

Corporate Parenting Panel

Minutes

31 January 2023

Present:

Chair: Councillor Hitesh Karia

Councillors: Simon Brown Chetna Halai
Matthew Goodwin-Freeman Aneka Shah-Levy

**Non-voting
Advisory
Member:** Valerie Griffin Foster Carer

**Officers (in
attendance):** Joy Bell Participation Officer
Neil Harris Assistant Director Quality
Assurance and Practice
Improvement
Maria Luscombe Head of Harrow Children's
Services, CNWL
Sarah Moriarty Assistant Headteacher
Christine Nichols Named Nurse for Children
Looked After in Harrow
Peter Tolley Director of Children Services
Joanna Tortipidis Senior Education Officer
Mellina Williamson-Taylor Head Teacher, Virtual
School

**Apologies
received** Teresa Chisholm Clinical Service Manager
Jacinta Kane Assistant Director –
Corporate Parenting

25. Attendance by Reserve Members

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

26. Declarations of Interest

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

27. Minutes

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 20th October 2022 be taken as a read and signed correct record.

28. Public Questions

RESOLVED: To note that no public questions were received.

29. Petitions

RESOLVED: To note that no petitions were received.

30. Deputations

RESOLVED: To note that deputations were received.

Resolved Items

31. Update from care experienced young people about their experiences

Members welcomed a care experienced young person who had been living semi-independently since June 2022 and Joy Bell, Participation Officer to the meeting.

In the discussion which followed, the Young Person raised a number of points and answered questions about their experience as a looked after person, which he responded as follows:

- Having previously been in a foster care family for 7 years the change to semi-independent living was necessary and beneficial. Whilst the change of environment felt turbulent, staff had made the transition as easy as possible. Support from the Personal Advisor was good although the quality of service varied from one staff member to another.
- Having a personal connection, ability to speak freely, being efficient and genuinely caring were amongst the key qualities of what made a good social worker. Good communication and maintaining consistency in social workers were also seen as essential in reducing turbulence during change and improving the experience of looked after children.

- Some concerns were raised over the quality of mental health support offered by the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) which the Young Person felt needed significant improvement and only exacerbated the mental condition and/or circumstances of vulnerable or at risk children in care. Alternative therapy routes needed to be explored and feedback from young people taken on board in order to develop the service. Officers acknowledged the honest feedback and explained that the focus was currently on creating joint services, which was expected to improve the overall experience of looked after children.
- Responding to a question on young people's preferred method for raising issues about the service they were receiving, the Panel heard that although attendance at Corporate Parenting meetings was useful, it was also an intimidating and daunting experience for many young people. The Panel heard that as of 31 January 2023, the Council had piloted an online form that would allow young people to submit feedback, with the possibility of making it anonymous.

Having an independent person for further support and befriending was generally seen as helpful but consideration had to be given on not introducing too many new people in a young person's life. It was noted that trust building could not be forced but happened naturally over time. In addition, it was important for young people to be enabled to choose the independent person themselves rather than having it imposed on them by the Council.

The Panel thanked the Young Person for the attendance and useful feedback.

RESOLVED: That the update be noted.

32. Update and performance for Corporate Parenting Service

The Panel received a presentation from the Director of Children's Services on the Performance of the Corporate Parenting Service which focused on Performance Scorecard, Children placed 20+ miles from home, Demographics and Disproportionality as well as Fostering Recruitment Update.

The following key points were highlighted:

- the performance was overall positive, with only timeliness of reviews identified as an area for improvement. This was not seen as a cause of concern as changes in this area happened rapidly.
- The majority of children placed over 20 miles from home were in long-term, settled placements which met their assessed needs. A small number of children were placed in short-term or temporary placements, based on assessed needs and were living with their

parents, in children's homes for safety reasons or in custody due to offences.

- 55 households were currently fostering 81 children in Harrow, with 3 new households approved in the 2022/23 financial year. (A further 5 households were undergoing assessment and would have capacity for 8 children.
- Harrow had 190 looked after children with a shortfall of 40/50 placement, there is lots of complexity and challenges involved such as accommodating large sibling groups, adolescents, and children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).

In response to a question regarding recruitment, the Director of Children Services responded that it was based on a variety of methods including word of mouth, targeting specific communities, developing links with local community groups, social media, foster care award ceremonies, foster recruitment strategy and local places of worship.

