

<b>Committee:</b>	Corporate Parenting Panel
<b>Date:</b>	13 January 2009
<b>Subject:</b>	INFORMATION REPORT - Approval of a London Pledge for Children Looked After
<b>Responsible Officer:</b>	Corporate Director of Children's Services, Paul Clark
<b>Portfolio Holder:</b>	Portfolio Holder for Children's Services, Councillor Christine Bednell
<b>Exempt:</b>	No
<b>Enclosures:</b>	None

### **Section 1 – Summary**

#### **FOR INFORMATION**

- 1.1. Report on the London Pledge, which aims to ensure that children and young people in care across London have equal access to the same range of key services
- 1.2. Report on the cost implications if the Pledge is fully implemented and the ways by which this may be funded

### **Section 2 – Report**

**2.1** Lead Members and Directors of Children's Services have been asked to sign up to the London Pledge, which is a common set of core principles and promises to which each Council will add its own locally agreed pledges.

**2.2** The London Pledge has been developed by way of a number of consultation events involving London Local Authorities, Members, Senior Officers and Young People

**2.3** The London Pledge is set out under the headings of the five Every Child Matters outcomes, which children and young people said were important to them.

**2.4** The London Pledge was signed off on behalf of the Local Authority at a London wide launch on 25<sup>th</sup> November 2008. Harrow Council will honour a number of **Principles** to our Children Looked After. It states that as Harrow Council:

- *We will only promise you things that we know we can do.*
- *We will care for you as an individual person with your own specific needs, which we will plan to meet.*
- *You will have the opportunity to talk to your social worker alone every time he/she visits you.*
- *We will always involve you in the decisions we take for you.*
- *We aim to be the best as parents and to make your experience of being looked after a positive one.*
- *We want you to be healthy, safe, have fun and gain achievements for yourself, to make a positive contribution to your community and to leave care able to make your way successfully in life. We will support you to achieve all this.*
- *We will have expectations of you as well and we will make these clear to you.*
- *We will listen to you as individuals and as a group and we want you to tell us when you meet us whether we are keeping our promises.*
- *We will take account of your particular needs, especially those relating to disability, race, culture, religion and sexuality. We will take account of anything that is leading to you being treated unfairly and will give you support to overcome it.*
- *We will ensure that you receive your full set of rights, as set out in relevant legislation, regulations and guidance and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.*
- *We will also ensure that you receive your London Pledge entitlements, wherever you live. Any failure on the part of Councils and their partners to deliver this will be promptly resolved.*

**2.5** There is a cost implication in relation to ensuring that children looked after receive information and that they are aware of their rights. We do have a system by which all new CLA receive an information pack at the same time as their Viewpoint session. The Participation Team collates the information. This is currently under review. There is an increasing cost in terms of printing and materials. Costs would also spiral if the information were to be provided in different languages. Costs of printing the materials are approximately **£2,000 for full year**. To provide in different languages would incur further costs.

**2.6.** In relation to **Health** Harrow Council will work to ensure that children looked after have access to a range of relevant health services, which promote and support their emotional, physical and mental health and support them to make healthy and positive choices with your lives. It states that as Harrow Council:

- *We will work to make sure that doctors, dentists and other health professionals are trained to understand your individual needs and listen to your problems so that they can give you the best possible support and treatment.*
- *We will work with others to ensure that you get better access to the information you need and the right support to help you with any health or emotional difficulties that you may have, especially if you live outside your home authority.*
- *We will ensure that we have good systems in place to share information across borough boundaries so that you do not miss out on medical appointments because you move areas.*
- *Parents or carers will have access to information, services and support that will help them to care for you and give them with the skills they need to ensure that you have the best chances in life and are healthy and safe.*
- *We will ensure that you receive your vaccinations, dental checks and other health checks at the right time and that you and your carers are given the relevant information to support you in accessing healthcare services*
- *When appropriate we will ensure that you have access to the relevant sexual health information and support to enable you to make positive choices about your future.*
- *We will make sure that you have opportunities to develop your personal and social skills to care for your health and well-being now and in the future.*

**2.7.** In relation to staying **Safe**, Harrow Council will work to keep children looked after safe from harm by individuals and their environment. Harrow Council will ensure that children looked after know how and where to access help if they feel threatened or are hurt in any way and will ensure that professionals and carers know how to support those children looked after who have been harmed or hurt. It states that as Harrow Council:

- *All agencies will work to prevent you suffering harm and to promote your welfare, provide you with the services you require to address your needs and to safeguard those of you who are being or who are likely to be harmed.*

- *We will have clear arrangements and protocols in place to safeguard you if you run away or go missing from care. These arrangements will be regularly reviewed.*
- *We will involve you in the selection of staff working with or for children and young people and the training of new social workers and foster carers.*
- *We will ensure that you get good information about your placement and a proper introduction to your carers (unless you have to move in an emergency). When you are moved to a new area you will receive information about the area and how to access services.*
- *We will ensure that you have access to youth support services and a Connexions adviser. If you need it additional guidance relating to your personal health and safety is available.*
- *If you get into trouble with the police and end up in custody we will make sure that the most suitable person comes along to support you.*
- *We will do our best to give you a choice in the selection of your own foster carer or placement.*
- *We will do our best to reduce the number of changes of social worker that you experience while you are in care*

**2.8.** In terms of **Enjoy and Achieve**, Harrow will work to ensure that children looked after have access to a broad range of positive activities and opportunities that provide them with places to go and things to do wherever they are. It states that as Harrow Council:

