

## LONDON BOROUGH OF HARROW

<b>Meeting:</b>	Joint Health & Social Care and Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Sub-Committees.
<b>Date:</b>	17 September 2003.
<b>Subject:</b>	“Taking Care of Education” (The Gatsby Project). Report on the completion of the Project.
<b>Key decision:</b>	No
<b>Responsible Chief Officer:</b>	Executive Director People First.
<b>Relevant Portfolio Holder:</b>	Social Services and Education & Lifelong Learning.
<b>Status:</b>	Part 1.
<b>Ward:</b>	All.
<b>Enclosures:</b>	Appendix 1: OC2 2000,2001 and 2002.

### 1. Summary

- 1.1 This report outlines the progress made with the implementation of “Taking Care of Education” (The Gatsby Project). The report highlights some of the preliminary headline findings of the evaluation of the project and notes that Harrow has been invited to submit a bid to the Gatsby Charitable Foundation for a further three years funding of the project.

### 2. Recommendations

- 2.1 To note and comment on the report.

### 3. Consultation with Ward Councillors

- 3.1 Not applicable.

### 4. Policy Context

- 4.1 The report provides an update to the reports received by the Scrutiny Committee in September 2001 and the Education Arts and Leisure Committee in October 2001.

### 5. Relevance to Corporate Priorities

- 5.1 This report addresses the Council's Corporate Priorities to: promote Harrow as a centre of lifelong learning by offering the highest quality education services; raise aspirations and outcomes of achievement; provide activities for cultural, artistic and leisure pursuits which reflect the profile and the interests of all local communities; and improve the life chances of young people and promote social inclusion.

## 6. **Background Information**

- 6.1 The London Borough of Harrow was one of three local authorities selected to take part in an initiative, in partnership with the National Children's Bureau (NCB) and the Gatsby Charitable Foundation, called "Taking Care of Education", known in Harrow as the Gatsby Project. The project started in Harrow in September 2000 and was allocated a total of £357,000 to cover the three years of the initiative. £189,000 to cover salary costs and £168,000 for the development of projects. (Due to an underspend in the salary budget, the Foundation has agreed to fund the Project Director's post for a further year from September 2003). Release of funds was subject to project proposals being submitted to and agreed by the NCB/Gatsby Reference Group.
- 6.2 The initiative is essentially an action research project which aims to identify what is effective in bringing about improvements in the educational performance of Children Looked After and what are the processes involved in establishing and maintaining a whole authority approach.
- 6.3 Projects were identified following an Investment Audit (this is a NCB assessment tool which evaluates educational provision and practice for Children Looked After), an analysis of research evidence and discussions with the Harrow Gatsby Reference Group. This group was made up of representatives from the two departments, schools and the Health Authority.
- 6.4 The NCB Research Department and the University of Luton are undertaking the evaluation of the project. The evaluation aims to: highlight which aspects of the development project are effective in bringing about changes in the education of Children Looked After; identify any changes in the well-being of a sample of young people and their attitudes to education and school; ascertain the views of young people on their education and care experiences and how they think these could be enhanced; and highlight barriers to the implementation of the desired approaches between agencies. The methodology involves gathering baseline information on educational outcomes for Children Looked After and analysing policy and practice. It also involves regular interviews with key personnel in Education and Social Services and with a sample of young people who are Looked After.
- 6.5 **Below is an overview of the developments and initiatives undertaken as part of the Harrow Gatsby Project.**
- 6.6 The previous Education Arts and Leisure and Social Services Committees and the Cabinet have adopted a set of Corporate Parenting Principles for the education of Children Looked After to guide the Education and Social Services Departments in working together to meet the educational needs of Children Looked After. This statement is being embedded in various service plans across the two departments. Many services have produced written statements as to how, in practical ways, they will support the education of Children Looked After.

