

Corporate Parenting Panel

Minutes

2 February 2021

Present:

Chair: Councillor Angella Murphy-Strachan

Councillors: Sue Anderson Lynda Seymour
Janet Mote Chloe Smith
Christine Robson

Non-voting Advisory Member: Valerie Griffin Foster Carer

Officers (in attendance): Paul Hewitt Corporate Director, People
Jacinta Kane Head of Service – Corporate Parenting
Peter Tolley Divisional Director, Children and Young People
Mellina Williamson-Taylor Headteacher, Harrow Virtual School
Sarah Moriarty Assistant Headteacher Harrow Virtual School
Kathryn Robinson Post-16 Advisory Teacher Harrow Virtual School
Alison Braithwaite Head of Children’s Services (Outer London) Central & North West London NHS Trust
Christine Nichols Named Nurse for Children Looked After in Harrow
Dr Bina Chauhan Consultant CLA, CNWL
Dipika Patel Business Intelligence Partner

94. Attendance by Reserve Members

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

95. Declarations of Interest

RESOLVED: To note that the Declarations of Interests published in advance of the meeting on the Council's website were taken as read.

96. Minutes

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 7 October 2020 be taken as a read and signed correct record.

97. Public Questions

RESOLVED: To note that no public questions were received.

98. Petitions

RESOLVED: To note that no petitions were received.

99. Deputations

RESOLVED: To note that deputations were received.

Resolved Items

100. Feedback from care experienced young people and Virtual School Update

The Panel received a report which provided feedback from young people on their experiences during the COVID-19 crises.

The presentations from the young people highlighted what they had achieved in terms of their education, employment and training. They spoke about the support received from the Virtual School and their partners, including participation in - enrichment projects, access to courses and apprenticeships, support with job applications and interviews.

The Panel thanked the young people for their presentations, noting how much they had achieved throughout what had been a particularly difficult year.

The presentation given by the Virtual School Head Teacher highlighted the following:

- The CLA Model School Policy was finalised in December 2020 and three Harrow schools had contributed. The template supported schools in promoting good practice for Care Leavers and CLA.

- Risk assessments and audits had been repeated, as with the previous lockdown, to ensure that students and carers were supported in the decision-making process regarding school attendance.
- Approximately 50% of students had physically attended schools. The remaining cohort continued to access their learning remotely. When compared to the first lockdown in March 2020 the attendance rate had risen by 25%.
- Grade prediction via the PEP process had become crucial with exams no longer going ahead due to Covid-19.

Progress had been made to support students in the best way possible, in order for the best possible grades to be achieved.

The Panel questioned, how the predicted grades compared to previous years were advised by the Assistant Head Teacher of Harrow Virtual School that results were similar to last year for GCSE Students and, for key stage 4 Students, extra support had been put in place to support those Students during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Education Health Care Plans (EHCPs) referrals had been submitted for a number of students and the Virtual School Advisory Teacher outlined the process. The statutory timescale was 20 weeks for the EHCP to be finalised. Although Covid-19 had presented itself as a challenge in terms of EP face-to-face assessments, the Virtual School had been effective by ensuring no delays had occurred. In addition, though the percentage of EHCPs was below the national average, they were consistent with previous reports, moreover, further training had taken place so that staff could better identify when an EHCP might be necessary.

It was mentioned by the Head Teacher of the Virtual School that the hours of learning per day should be taken as an average. Learning should be taught in a holistic manner in terms of cross-curriculum approach with support given to students as needed.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

101. Update and performance for Corporate Parenting Service

The Panel received a report which gave an overview of the key developments within the Corporate Parenting Service. In particular, the report addressed the position of the key performance indicators; increasing CLA numbers and impact; contact arrangements; Corporate Parenting redesign as well as strategic updates.

The report highlighted the following:

- That the timeliness of reviews of CLA, placement stability, had proven to be on target. However, the percentage of care leavers not in education, employment or training as well as CLA's dental checks were where improvements could be made.

