

Committee:	Corporate Parenting Panel
Date:	14th January 2008
Subject:	INFORMATION REPORT – Harrow Position in relation to “ Care Matters- Time for Change” White Paper
Responsible Officer:	Paul Clark
Portfolio Holder:	Councillor Janet Mote
Exempt:	No
Enclosures:	None

Section 1 – Summary

This report presents Harrow’s current position in relation to the government’s White Paper “Care Matters: Time for Change”, which was published on 21st June 2007, together with initial plans for implementation

FOR INFORMATION

Section 2 – Report

. Background

1.1 What the White Paper proposes

This report will consider areas where there may be a cost implication.

- 1.2. £600m has been invested by Government in the Every Child Matters agenda to date, and over £300 million more will be invested over the next Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) cycle up to 2011 (£13.5m in

07/08; £88.9m in 08/09; £95.6m in 09/10; £106/6m in 10/11). The amount provided by Government will be dependent on the size of the CLA population

1.3. A Change Fund for each LA will also be made available to enable each area to deal with particular challenges that they face. This will be available from 2008 until 2011, this is equivalent to £33/£50/£67k for each local authority. At this point we don't know when the White Paper will become law, and the exact provisions. Therefore, the following considerations may change.

1.4. The White Paper is set out under seven headings as follows: -

2. Corporate Parenting.

2.1. Care Matters refers to Corporate Parenting needing to operate at both a day-to-day level in terms of the care provided by carers and Social Workers and at a higher strategic level. It places a clear legal responsibility on the Director of Children's Services and lead member for Children's Services for leading improvements in Corporate Parenting and identifies a number of actions that must be taken including developing "a pledge" for looked after children in their area. Government have made the following suggestions:

- A choice, made with their social worker, of high quality placements;
- 24/7 support from their social worker or an out of hours contact;
- A minimum entitlement to sport and leisure activities – for example, 4 hours a week;
- A chance to take part in volunteering;
- Twice yearly health assessments for under 5s and annual health assessments and twice yearly dental check ups for older children;
- An independent advocate;
- The choice of when to move on to enter adult life, up to the age of 18;
- The right to have their voice heard and influence the work of the local authority through participation in a 'Children in Care Council'.

2.2 Other entitlements, which local authorities might consider including in their pledge could be, for example, giving older CLA a savings account and supporting them financially to go to university.

2.3 The joint London Councils/ Association of London Directors of Children's Services (ALDCS) response to *Care Matters* in January 2007 set out proposals to develop a core pan-London Pledge. Consultation is currently taking place. It is anticipated that the London Pledge be adopted by boroughs and other agencies in May 2008.

2.4. Harrow Position:

- We have started to develop a multi agency charter. This will be driven by the Life Chances Forum, which Gail Hancock now chairs and will also be informed by the pan London pledge.
- We need to consider how we can provide real choice in terms of placements. This will require early planning for children on the “verge of care” so that placements can be visited, compared etc. Further clarification from Government is required around how differences of opinion between what is offered and what the young person wants can be resolved. A cost element may be an issue.
- We have to consider how best we can deliver 24hr support to CLA and whether there is a cost element
- We do provide leisure and sport facilities at reduced costs and we subsidise such activities for CLA placed outside the Borough.
- In terms of volunteering the Participation Team have done a great deal to involve young people. We need to consider further how we can actively encourage YP in this area – which is about raising self-esteem and involvement in the local community.
- Our performance on health assessments and dental checks is currently on the Dark Green level (very good)
- We already have an advocacy service
- We track CLA through the review process and the Child Care Panel.
- We move YP on to semi and full independence by assessment and agreement with the YP.

3. Family and Parenting support

3.1. The White Paper sets out proposals, which aim to support families so that children can stay with their birth parents if that is in their best interest and to ensure that a placement within their wider family or friends is always considered. The White Paper will make a number of requirements including:

3.2. Family and friends are, as far as possible, considered in all cases and in the first instance as potential carers.

3.3. Local Authorities must have transparent policies in relation to the support offered to family and friends carers.

3.4. Children’s Services must continue to work with birth parents as part of effective care planning.

3.5. Family and Friend carers will be allowed to apply for a residence order if a child has lived with them for a continuous period of at least one year.