- 6.7 There are now two versions of Personal Education Plans (PEPs), one for children under 5 and one for children of compulsory school age. In the academic year 2001-2002, 100% of PEPs were completed by social workers. These were audited and recommendations made as to how the quality of PEPs could be improved. Additional training sessions have been made available for all practitioners and managers in the Children and Families Service in Social Services.
- 6.8 During the course of the Gatsby Project, the collection and sharing of data and information has improved. Information on numbers of Children Looked After, school places, year groupings and PEP status is now regularly produced and shared. Attainments, attendance and exclusion data is now systematically collected.
- 6.9 Training for social care staff, designated teachers and staff from Education Services has taken place. A guidance book on PEP completion has been produced for social workers and a similar guide for designated teachers is in progress. Elected Members were also briefed as to their role as Corporate Parents.
- 6.10 An annual Celebration of Educational Achievement Awards Ceremony has been established. The first event took place in October 2002 and was held at the Civic Centre where over eighty children, young people, carers and officers gathered to celebrate the achievements of Children Looked After by Harrow.
- 6.11 An Educational Psychologist post for Children Looked After, jointly funded by Gatsby and the Education Department, has been created. The main focus of the post is to undertake direct and group work with children and young people that will enable them to become resilient and self confident, allowing them to be more likely to achieve their full educational potential. The post holder has also made a significant contribution in providing advice to out of authority schools where Children Looked After attend. This post has been sustained by funding from the Vulnerable Children Grant in the Education Department.
- 6.12 A Youth Participation post in the Community and Youth Service has been created with joint funding from Gatsby and Comic Relief. The remit of this post is to undertake direct work with Children Looked After with the aim of increasing their participation in activities such as the Harrow Young People's Forum as well as mainstream youth activities.
- 6.13 A Teaching post for Children Looked After has been created. The aim of the post is to provide an initial educational response to Children Looked After, to keep them engaged in education and to support their reintegration into a new school place. As yet, it has not been possible to recruit to this post. However, the post has recently been readvertised and interviews are taking place in September.
- 6.14 The provision of a free leisure card for Children Looked After has been piloted. The Arts and Leisure Service, foster carers, residential social workers and Leisure Connection PLC supported the pilot. Such was the success that the Council is to provide a leisure card to Children Looked After by Harrow, this autumn.
- 6.15 A range of projects, aiming to increase the awareness and to develop the skills of foster carers and residential social workers, in supporting and encouraging the acquisition of literacy and numeracy skills by Children Looked After, have been undertaken. The National Literacy Association and the Education Department's

Advisory Team supported projects such as “Book of My Own”, “Reading Roadshows”, “Maths Counts” and Literacy workshops.

- 6.16 Another project that seeks to encourage literacy development has been the distribution of Library Welcome packs to Children Looked After. The packs contain information about joining a library and what libraries have to offer children and young people. The packs are distributed to all of Harrow’s Children Looked After with specific information on the nearest local library for those placed outside of Harrow.
- 6.17 The literacy theme was also developed in Harrow’s two Children’s Homes. Again in collaboration with Harrow Library Services, supplies of books, both academic and non-academic, have been provided for use by the children and young people.
- 6.18 In collaboration with Harrow Library Services, an After School Club was successfully piloted during the summer term at Gayton Library. The Club was aimed at children who were of middle school age and it attracted between 8-10 regular attendees. The Club met once a week for two hours and provided a range of activities such as craftwork, board games, snooker, table football and full use of the facilities in the library including access to the internet.
- 6.19 During the course of the project, a number of photography workshops were held. These were organised in partnership with the Arts and Leisure Service, Harrow College and Kodak PLC. Such was the success, The National Portrait Gallery organised a two-day workshop for the young people, enabling them to develop their portraiture skills using professional equipment and facilities. The work of the young people has been exhibited at the Civic Centre and at the Harrow Arts Centre.
- 6.20 As part of the work of the Gatsby Project, computer equipment has been provided for the use of young people in the two Children’s Homes and at the Leaving Care office.
- 6.21 A mentoring scheme, in partnership with the Harrow Mentoring Project, has also been piloted for Children Looked After between the age of 11-16. This initiative is primarily aimed at Children Looked After who are in foster or residential placements outside of Harrow.
- 6.22 Main findings of the national Children’s Bureau evaluation.**
- 6.23 To date, the NCB Research Department has produced four Evaluation Reports and two reports of findings from the sample of young people whose views and progress have been tracked. At the time of writing this report, the evaluation is still work in progress and, as such, a conclusive final evaluation is not available for inclusion here.
- 6.24 A number of interesting findings have emerged. In relation to the formative or process analysis of the project itself, the researchers have consistently referred to the good progress made in Harrow and in the most recent report it is noted that the “level of progress achieved is to be commended”.
- 6.25 It is also encouraging to note that during the course of the project, significant progress has been made in raising the outcome educational achievements of Harrow’s Children Looked After (this includes children educated in schools outside of Harrow). This is indicated in the OC2 return to the Department of Health (Appendix 1). There has been significant progress in meeting the Government’s target of

increasing the number of students with at least one GCSE. In 2002, 92.9% of Children Looked After gained a GCSE, compared with 46.2% in 2000. 64.3% achieved at least 5 GCSE's grade A\*-G in 2002 compared with 23.1% in 2000. For the first time in three years, no Children Looked After within the OC2 cohort were permanently excluded from school and the level of absence from school improved from 13.3% in 2000 to 6.52% in 2002. Further work is now needed to ensure students achieve 5 GCSE's at grade A\*-C.

