

CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

MINUTES

2 OCTOBER 2019

Chair:	* Councillor Janet Mote	
Councillors:	* Sue Anderson	* Lynda Seymour
	* Simon Brown (1)	* Chloe Smith
	* Christine Robson	
Non-Voting Advisory Member:	* Valerie Griffin	Foster Carer
In attendance: (Officers)	Paul Hewitt	Corporate Director, People
	Peter Tolley	Divisional Director, Children and Young People
	Barbara Houston	Head of Service, Corporate Parenting
	David Harrington	Head of Business Intelligence, Resources
	Mellina Williamson-Taylor	Headteacher, Harrow Virtual School
	Anupameya Jain	Acting Assistant Head Teacher, Virtual School
	Joanne Tortipidis	Senior Education Officer
	Laurie Ward	Specialist Nurse for Children Looked After, Harrow
	Teresa Chisholm	CNWL

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

55. Attendance by Reserve Members

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

Ordinary Member

Reserve Member

Councillor Angella Murphy-Strachan

Councillor Simon Brown

56. Declarations of Interest

RESOLVED: To note that there were no declarations of interest made by Members.

57. Minutes

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 11 June 2019, be taken as read and signed as a correct record.

58. Public Questions

RESOLVED: To note that no public questions were received.

59. Petitions

RESOLVED: To note that no petitions had been received.

60. Deputations

RESOLVED: To note that no deputations were received at this meeting under the provisions of Executive Procedure Rule 48 (Part 4D of the Constitution).

RECOMMENDED ITEMS

61. Corporate Parenting Strategy 2019/21

Peter Tolley (Divisional Director, Children and Young People Service) introduced the report which set out details of the Council's Corporate Parenting Strategy for 2019/21, explaining that the Panel was being asked to make a recommendation to Cabinet to approve the strategy set out in the report. The Strategy outlined the Council's strategic framework and key priorities relating to CLAs in Harrow in order to ensure they were provided with stable placements, support and education.

Following questions and comments from the Panel, officers advised that:

- The principles of corporate parenting outlined in the Children and Social Work Act 2017 had placed explicit emphasis on the statutory responsibilities of corporate parenting, particularly in relation to care leavers.

- A report focusing specifically on the Council's Participation Strategy outlining the Council's engagement plans with young people would be presented to the Panel at a separate meeting.
- A Children Looked After (CLA) event was planned during the autumn half-term at the Hive Stadium, providing an opportunity to meet young people. An invitation was extended to members and officers to attend.
- Recent training on corporate parenting had been delivered to elected members. The training was annually refreshed to ensure members were kept abreast of the latest developments.
- A number of minor oversights had been made to the content of the report presented to the Panel. It was agreed that the amendments be made prior to presenting the report to Cabinet.

Resolved to RECOMMEND:

That the Cabinet be recommended to approve the Corporate Parenting Strategy 2019/21, subject to agreed adjustments in content.

RESOLVED ITEMS

62. Children Looked After and Care leavers - discussion

At the invitation of the Chair, Barbara Houston (Head of Corporate Parenting) opened the discussion. The Panel was joined by three young people and their social workers who shared feedback and experiences as care leavers from the Council's corporate parenting services. The Panel welcomed the young people's views, spotlighting specifically on the growth in confidence and achievements made as well as commending the invaluable support and professionalism provided by the social workers.

A key point raised in the ensued discussion revolved around the beneficial impact of having a constant, long-term social worker as a key factor in providing continuous support. The young people commented on the difference it had made to their development through enabling a strong, stable and trusting relationship and praised their respective social workers.

Spotlighting on the matter further, officers advised that support was now available for young people potentially up to the age of 25 and that consistency of social worker remained important throughout. Acknowledging the young people's comments, officers advised that these would be taken into account going forward.

The Panel noted the improvement in corporate parenting services over the years, the positive impact it had made and the continuous work undertaken by Harrow Council in investing in children and young people through the range of services it offered. The Panel thanked the young people and social workers for sharing their experience and feedback.

RESOLVED: That the discussion be noted.

63. Children's Services, IRO Annual Report 2018/19

Barbara Houston (Head of Corporate Parenting Services) introduced the report which set out the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) Annual Report for 2018/19. The role of the Independent Reviewing Officers was to review care plans for looked after children and young people to ensure the local authority provided quality service. Key messages in the report included the population range of looked after children, caseloads and details of reviews.

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

- A total of 525 reviews were completed between 2018 and 2019, all of which within the required timescales.
- 3.7% of children and young people chose not to participate in any reviews for the year ending 31 March 2019. This was likely due to challenging behaviour and a feeling of disengagement from the process.
- While majority of CLAs returned to live with parents or were adopted, a high proportion of permanency outcomes (35.6%) also referred to “care ceased for any other reason” (p.32 of report). Acknowledging the vagueness of the outcome, officers explained that this was due to categorisation imposed by the Department for Education and agreed to plan to provide a more detailed breakdown to the Panel for the next IRO Annual Report.
- Looked after children and young people were being kept informed of their entitlements, including information about what the local authority was required to provide in terms of costs for education and training.
- The Panel commented on the useful explanation provided in the report over the professional profile of the IRO. It was noted the IROs served a vital role in corporate parenting through the provision of valuable assurance and constructive criticism of the care planning services but also in terms of acting as a consistent communication link between the young people and the Council.

The Panel thanked officers for the report and endorsed the key role provided by IROs in providing quality assurance in the robustness of the existing system.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

64. Information report - Activity and performance

David Harrington (Head of Business Intelligence) introduced the report which set out activity for CLAs and care leavers as well as provisional performance position for Q1 2019/20.

