

## CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

31 JULY 2008

Chairman: \* Councillor Janet Mote

Councillors: \* Husain Akhtar \* B E Gate (1)  
 \* Miss Christine Bednell \* Eric Silver  
 \* Mrs Margaret Davine

\* Denotes Member present  
 (1) Denotes category of Reserve Member

**PART I - RECOMMENDATIONS - NIL****PART II - MINUTES**40. **Appointment of Chairman:**

**RESOLVED:** That Councillor Janet Mote be appointed Chairman of the Corporate Parenting Panel for the Municipal Year 2008/09.

41. **Attendance by Reserve Members:**

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

<u>Ordinary Member</u>	<u>Reserve Member</u>
Councillor Mitzi Green	Councillor Brian Gate

42. **Declarations of Interest:**

**RESOLVED:** To note that there were no declarations of interests made by Members in relation to the business transacted at this meeting.

43. **Arrangement of Agenda:**

**RESOLVED:** That all items be considered with the press and public present.

44. **Appointment of Vice Chairman:**

**RESOLVED:** That Councillor Eric Silver be appointed Vice Chairman of the Corporate Parenting Panel for the Municipal Year 2008/09.

45. **Minutes:**

**RESOLVED:** That the minutes of the meeting held on 14 April 2008 be confirmed as a correct record and the Chairman be authorised to sign them when they were printed in the Bound Minute Volume, subject to the following alteration:

- That the third sentence of minute item 39(ii) be changed to read: "The Chairman invited Members to a meeting organised by the Children's Participation Team on 31 July 2008 to discuss the involvement of CLA in the work of the Panel."

46. **Public Questions:**

**RESOLVED:** To note that no public questions were received at this meeting under the provisions of Advisory Panel and Consultative Forum Procedure Rule 16 (Part 4E of the Constitution).

47. **Petitions:**

**RESOLVED:** To note that no petitions were received at this meeting under the provisions of the Advisory Panel and Consultative Forum Procedure Rule 14 (Part 4E of the Constitution).

48. **Deputations:**

**RESOLVED:** To note that no deputations were received at this meeting under the provisions of Advisory Panel and Consultative Forum Procedure Rule 15 (Part 4E of the Constitution).

49. **Activity and Performance:**

The Panel received an information report of the Corporate Director of Children's Services, setting out key data relating to Children Looked After (CLA) and Children on the Child Protection Register (CPR), including key performance indicators up to the end of May 2008. An officer reported that the figures were encouraging and commented that no indicators were red and four had improved by at least one performance band. He informed the Panel that the improvement in performance had been achieved through careful management and increased team stability. The Chairman stated that significant progress had been made, and requested that it be noted that the Panel were thankful of the contributions made by the relevant social workers and support staff.

A Member commented that he was pleased to see a decline in the number of children being placed with private and voluntary carers outside of Harrow. He stated that it was important that local children be kept in the local area. An officer explained that the movement of Looked After Children (LAC) out of Harrow had previously been a problem but that, through careful analysis, the Council had identified why individuals were leaving and had instigated a targeted recruitment strategy to ensure that Harrow was equipped to deal with a wide range of needs. This, the officer reported, had reduced the number of LAC living outside of a 20 mile radius, from 28% in the previous year to 4.2%. The officer also informed the Panel that the department had been successful in retaining experienced carers by increasing allowances.

A Member asked the officers in attendance how Foster Carers were helped to meet and raise standards of care in the borough. An officer explained that all Foster Carers in Harrow were trained in line with Government standards, had access to telephone support and worked under the guidance of a Supervising Foster Carer. The officer informed the Panel that Foster Carers were also catered for by other groups, including 'Children Looked After Mental Health Service' (CLAMHS) which helped ensure that LAC had access to mental health services. She also explained that Harrow Council and Harrow Primary Care Trust jointly funded the post of a CLA Nurse to focus on improving the health of children and young people who were looked after. In addition to healthcare, the officer informed the Panel that, with financial support from the Schools Forum, a Homework club had been set up to help LAC raise their educational prospects. The level of support available to Foster Carers was consistent across the borough.

Summing up the report, an officer explained that the department had rated itself 3 out of 4 in the Council's annual self-assessment. The officer stated that the department was aiming to achieve the highest rating next year. Following a brief discussion, all Members of the Panel unanimously agreed that great progress had been made and that the benefits that had been achieved were clearly evident.