- 6.26 Although the researchers noted the progress made with the Gatsby Project, their caveat to this, was to suggest that there is a need for a considerable amount of work to be undertaken before the education of Children Looked After becomes part of mainstream policy and practice and this may have been due to an over reliance on the Gatsby Project to deliver improvements.
- 6.27 A second issue identified by the researchers concerned the Personal Education Plan (PEP) process. Here, it was identified in the young people's sample that a number of young people are as yet unaware of PEPs and there were some indications that plans are being developed without young people's knowledge and that this is likely to undermine the potential for such plans to support young people's education.
- 6.28 The evaluation is also beginning to throw some light on the views and attitudes of Children Looked After by Harrow as they have been recorded during the course of the project. Standardised testing of the Harrow sample suggests that young people were now placing greater value upon education and had an improved sense of school membership as measured by their attitude to schooling. There was also a marked increase in self-esteem ratings among the sample of young people. This is of interest given the number of project activities directed towards improving resilience and self-esteem.
- 6.29 However, the improvements in young people's self-esteem and psychological well being could be the corollary of living in a settled supportive environment. According to the young people themselves, the most important factor in promoting educational success was the availability of a supportive care placement within which carers valued education and encouraged young people to succeed. The absence of such support was seen, as a central feature of explanations forwarded by young people whose achievement is less positive.
- 6.30 These findings have led the researchers to suggest that the ideal scenario for Children Looked After may be to maximise the supportive benefits of care placements through the opportunity to remain in them for a considerable period of time. Where placement change does arise, this need not be detrimental provided young people can experience similar or even enhanced levels of support in subsequent placements.
- 6.31 In July of this year, the Portfolio Holders for Social Services and for Education and Lifelong Learning, together with the Executive Director for People First and the Gatsby Project Director met with a representative of the Gatsby Charitable Foundation. The outcome of this meeting was an invitation for Harrow to bid for further funding to enable the initiative to continue for a further three years.
- 6.32 It is anticipated that the Trustees of the Gatsby Charitable Foundation will consider Harrow's bid in October. If the bid is successful, the additional funding will enable Harrow to sustain some of the activities already undertaken. This would include the

arts and leisure pursuits and work with foster carers. Additional funding would also allow for the development of some new projects, for example, an advisory teacher post to develop the Personal Social and Health Education and Citizenship curriculum and to appoint teaching assistants for Children looked After.

## 7. **Consultation**

- 7.1 Paragraphs 6.27 and 6.28 above, summarise some of the views of young people gathered by the independent researchers who were evaluating the project.

## 8. **Finance Observations**

- 8.1 There are no direct financial implications within this report. Spending on the project is closely monitored against income in a "ring fenced" budget. The current financial position is summarised in paragraph 6.1. If the bid for further funding is successful, this will enable an extension of the project to take place.

## 9. **Legal Observations**

- 9.1 Local Authorities have a statutory duty under the Children Act 1989 to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in their care. Opportunity for a reasonable level of educational achievement is an important aspect of this duty under the Act. A demonstrable failure on the part of local authorities in the past to provide such opportunities and the generally low level of educational achievement of Children Looked After has led to much criticism by central government and other informed observers.

## 10. **Conclusion**

- 10.1 The implementation of the Gatsby Project in Harrow has identified a number of activities that have engaged and supported the education of Children Looked After. It has also made a contribution to a piece of research that will inform the understanding of how to achieve the highest possible educational outcomes for Children Looked After.

## 11. **Background Papers**

- 11.1 "Taking Care of Education" (The Gatsby Project). Scrutiny Committee, 25 September 2001.
- 11.2 Progress report on the implementation of "Taking Care of Education" (The Gatsby Project), Education Arts and Leisure Committee, 3 October 2001.
- 11.3 "Taking care of Education" Setting the Scene. Preliminary Evaluation Report. NCB May 2001
- 11.4 "Taking Care of Education". Young People's Sample. Interim Findings. NCB December 2001.
- 11.5 "Taking Care of Education in Harrow". Process Evaluation Report. NCB March 2002.
- 11.6 "Taking Care of Education in Harrow". Evaluation Report. NCB July 2002.
- 11.7 "Taking Care of Education in Harrow". Evaluation Report. NCB February 2003.
- 11.8 "Taking Care of Education" Evaluation. Young People's Sample Follow-up Findings. July 2003.

12. **Author**

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**Appendix 1 OC2 2000, 2001 & 2002**

**Children Looked after for 1 year or more on 30 September of the reporting year**

	OC2 2000		OC2 2001		OC2 2002*	
Number of CLA of compulsory school age	75		80		94	
Number of CLA permanently excluded in the period	3	4.0%	3	3.8%	0	0.0%
Number of children who missed 25 days or more days of schooling for any reason	10	13.3%	8	10.0%	6	6.52%
Number of children eligible to take GCSE'S	13		10		14	
Number who sat at least 1 GCSE	6	46.2%	5	50.0%	13	92.9%
Number who obtained at least 1 GCSE grade A*-G	5	38.5%	5	50.0%	13	92.9%
Number who obtained at least 5 GCSE grade A*-G	3	23.1%	3	30.0%	9	64.3%
Number who obtained at least 5 GCSE grade A*-C	2	15.4%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%

(Data source: Children's Quality Information Team)