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

- Data presented in report was for Q1, covering the period up to June 2019, with Q2 data only recently completed. Although a number of indicators were in red, the Panel was assured that the Council was on target to achieve the expected performance results. It was also noted that performance indicators were only an introduction to the subject of CLAs, with more detailed, actionable information provided to the specific teams.
- Long term stability of placements was under target but in line with statistical neighbours and moving in the right direction.
- The number of children and young people going missing during placements remained high and was above the statistical neighbour average. While the number of CLAs in the borough was relatively small, majority of them came with a range of challenging circumstances. The Panel was assured that addressing the problem remained a key focus for Children Services, with regular meetings being held to discuss ongoing concerns with repeat offenders as well as considering ways of disrupting cases of suspected exploitation.
- Persistent school absences remained high and above the statistical average.
- Health checks were progressing well but remained behind target. It was expected that numbers would accelerate by the end of the year.
- Figures on educational attainment in key stages demonstrated a drop from 45.5 to 33% in 2017/18. However, it was explained that the figures were based on a small cohort of children and as a result tended to fluctuate. Instead, members were asked to consider the overarching complexity of care needs.
- A number of out of borough placements had been made as a result of the individual circumstances of some children. Officers agreed to provide a breakdown on some of the indicators used between out and in-borough children for next meeting.
- Spotlighting on the Council's strong engagement with community partners and agencies to address missing children, officers clarified that one of the organisations listed - St Giles (reference p.13 of the report) – was a pan-London charity providing a range of services to vulnerable children and adults.

- A section in the report seemed to suggest that the proportion of placements in 'secure units, children's homes and hostels' was higher in Harrow compared to the rest of England. It was explained that this was due to the Department for Education categorisation and included young people living in semi-independent accommodation. It was clarified that there were no Harrow children currently in welfare secure placements. Officers agreed to provide a detailed breakdown of the numbers.
- Further details on categorisation of "other placements in the community" to be provided at next appropriate meeting for further reassurance. It was noted that some of the smaller categories were not helpful as they didn't allow for like for like comparison.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

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

Laurie Ward (Specialist nurse for Children Looked After, Harrow Westmead Clinic) introduced the report and outlined key performance indicators on the delivery of health services to Harrow's CLA for the period March – April 2019.

Following questions and comments from Members, she advised that:

- Good relationship between the Council's social services team and, Harrow CCG continued, including regular attendance of strategic and partnership meetings in order to best support the health needs of children looked after.
- The Annual Report for 2018/19 had been completed.
- A Peer Review of the CLA Health Team was carried out from CNWL and positive feedback was received.
- An article by the Specialist Nurse and Designated Doctor on understanding and improving outcomes for asylum seekers had been published in the July 2019 edition of the Adoption and Fostering Journal. A copy would be circulated to members and offices for information.
- A number of positive comments and learning points had been raised by children following a recently held Voice of Child assessment event.
- Training on a recent Serious Case Review, relating to a Harrow looked after child placed in Lewisham Council, was attended by the Named Nurse. The Lewisham Safeguarding Board had completed the review, resulting in a number of learning points for the Council and other agencies. A summary of the report would be shared with the Panel for information.

The Chair thanked Ms Ward for her report. Members commended the CLA Health Team for their valuable contributions, continuous support and expertise provided to the Council.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

66. Information report - Harrow Virtual School: Headteacher's Enrichment Report 2018/2019

Mellina Williamson-Taylor (Head Teacher, Harrow Virtual School), Anu Jain (Acting Assistant Head Teacher) and Joanne Tortipidis (Senior Education Officer) introduced the item, which provided the Panel with an overview of the Virtual School's Enrichment Programme and its impact on CLAs and Care Leavers. It was noted that this was the first time the Enrichment Report was being presented in its entirety.

Following questions and comments from members, the officers stated that:

- Enrichment activities had had a threefold increase over the 2018/19 academic year with a range of activities offered to Harrow CLAs.
- The increased staff capacity had had a positive impact on the Team's performance and success rates. Additionally, it had made better use made of funding from the Sir John Lyon Foundation and many activities had been shared with other neighbouring authorities.
- A number of success stories were attributed to the positive impact of the Virtual School's Enrichment Programme. A key highlight of the programme was the difference it had made to young people's confidence as well as the strong relationship maintained between the Virtual School Team and the core group of looked after children over time.

Members thanked officers for their report and noted that it was good to meet more members of the Virtual School Team. The Panel was particularly complimentary on the emotional and mental health support provided by the Team to looked after children and young people, which it felt was evident throughout the report.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

67. Exam Results (verbal update)

Mellina Williamson-Taylor (Head Teacher, Harrow Virtual School) delivered a verbal update on the Harrow Virtual School exam results for 2019. In stating that all results were on target and as expected, she highlighted the following:

- Provisional results were available for Key Stage 4.
- Pupils in Year 6 met or exceeded expectations in their SATs.

- Two children who had been in care for a year or longer had passed their GCSEs. These ranged from 5 to 7 subjects, including English and Maths. This was an excellent achievement, indicative of the children's hard work and aspirations.
- Further work was required in Key Stage 3 to avoid a possible regression in the lead up to Key Stage 4.

RESOLVED: That the verbal update be noted.

68. Any Other Urgent Business

RESOLVED: That there was no other urgent business.

(Note: The meeting, having commenced at 6.00 pm, closed at 7.35 pm).

(Signed) COUNCILLOR JANET MOTE
Chair