- *We will encourage and help you to access good quality affordable social, cultural and leisure activities, both in your community and across London.*
- *By 2011 we will provide you with a free leisure card to access facilities across London up to the age of 21. This will include free access to gyms and major cultural attractions.*
- *We will support you to purchase a bike and safety equipment and we will organise proficiency training if it is something that you would like and that your carers agree.*
- *We will work together across London to support you to achieve five A\* to G at GCSE or equivalents. We will ensure that you have better access to personal computers and other materials that you may need for your education and that you are able to access the full range of educational opportunities open to your peers. We will pay particular attention to supporting you at key transition stages in your lives and ensure that you*

*and your carers have access to high quality information, advice and guidance that supports you to make the right choices about your future.*

- We will work with schools, colleges and universities to ensure that you are championed to succeed in your education. In school you will have the support of your designated teacher and a governor champion and you will have a high quality, clear and up to date Personal Education Plan that will meet your needs and push you to succeed.*
- If you are leaving care for university or vocational training we will ensure that your Pathway Plan is clear about the support you will receive, including our financial contribution to your studies.*
- We will make sure that you have access to a computer and materials needed for your education and training. We aim to provide you with a laptop or computer at Key Stage 3 and beyond and appropriate software, providing you remain in education and training.*
- Where appropriate we will support you to access vocational opportunities and/or apprenticeships that will enable you to achieve your full potential.*

**2.9** We do have free gym and swimming passes for CLA in Harrow. We are not quite sure how we can provide free leisure cards for events across London unless they are a part of a chain. We need to consider how we can achieve this and how we can provide equitable resources to children looked after placed out of Harrow and London. Our current practice is to look at how we can provide 2 leisure activities for all children looked after.

**2.10** The current cost for 17+ gym and swimming passes is £300 per annum. It is difficult at this stage to cost swimming lessons and the 2 leisure activities, as prices would vary depending on the activity. Costs (and facilities) may vary for CLA placed outside of Harrow.

Gym and Swimming passes for ages **10-16: 80 x £300 come to £32,000**

**2.11** There will also be a cost implication if assistance towards the purchase of a bicycle is done independent of other occasions, such as Birthdays and festive events. However the wording does imply that the LA can contribute to the cost and on significant occasions The other factor is deciding at what age to buy! Younger CLA can normally expect to receive bikes for birthdays and the like, whilst 17+ can receive help with driving lessons

Costs: (working on basis that we would target ages 10-15)  
**80 x £100 = £8,000 08/09**

**2.12.** It is not clear whether a governor champion is appropriate and/or practical. Further clarity is required as to the role and lines of communication as it does not appear to be a Care Matters or Children Bill initiative.

**2.13.** In terms of providing computers and laptops for CLA this is an area whereby we have had some success in the past and where we would want to build on. The good news is that we have recently been successful in bidding for IT monies from the Department of Children, Schools and Families, which will cover this cost

**2.14.** In terms of **Empowering to make a Positive Contribution**, Harrow will work to ensure that CLA voices are heard and that they are able to participate fully in decision making about their lives and the services that affect them. It states that as Harrow Council:

- We will consult you about all our services that affect you.
- We will make sure that you know your rights and what services you are entitled to by putting this down in writing for you. We will also agree with you what we expect from you and put it down in writing.
- We will organise meetings for children and young people who are looked after by a Council in London so that we can hear from you about how you think we can best plan to meet your needs as a group and you can tell us whether we are keeping our promises.
- We will celebrate and promote your achievements with you, as well as the contribution you make to the community. This will also include marking your birthday; your religious festivals and making sure you have a copy of your school photo and reports.
- In cooperation with your parents or carers we will ensure that you have a passport or know why you don't have one.
- Once you get to 16 years old we will ask you whether you want a mentor (e.g. 16+ worker) and arrange one for you if this will be helpful.
- We will also offer you the chance to set up and participate in a peer-mentoring programme for London. This will involve care leavers supporting young people still in care to grow and achieve.
- In addition to your social worker, carer, family member, independent reviewing officer and designated teacher, we will make sure that there is another way to tell us if you are unhappy about anything or have a complaint. We will let you know how to contact this person (an advocate) in writing and they will speak for you if you want them to.
- We will also support you to contact your lead Member, Director of Children's Services and senior managers as necessary and you will be listened to by them.

- We will work with others to provide you with information about volunteering and access to opportunities to help others.

**2.15.** In terms of **Achieving Economic Wellbeing** Harrow will support CLA to achieve economic independence and well-being as they progress into adulthood, recognising that CLA need certain skills and support to live independently. Harrow will take the relevant steps to prepare CLA effectively for independence and the world of employment. It states that as Harrow Council :

- We will open a savings account for you if you have been in care for more than 12 months and will make agreed payments into your account for you<sup>1</sup>. You will have a say about how your money is managed and you will be able to start taking money out once you reach the age of 18.
- We will support you to learn to drive where this will help you get into training and the right job.
- When the time comes for you to leave care we will listen to and act on your views about the services and support you need to help you become an independent adult (including accommodation, further/ higher education, training and employment).
- We will ensure that when you leave school you will receive an offer of education, employment or training. This will include access to a careers adviser and an information and guidance session.
- We will provide work experience opportunities and training or apprenticeships to help young people in and leaving care to develop their CV and find employment. This will include young people over the age of 18 and a range of different types of work experience and advice.

**2.16.** Officers will meet to plan how to implement the pledge, to ensure that there is an audit trail and that each CLA has their own individual Pledge which will be scrutinised through the Review process.

### **Section 3 – Further Information**

**3.1** This report is for Panel to consider and to provide direction

### **Section 4 - Contact Details and Background Papers**

Contact:

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