 2022 to help attract foster carers.

It was noted that the report highlighted challenges in recruitment of foster carers, namely the difficulty of carers balancing their ‘other’ commitments with foster caring, the changing demographic of the borough resulting in a higher demand for carers of specific nationalities, such as Romanian and Polish, and because some children had complex needs thereby making them difficult to place.

The Divisional Director of Children and Young People (Interim) reported that work was being done by the Communications Team to source carers through a range of methods which would include internet marketing, placing of electronic advertisement board(s) at key sites in the borough, dissemination of professional information packs and community liaison initiatives/friend schemes to target specific demographics. It was appreciated that the latter methods would take time due to the need to build links within the community prior to getting desired results.

The Advisory Member referred to the recruitment events she had attended and reported how prospective foster carers had felt assured and comforted to hear from experienced carers.

The Divisional Director of Children and Young People (Interim) thanked Panel members for their support in attending events and emphasised the point that recruitment and retention were interlinked and continued to be tracked through ongoing monitoring and evaluation. An enhanced payment scheme was also on offer to help retain existing foster carers.

The Corporate Director of People highlighted that 74% of children in foster care were placed in-house, a figure that was comparatively higher than the average in West London and across London.

A Member informed the Panel that the recruitment drive would also include visits to two temples within the borough to help increase the numbers of carers from other faith groups.

The Chair stated that she would suggest additional Afro-Caribbean community groups once she had discussed the current list with officers outside of this meeting.

A Member was pleased with the work being done to represent the Romanian community in Harrow given that it was a growing language of the borough. Members noted that it was also intended to recruit social workers from that community.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

Reason for Decision: To be availed of the progress made in recruiting foster carers.

36. Information Report - Higher Education amongst Care Leavers

The Panel received the report of the Corporate Director of People, which set out the current position in respect of care leavers in higher education.

The Divisional Director of Children and Young People (Interim) introduced the report and informed the panel that 16.4% of care leavers in Harrow attended university which was an improvement from the 12% in 2017 and significantly higher than the national average. This was considered to be a key achievement for all those involved given the difficult start in life that many care leavers experienced.

The key activities to support higher education were summarised, with particular mention given to the Leaving Care and UASC (Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children) Team who had actively encouraged young people between the ages of 18-21 to engage in higher education, training or work via the Leaving Care local offer on the Harrow council website.

The Divisional Director provided a summary of two case studies which highlighted a snapshot of how education increased life chances of young people.

A Member queried what options were available for those not aspiring to university education and opting to enter the apprenticeship route. The Divisional Director of Children and Young People (Interim) explained that each leaver had access to Prospects (careers advisory service) and a tailored Pathway Plan to identify their needs. He undertook to provide further information at a future meeting.

Another member enquired if care leavers who had gone to university could return back to their foster home after higher education as this would have an impact for other children being fostered in their absence. The Divisional Director for Young People (Interim) explained that a return would depend on a

range of factors which included the length of time they were away from home, strength of their relationship with the carer and vulnerability. Forward planning was a key factor.

A Member enquired about the mental health support for young people who are no longer eligible for CLA support and typically have to meet a higher threshold for adult services, as their conditions become apparent when the level of support is reduced as they become older. The Divisional Director for Young People (Interim) clarified that the CLA Team worked with those up to 25 years of age and identified specialist health needs to develop transition to additional support, where required, rather than waiting for crisis situations to occur. Improvements in this service were continually underway but reported to be better at flagging incidents.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

Reason for Decision: To ensure that, as Corporate Parents, young people were engaged in education, employment and training.

37. Housing for Care Leavers - Update

The Panel received the joint report of the Corporate Directors of Community and People which set out the housing assistance available to care leavers.

An officer introduced the report and responded that the housing quota of 19 lettings in 2018 had been increased to 22 lettings for 2019-20 so that the Council could continue to provide social housing for young people leaving care. Provisions were also in place to offer shared accommodation if this quota turned out to be insufficient.