**RESOLVED:** That the report be noted.

50. **Development of a Special Interest Group with Young People:**

The Panel received an information report of the Corporate Director of Children's Services detailing proposals to develop a Special Interest Group with Young People to support the Corporate Parenting Panel in their work. An officer explained that the Special Interest Group would be comprised of young individuals who reflected the social and cultural makeup of LAC in Harrow. It was intended that the Special Interest Group would consider the concerns facing LAC and subsequently meet with the Corporate Parenting Panel to discuss the issues.

Following questions from Members, the officer clarified that:

- There were plans to run two different Groups in order to cater for varying ages, though no final decision had been made as to how this would be implemented.
- It would take time to get the group fully operational and it was therefore not possible to set a date for the first meeting.
- The Corporate Parenting Panel could engage with the Special Interest Group through both formal and informal meetings, depending on the subject matter.

- All Members of the Corporate Parenting Panel would be CRB checked.
- All Members who wished to join the Corporate Parenting Panel would also be CRB checked.

A number of Members voiced their support for the project and commented that it was an excellent way in which to get young people involved in the democratic process. It was noted that, in addition to helping the Council improve services for LAC, such groups had the potential to make young people feel valued.

**RESOLVED:** That the report be noted.

51. **Government White Paper “Care Matters - Time for Change”:**

An officer reported that £127,000 would be made available to Harrow by the Department for Children, Schools and Families for the implementation of the “Care Matters – Time for Change” White Paper. The Members were informed that a meeting had been scheduled for key officers in positions related to LAC to decide how the money should be utilised. A shortlist of initiatives had been drawn up and the Panel was invited to provide feedback. The initiatives were as follows:

1. Introduction of a CLA Personal Education Plan (PEP) Coordinator.
2. Development a PEP user leaflet to ensure that Foster Carers understood and made use of the service.
3. Introduction of a CLA Allowance scheme.
4. Make available a higher education bursary of £2000 to assist LAC that wish to undertake a university course.
5. Introduction of ‘Achievement Payments’ for LAC based upon effort as well as educational achievement.
6. Introduction of an after school homework club at the cost of £10,000 per year.
7. Introduction of a Virtual Head Teacher scheme. The scheme would entail a senior individual working for the local authority, tasked with raising educational standards of children in care. An officer commented that 3 teachers had put themselves forward for the project and, as such, £10,000 had already been offered in support of the project. The same amount of funding had also been provided by the Schools Forum.
8. Utilise the services of ‘Welfare Call’, an organisation that contacts schools to check that LAC are attending.
9. Employment of a dedicated Tutor to support LAC that cannot access school or educational resources.
10. Offer an Independent Visitor Scheme for LAC. The Independent Visitor Scheme would contribute to the welfare of LAC by promoting their individual needs, supporting their care plan and helping them to develop a lasting relationship.

Following questions from the Panel, an officer clarified that:

- The schemes were predominantly concerned with raising the educational prospects of looked after children. Health related schemes had not been put forward as it was felt Harrow was already doing well in this regard. In particular, the officer reported that the grant received from the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) had been increased to £460,000 and this was already having major benefits on health across the borough.
- The Independent Visitors Scheme would encourage LAC to exercise their right to participate in decisions taken about them.

**RESOLVED:** That the report be noted.

52. **Any Other Urgent Business:****Children and Young Persons Bill**

The Chairman requested that the officers in attendance provide the Panel with an update on the Children and Young Persons Bill, part of the 'Care Matters' reform package, at the next scheduled meeting.

**Corporate Parenting Training**

A Member suggested that all Councillors should receive training regarding their responsibilities as corporate parents and that that he would discuss the matter with the Member Development Panel. The Panel agreed that this was a good idea.

**Adoption Inspection**

An officer informed the Panel that Harrow Council was to be inspected by the regulating body 'Commission for Social Care Inspection' (CSCI). She reported that the inspection was due to take place in the week beginning 8 September 2008 and that inspectors would want to interview the Portfolio Holder for Children's Services and Members of the Corporate Parenting Panel. The officer informed the Panel that Harrow was expecting a positive adoption inspection and that she would be offering advice and assistance to Members to ensure that they were prepared for the interviews.

**Putting Corporate Parenting into Practice**

A book entitled "Putting Corporate Parenting into Practice" was given out to Members, with copies also being sent to absent and reserve Members to read over the summer period.

(Note: The meeting having commenced at 6.05 pm, closed at 8.05 pm)

(Signed) COUNCILLOR JANET MOTE  
Chairman

Appendix 1

Officers in  
attendance:

Gail Hancock

Head of Service – Safeguarding,  
Family Placement & Support  
Service Manager – Performance  
Management

David Harrington

Andreas Kyriacou

Senior Co-ordinator, Children  
Looked After

Therese Mcalorum

Childrens Participation Co-  
ordinator