3.6 Guidance will highlight the need for ensuring that appropriate services are delivered for the child and family to support the return home when that is appropriate.

3.7 Harrow Position

- We are as far as possible following the suggested requirements – they highlight good practice principle
- We need to continue sharing assessments with parents and receiving their feedback

4. Care Placements

4.1 The White Paper sets out measures to ensure that all children experience stability and continuity in their placement with an ultimate goal of placements leading to permanency. The aim of the White Paper is to address this through improved commissioning, training, development and support for carers as a way of avoiding placement breakdown. The actions arising from this include: -

4.2 A statutory duty on Local Authorities to secure a sufficient and diverse provision of quality placements within their local area.

4.3 Piloting regional commissioning units to find individual appropriate placements for children particularly those with complex needs and disabilities.

4.4 Guidance to Local Authorities to help them manage local placement markets.

4.5 Guidance on the application of the Children Act 1989 for placing children in secure children's homes will be updated.

4.6 Social Work training to include modules on effective concurrent planning.

4.7 Local Authorities will be unable to place a child out of its area unless it is satisfied that such a placement is in the child's best interests.

4.8 Frequency of Social Work visits to be made more explicit.

4.9 Social Workers will be required to see the child alone and away from their carers.

4.10 Harrow Position:

- We have scoped the carers that we need to recruit following an analysis of CLA needs.
- We have reviewed the level of payments and other support packages for carers which are currently been considered by HFCA
- We have a multi agency complex needs panel that considers packages of care for CLA with complex needs
- We are members of the Pan London consortium for securing and commissioning placements
- The new Placement Manager will have a key role in gate keeping the use of IFA placements and in particular where they are placed. In addition, the Placement Manager and his team will have an important role in ensuring that the appropriateness of out of Borough placements are reviewed, in terms of the needs of the child and whether there is added value

5. Education

5.1 The White Paper proposes action to narrow the gap in terms of Looked after Children's educational attainment and the expectations include: -

5.2 Local Authorities providing high quality early years education.

5.3 Ensuring care planning decisions do not disrupt a child's education and that a looked after child is not required to move schools in years 10 and 11 other than in exceptional circumstances.

5.4 The role of the designated teacher in schools will be made statutory.

5.5 11 Local Authorities are piloting the creation of the post of a virtual school Head accountable to the Director of Children's Services.

5.6 There is a proposal to provide £500 per year for Looked after Children who are at risk of not reaching their expected standard of educational attainment.

5.7 There is to be an extension of opportunity in relation to individual tutoring and out of school activity for Looked after Children.

5.8 Harrow Position

- We have good educational provision in Harrow. We need to consider, in light of current EWO resources how we can ensure that we can influence the quality of education provided for CLA placed in other local authorities.
- We do not move YP in years 10 and 11 unless in exceptional circumstances. We do, however, need to consider how their progress is monitored at an early stage to maximize their efforts in gaining good GCSE results.
- Designated Teachers are responsible for all CLA, whether they are Harrow young people or not. It is not clear as yet whether further resources will be required
- Similarly we are waiting the outcome of the Virtual Head pilot scheme
- It is not clear how the additional resources - £500 per child and tutoring – will be funded

6. Health and Wellbeing

6.1 The White Paper acknowledges that health and wellbeing of a child underpins their ability to enjoy life and do well in school and adulthood. The actions required include: -

6.2 Exploring the use of a named health professional to improve coordination of health services.

6.3 Ensuring Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services provide targeted and dedicated services to Looked after Children.

6.4 Guidance to schools providing sex and relationship education for looked after children.

6.5 Ensuring pregnant teenagers and teenage parents who are looked after have a lead professional to coordinate support to them.

6.6 A duty on Local Authorities to ensure young people have access to positive leisure time activity which will be free of charge.