A member thanked officers for their work in this area as previous concerns had been expressed about how sharing arrangements would work. In response, the Divisional Director of Children and Young People (Interim) stated that the report epitomised the importance of corporate parenting across the council and thanked colleagues in the housing service for their support.

RESOLVED: That the increase in the quota be welcomed.

Reason for Decision: To ensure that young people leaving care had settled accommodation.

38. Information Report - Children Looked After (CLA) Performance Benchmarking Data

The Panel received the report of the Corporate Director of People which set out benchmarking data with statistical neighbours and London and England averages for CLA and care leavers.

An officer introduced the report and informed members that data for Quarter 4 was not yet available but it was important that the Panel considered the latest information. The data for 'overall absence of CLA', 'CLA - % classed as persistent absentees' and '% of CLA pupils with at least one fixed exclusion'

were highlighted to be challenging where improvements were required to meet targets.

Educational achievement showed signs of improvement which was encouraging. Similarly, '% of CLA missing' was decreasing and the Council performed well in training but emphasised that it continued to set high targets for future improvement.

CLA offending rates were down which demonstrated effective work between the youth offending team and social care team. Meanwhile, there had been small increases in alcohol misuse which were being looked at, as well as '% of CLA who were away from placement without authorisation'.

The officer advised that the statistics for immunisation were not recorded in his report but that the Council compared favourably with its neighbouring authorities.

The Chair queried attainment for CLA Key Stage 4 and asked what strategies had been put in place for the Virtual School to address this. The Divisional Director Children and Young People (Interim) confirmed that the strategies in place were as before and that staff capacity had also increased to address emotional needs. Personal Education Plans (PEPs) were also in place and partnership working between the Virtual School and school in the borough was good.

Another member was pleased to learn that PEPs and care plans, including cooperation from schools both within and outside the borough, were in place.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

Reason for Decision: To be availed of performance as Corporate Parents.

39. Update on Regional Adoption Agency

The Corporate Director of People reported that there was a national requirement for local authorities to become Regional Adoption Agencies (RAAs) operating across boundaries to ensure maximum choice for children with voluntary adoption agencies at their heart.

The Corporate Director added that Harrow Council had embraced this requirement and would act as the lead commissioner with Coram as its strategic partner to help deliver an agency with six other local authorities. Initially, Harrow Council, Redbridge Council and City of London would work together followed by a phased entry involving Bromley, Waltham Forest, Hillingdon and Slough Councils. The agency would 'go live' at the end of April 2019.

A Head of Service had been recruited to lead on this initiative and would be in post in July 2019 and a recruitment exercise for assessors was underway.

The Corporate Director thanked Members for attending various engagement events across the local authorities.

A Member commended the work that had been done and the opportunities the agency would provide to improve pathways for adoption. It had been valuable to meet with the adoptees that had accessed the service.

Another Member stated that this work was important and highlighted the value of multi-agency working. She was concerned that the Government no longer updated the Adopted Children's Register which Coram had to update for the purposes of this exercise.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

Reason for Decision: To welcome and be availed of this initiative.

40. Meetings of the Corporate Parenting Panel - Municipal Year 2019/20

The Chair reminded all present to record the dates of the meetings of the Panel in their diaries and sought Members' agreement to vary the start time of the October 2019 in order to allow the young people, who would be invited to participate in the meeting, to leave the meeting at a reasonable time.

RESOLVED: That meetings of the Panel scheduled to be held on 11 June 2019, 14 January 2020 and 30 March 2020 commence at 7.00 pm and that the meeting on 2 October 2019 commence at 6.00 pm.

41. Urgent Business

Ofsted Visit

The Corporate Director of People informed the Panel that colleagues from Ofsted would be visiting the Council on 4 April 2019 and that he would be sharing the self-assessments undertaken with them. The Corporate Director explained that the key priority of the exercise was to improve outcomes for those in education. He undertook to provide a report to the next meeting of the Panel.

(Note: The meeting, having commenced at 7.03 pm, closed at 8.20 pm).

(Signed) COUNCILLOR ANGELLA MURPHY-STRACHAN
Chair