- Over the past three years, from 2017 to 2020, there had been a gradual increase in the number of CLA.
- Contact with carers and families had continued to take place during the pandemic and lockdown. Face to face visits and virtual contact had taken place on the basis of individual risk assessments, and supervised face-to-face family contact had been maintained for a large number of families.
- The Corporate Parenting re-design acted on feedback from children and young people, Ofsted, areas of improvement as well as legislative changes and was being implemented in June 2021. The purpose of the re-design was to improve Pathway planning for young people s well as improved transitions for care leavers.
- The Independent Children’s Social care review had been announced which allowed the Council as well as care experienced young people an opportunity to give feedback to central government.

The Panel inquired what strategies were being implemented in order to counter the pressures faced by placement sufficiency. The officer reported that strong partnerships with other local authorities in terms of commissioning placements had allowed for better outcomes and range of placements, and that the service is now exploring the targeted recruitment of foster carers for teenagers.

RESOLVED: That report be noted.

102. Tackling Disproportionality and the Youth Justice Team

The Panel received a report which provided an overview of how the Harrow Youth Justice (HYJ) worked; an insight into the profile of children and young people within the HYJ service, an update on current activities within the Harrow Youth Justice Team and future plans.

The following were highlighted during the presentation:

- The position of the HYJ Service within the Council, as well as key psychological training undertaken to support the service and users.
- An outline of offender demographics within the HYJ Service as well as the different types of offences that had occurred.
- Ethnicity and disproportionality within the HYJ Service.
- How working on an individual, organisational and structural basis could help counter disproportionality.
- That work was being done with partners to recognise structural inequalities.

The Panel inquired if there was data to support improvements on tackling disproportionality and was advised by the, that currently there was no data to hand but highlighted that positive feedback from the cohort had been received and that, from their analysis, there was still a long way to go to tackle disproportionality.

The Panel asked what progress had been made when it came to the service's outreach to ethnic organisations, in particular Somali organisations. The officer advised that active engagement had been undertaken and that prior to the pandemic progress had been made.

It was also confirmed that the HYJ Service had been involved with organisations to help reduce the issue of county lines.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

103. Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) Annual Update

The Panel received a report which highlighted updates from the Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO) from April 2019 to March 2020.

The report highlighted the following:

- The position of the IRO within the Council.
- Caseloads per fulltime IRO were slightly higher than the previous year as well as the recommended caseload amount set out in the IRO handbook.
- The profile of children post-care, where most achieved permanency because they returned home with parents/relatives.
- 81% of young people were able to participate in their reviews.
- Good practice and problem resolutions continued to be monitored throughout the year.
- Reviews had continued despite the challenges Covid-19 had presented.

Concern was raised by the Panel regarding the data on personal education plans (PEPs). Members were advised that, from a monitoring perspective, it was an issue that had continued to be raised and challenged regularly. The Head Teacher of the Virtual School added that their PEP rate had been at 100% every term for the past three years.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

104. Coram Ambitious for Adoption Regional Adoption Agency - Annual Update

The Panel received a report which provided an annual update from April 2019 to December 2020 surrounding work done by the Adoption team.

The presentation highlighted the following:

- Performance of children with plan for adoption, sufficiency of adopters and post adoption support.
- Outlined the working partnership between the Adoption team and Coram.
- Agency Decision Maker (ADM) decisions had decreased as well as the number of placement orders granted, which aligned with national figures.
- Overall, the timeliness of children being matched and placed once they became looked after were good, having been above the national average.
- Enquiries had continued throughout the pandemic.
- The Adoption team had the role of post adoption support since June 2020 and continued to operate through the pandemic via virtual schemes.
- Addressed future objectives that worked towards improving sufficiency of adopters to meet the needs of children; support recruitment campaign to welcome more BAME adopters; improved timeliness of matching; Embed early permanence; uniformity of post adoption support and the training, support and development of all staff.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

105. Update and Performance on Health for Children Looked After

The Panel received a report which provided updates on the delivery of health services to Harrow's Children Looked After (CLA) during April – August 2020 in line with the national guidance. The report reviewed the service and included clinical work undertaken during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The report highlighted the following:

- That the timeliness of Initial Health Assessments (IHA) and Review Health Assessments (RHA) had continued to be maintained at a good level.
- Training as well as meetings had continued virtually for the team.

- In light of Covid-19, IHAs had started to be triaged and RHAs were offered as face-to-face meetings but if declined had been done virtually.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

(Note: The meeting, having commenced at 6.00 pm, closed at 8.40 pm).

(Signed) Councillor Angella Murphy-Strachan
Chair