6.7 Harrow Position

- The introduction of the CLA nurse has greatly improved the health provision for our CLA cohort. However, further health resources are required to complement this service and to ensure that a named health professional is available for all CLA, including teenage mothers

- The role and provision by CAMHS is currently being reviewed to ensure that all CLA have a speedy and needs led service. There are plans to have CAMHS surgeries in Pinner Road
- The leisure requirements of our CLA cohort have been scoped. We need to establish how they can be financed

7. Transition to Adulthood.

7.1 This section sets out the support that should be available to young people to support the transition in to further or higher education, employment and independence. The actions expected include: -

7.2 A pilot allowing children and young people to stay with their foster carers up to the age of 21.

7.3 Establishing whether there is a demand for young people staying in children's homes beyond the age of 18.

7.4 Legislation to ensure young people are not moved from regulated to unregulated placements.

7.5 An approach which continues to support care leavers as long as they need it.

7.6 Extending the provision of personal advisors to every care leaver up to the age of 21 or 25 to those in further learning or training.

7.7 Harrow Position

- We currently allow YP to remain with carers up to 18 years and, occasionally, longer under supported lodgings. There may be cost implications if extended to 21 and will have a knock on effect on the availability of other placements
- Similarly, we move YP on a needs basis in relation to children homes
- We take great care in ensuring through our placement officer, contracts, and the Pan London Consortium that all placements are regulated
- Support is provided to all Care Leavers on a needs basis
- Harrow does not have personal advisers. We are the view that we are providing a better service by using Social Workers on this respect. We do currently provide support to all care leavers who are in higher education. However, there will be a resource and cost implication if this were to extend up to 25 years of age and to cover those in training.

8. The role of the practitioner

8.1 The White Paper states that the improvement of services for children and young people who are looked after will depend on having a highly skilled, valued, committed and stable workforce that delivers individualised support for children and young people. The actions proposed in this section include: -

8.2. Further funding to be made available in 2008/09 to increase investment to enable flexible working for Social Workers.

8.3. The establishment of a number of two year pilots across different Local Authorities to test the use of a Social Work practice model, including Social Work practices run by the voluntary and private sector.

8.4. Revised independent Reviewing Officer responsibilities to include a named IRO for every child being looked after, the IRO to spend time individually

with each child prior to a review and the requirement to hold a review before any “significant event” takes place for a looked after child.

8.5.Plans to extend the opportunity for looked after children to access an independent visitor.

8.6 Harrow Position

- We have successfully implemented the workforce strategy. We do offer some staff opportunities to work from home. However, we do need to explore further means by which we enable flexible working.
- We await the outcome of the Social Work practice model pilots, particularly in relation to issues of accountability, workforce issues and added value.
- Extending the role of the IRO is a welcome one although there will be a, as yet undefined cost and resource element if required to undertake additional tasks.

9. Initial plans to implement the White Paper proposals

9.1 An information report will be provided to Corporate Parenting in January 08 outlining the implications of the White Paper, “Care Matters”, Harrow’s current position, together with the possible budget pressures . The Children’s Bill will be added to the subsequent meeting in April 08

9.2 Senior Management have identified a total possible resource implication of approximately 376K. However it is anticipated that 150K will be found through savings

9.3 The multi agency Life Chances Forum which reports to Corporate Parenting have considered the implications from Care Matters and have identified key issues from a Health, Education and Social Care perspective to prioritise:

9.4 In terms of health this will be in relation to substance misuse, drugs and alcohol. In addition all CLA will complete a Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire which will help to identify whether there are emotional issues which may require CAMHS intervention

9.5 In terms of education this will be in relation to using the Personal Education Plans process to inform what support is required to improve educational achievement. In addition, all CLA of a school age will undertake a Pupil Attitude to School Survey (PASS) which Measures Young People’s Attitudes to Learning and Themselves as Learners. This will inform what support they will require.

9.6 In terms of Social Care this will be in relation to considering how to improve placement stability and choice as these are the most significant indices of positive outcomes for CLA

9.7 The CLA virtual team will work on the above priorities and report progress to the Life Chances Forum

9.8 Two multi agency panels, the Permanency Tracking Panel, and the Child Care Panel, chaired by Social Care, monitor child care processes to ensure that the key messages of the Children’s Bill and Care Matters are addressed in both care planning and outcomes

9.9 The Participation Team are pulling together the various charters and pledges to Children so that there is uniformity and consistency

Section 3 – Further Information

There will be a further update at the April panel, which will incorporate the proposals arising from the Children's Bill.

Section 4 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact: Andreas Kyriacou, Senior Co-ordinator, Children Looked After 0208
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Background Papers: None.