

Corporate Parenting Panel

Minutes

7 June 2021

Present:

Chair:

Councillor Angella Murphy-Strachan

Councillors:

Sue Anderson
Dr Lesline Lewinson

Janet Mote
Kiran Ramchandani

**Non-voting
Advisory
Member:**

Valerie Griffin

Foster Carer

**Officers (in
attendance):**

Paul Hewitt
Jacinta Kane
Peter Tolley

David Harrington

Laurie Ward

Teresa Chisholm

Mellina Williamson-Taylor

Sarah Moriarty

Kat Robinson

Corporate Director People
Head of Corporate Parenting
Divisional Director Children
and Young People Service
Head of Business
Intelligence
Central and North West
London NHS Foundation
Trust
Central and North West
London NHS Foundation
Trust
Head Teacher – Harrow
Virtual School
Assistant Head Teacher –
Harrow Virtual School
Post 16 Advisory Teacher –
Harrow Virtual School

**Apologies
received:**

Councillor Christine Robson
Councillor Lynda Seymour
Councillor Maxine Henson

106. Appointment of Vice-Chair

RESOLVED: That, in accordance with Committee Procedure Rule 7.2.2, Councillor Kiran Ramchandani was appointed Vice-Chair of the Panel for the 2021/2022 Municipal Year.

107. Attendance by Reserve Members

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

Ordinary MemberReserve Member

Councillor Maxine Henson

Councillor Sue Anderson

Councillor Lynda Seymour

Councillor Dr Lesline Lewinson

108. 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.

109. Minutes

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 2 February 2021 be taken as a read and signed correct record.

110. Public Questions

RESOLVED: To note that no public questions were received.

111. Petitions

RESOLVED: To note that no petitions were received.

112. Deputations

RESOLVED: To note that deputations were received.

Resolved Items**113. Update From Care Leavers and Updated Local Offer to Care Leavers**

Members received an update from care experienced young people who shared their experiences of: "life under lockdown" due to coronavirus (Covid-19); moving to independent living; being members of interview panels for social work recruitment; and of being furloughed from employment.

One of the care experienced young people spoke about his experiences as an interview panel member for social work recruitment in Harrow. He shared that this experience had been “very interesting, and it was really cool to be on the panel as the voice of a young person”. He shared that he was not treated just as an addition, but as a valued panel member, taking on equal responsibility by asking questions, and reviewing CVs.

Members inquired how much support he had received from Children’s Services during this time and if there were any gaps during this period.

The young person responded that he had been in regular touch with his Social Worker, “who was absolutely brilliant in providing support”. He had also received support from key worker, Centrepont and the Head of Service – Corporate Parenting. He felt he could approach them for support, as he had established a good working relationship with them.

Members also heard from the Independent Adviser, Valerie Griffin, who updated the Panel on her experiences as a foster carer. She shared that she had enjoyed lockdown as she had spent more time on one-on-one interaction with the children. The children benefitted from that, and had used the extra time to revise for exams. This had also improved their self-esteem. Family contact was positive via the phone and facetime, meaning they did not lose touch with their families.

The panel also heard from a young person in Ms Griffin’s care who had enjoyed the extra time at home and had thrived in education during this time.

Members thanked Ms Griffin for her input and for caring so well for children.

Members expressed their appreciation to the young people for sharing their experiences and wished them well in their future endeavours. They encouraged the young people to feedback their experiences, including the negative ones, so that it would lead to improvement.

RESOLVED: That the update be noted.

114. Update and Performance for Corporate Parenting Service

Members received the Corporate Parenting Service Update and slide presentation, which included performance of the service; measures on tackling disproportionality; young people not in education, employment or training (NEET); the Care Leavers Local Offer update; the West London Fostering Project; and European Union Settled Status (EUSS).

The key elements of the performance scorecard were highlighted, and performance overall was looking positive. The areas for scrutiny and development were NEET young people (largely due to impact of Covid-19 on employment opportunities for young people); dental checks (again impacted by the pandemic, but improved performance); and children placed more than 20 miles away from home. There had been a small increase in children placed out of Harrow, based on the needs of individual children and contextual safeguarding reasons.

Plans to tackle NEET young people and support back into education was outlined, and the programmes commissioned by Prospects and Xcite.

Efforts were being taken to understand and tackle disproportionality, understand and analyse data. Black children were overrepresented across all areas of children's social care, and were also overrepresented in the Youth Justice Service. This was the picture seen nationally. The performance team were working on a dataset about disproportionality and understanding the impact and outcomes for children.