The Panel thanked officers for their presentation and

RESOLVED: That the update be noted.

33. Virtual School Performance Update

The Panel received a presentation from the Virtual School Head Teacher on the performance of the Harrow Virtual School highlighting a number of key points:

- An extensive enrichment programme, in partnership with four other local authorities, had received positive results. The programme included mentoring and range of sport and community initiatives, with the overall aim of improving children's attendance of sessions.
- Early predictions have shown that 25% of the students in Year 2 and Year 6 were expected to meet the standards in Maths, Writing and Reading, although this could change over the summer term.
- Over half of Year 11 were expected to achieve at least 1 GCSE with two students in Year 12 already passed their GCSE qualifications.

Data on suspensions for the period September to December 2022 revealed that 3 pupils had received a fixed-term suspension last term, with boys generally receiving longer periods of suspension. Further work was being undertaken by the Virtual School in this area Following a request by the Panel at its last meeting, the Head of Virtual School also presented Members with two cases studies, both of which highlighted positive outcomes achieved by the service in working with looked after children. In both examples, children were supported and had weekly Personal Education Plan (PEP) meetings which had a positive outcome both in their personal lives as well as their education.

In response to a question about the impact of PEP meetings and why some children were not fully engaging, officers explained that the reasons were multifaceted and included, varying interests, difficulty speaking up at meetings.

The Panel welcomed the update and congratulated the Virtual School on their performance and case study outcomes.

RESOLVED: That the update be noted.

34. IRO Annual Report

The Panel received a presentation on the Independent Review Office (IRO) Annual Report presented by the Assistant Director of Quality Assurance and Practice Improvement. The IRO service was responsible for reviewing plans for children in care and monitoring the Local Authority in respect of its corporate parenting and safeguarding duties. The following key points were highlighted:

- Number of looked after children for 2021/22 had remained within recommended case load of maximum 70 children as stipulated in statutory guidance.
- a total of 548 reviews were chaired by IROs in the year ending 31st March 2022 showing a slight decrease of 11%. There was an increase in young people who started to be looked after at 16 years or over (37.2%), which was a higher compared to last year (26.5%).
- 23 Looked After Reviews concerned children and young people with a disability and majority of these children were placed in long-term residential boarding school provision.
- In terms of permanency outcomes during 2021/2022, 32.1% of children and young people returned home to live with parents or relatives. Whilst positive, further work needed to be undertaken to establish how data was being collected and what the general trend compared to other local authorities was. This showed a higher figure compared to the period 2020/2021 with 28.8% of children and young people returning to live with parents or relatives and 1% adopted.
- Involvement of Young People in review process had improved, with 76% of children and young people over the age of 4 participated in their review during 2021/22. Less than 6% of children and young people did not participate in their review for the year ending 31st March 2022
- Annual Programme for April 2023 to March 2024 was seeking to maintain the good standards of IRO reports and recommendations, focusing on outcomes rather than data and process.

The Panel welcomed the updated

RESOLVED: That

1. The update be noted; and
2. a list of the different avenues for Young Person to raise any issues and/or concerns be presented at the next Panel meeting.

35. Update and Performance on Health for Children Looked After

The Panel received a presentation from the Named Nurse for Children Looked After (CLA) in Harrow, highlighting the following key points:

- All Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for Harrow Children Looked After for June – August 2022 were at 100% and the Initial Health Assessments completed within 20 days for December 2022 were 75%. The most significant reason was late requests. 51% of the requests for initial Health Assessment (IHA) were received outside timescales, while 13 of the 21 late requests were seen in timescales.
- Factors such as capacity issues, late requests and decline appointments contributed towards health assessment reviews (RHA) being completed outside of timescale were. 37% of requests for RHAs were received outside timescales and 17 out of the 19 late requests were completed in timescales.
- In relation to a case study mentioned in the officer presentation, it was noted that this had a positive outcome and that the Young Person involved was in close contact with the Children Looked After Nurse with any health-related concerns.
- The Named Nurse for Children Looked After was currently reviewing the client Health Assessment Leaflet and updating the information.

RESOLVED: That the update be noted.

(Note: The meeting, having commenced at 6.04 pm, closed at 8.25 pm).

(Signed) Councillor Hitesh Karia
Chair