The Care Leaver Local Offer had been refreshed and it was a requirement under law to publish it. This had been updated following consultation with young people, benchmarking with other local authorities, and with input of leaving care charities. A key change to the local offer was the Council Tax Exemption until the age of 25 for care leavers. This had brought Harrow in line with what was provided nationally to care leavers. This was a co-produced piece of work, and a significant moment that the updated local offer had been given. Young people had been very positive about the impact of the local offer on their lives.

The young person on the panel welcomed the council tax exemption for care leavers, and was very appreciative of the change. Care leavers who took part in the consultation process welcomed the revision of the local offer and the Council Tax Exemption which would prevent care leavers from experiencing financial hardship in their first years of living independently.

An update about the work of the West London Fostering Project was provided. Harrow, Brent and Ealing were working collaboratively to develop placement sufficiency and improve recruitment and retention of foster carers in West London. The objectives were to increase the choice of local foster families to provide stability for young people; develop flexible and responsive support to carers; and minimise placement disruption and/or breakdown.

EUSS updates were shared with the panel, and the service has worked closely with the Coram Children's Legal Centre. Thirty children and young people had been identified to apply for EUSS, and all but five had applied for EUSS.

Members recognised the work being completed on disproportionality within the Service.

Members expressed their appreciation to the Corporate Parenting Service Team for their hard work, and noted the strides made.

RESOLVED: That the update be noted.

115. Update on the Virtual School Performance

Members received an update on the performance of the Harrow Virtual School.

The Personal Education Plans (PEP) returns remained at 100%, with 111 pupils of Statutory School Age (SSA) on roll. This was a slight drop in cohort numbers of 3 students since September 2020. On the coronavirus (Covid-19) Recovery Programme, mental health continued to be monitored via the Strength and Difficulties Questionnaires (SDQs) and the Clinical Psychologist. Enrichment programmes had been strengthened, with a steady stream of laptops provided post lockdown. One-to-one tuition programmes had increased by 30%. Furthermore, English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) Summer Camp were on offer.

On attendance, 90% of eligible pupils had good school attendance, with 74% of pupils in Key Stage 4 having good attendance. However, this was below the School's expectations. There had not been any permanent exclusions, and 5% of pupils had had a suspension. The England average was 13%.

In order to enrich the students' experiences, the following activities had been introduced: Reading Club (online); Philosophy Club (online); We Belong - A New Direction (online); Harrow School and Partners 1:1 tuition (online); Phoenix Outdoor Centre; Orley Farm Activity Day; ESOL Summer School; Arvon Residential Trip; Strength in Horses equine therapy; Opera at Holland Park; Chelsea Physic Gardens; and Care to Dance.

The following were highlighted as priorities to support children who have fallen behind with their learning:

- to increase the number of children with good school attendance from 90% to 95% or higher;
- to increase the number of children in Key Stage 2 achieving expected standards in all 3 subjects - Maths, Writing and Reading (33%). The England average is 37%;
- to increase the Attainment 8 Score (18%) to be in line with or above the England Average (21%); and
- to review education packages for 'hard to reach' Key Stage 4 students; and Black and Asian boys had been identified as a vulnerable group and represented 57% of the cohort with a suspension.

Members expressed their appreciation to the leadership of the Harrow Virtual School for their hard work over the years, and welcomed the improvements made.

RESOLVED: That the update be noted.

116. Update and Performance on Health for Children Looked After

Members received the Harrow Children Looked After (CLA) Health Report.

The report set out the delivery of health services to Harrow's Children Looked After (CLA) during January – March 2021 in line with the national guidance. The report reviews the service and includes clinical work undertaken during the coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic.

There had been new processes, where initial health assessments were being triaged in response to the coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic. Assessments were completed either face to face, virtual or telephone on a case by case basis. Review health assessment were being offered face to face appointments. However, if declined they were being completed either by telephone or virtual.

Children and young people had been asked about their experiences during the pandemic lockdown. Young people were given the choice for video, face to face or phone assessments. Face to face assessments were carried out where appropriate. Virtual appointments were found to be popular.

Members expressed their appreciation to service providers for their work with the children and young people.

RESOLVED: That the update be noted.

(Note: The meeting, having commenced at 6.00 pm, closed at 7.33 pm).

(Signed) Councillor Angella Murphy-Strachan
Chair