

Committee:	Corporate Parenting Panel
Date:	14 July 2009
Subject:	INFORMATION REPORT – Participation in the Pledge and the role of the Children in Care Council
Responsible Officer:	Corporate Director for Children’s Services, Paul Clark
Portfolio Holder:	Portfolio Holder for Children’s Services, Christine Bednell
Exempt:	No
Enclosures:	Appendix 1 – Government Framework

## Section 1 – Summary

### FOR INFORMATION

- 1.1. This report sets out the proposed involvement of Children and Young people Looked After in prioritising the key components for Harrow, contained in the wider 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. Reports on the cost implications of consultation and how direct feedback from young people could be used to inform the Councils personal preference for individual pledges.
- 1.3. This report is for Committee to note and comment on.

- 1.4. The London Pledge was signed off on behalf of the Local Authority at a London wide launch on 25<sup>th</sup> November 2008.
- 1.5. This proposal aims to hear direct from young people what the issues are for them locally as children and young people Looked After by Harrow Council.
- 1.6. Purpose:
  - to enable resources to be targeted more effectively;
  - for information to be shared, and for;
  - awareness to be raised of the Pledge, what it means for young people and professionals and how priorities identified could be used to support the development of individual pledges.
- 1.7. This report proposes the development of a Children In Care Council, made up of children and Young people Looked After, who will work with the Corporate Parenting Members to monitor and support the development and progress of Harrow's Pledge

## Section 2 – Report

2.1 The London Pledge addresses a number of principles as well as the 5 Every Child Matters outcomes.

In June 2007, the white paper “Care Matters: Time for Change” was published. The Pledge appears as part of a raft of measures to improve and strengthen local authorities’ role as corporate parents. The white paper is very clear that young people’s involvement in developing their Pledge – giving them the chance to shape and influence the parenting they receive – is essential to its success. As part of this process, the white paper proposes that each local authority should have a “**Children in Care Council**” that is instrumental in the process of feeding in young people’s views on the content of the Pledge and the ongoing monitoring and review mechanisms put in place to measure its success and maintain its currency. It also emphasizes the whole local authority’s responsibility across all departments for its children in care. The White Paper gives overall lead responsibility for the participation of young people in care to the Director of Children’s Services and the Lead Member. It is their responsibility to oversee the development of structures to enable young people’s participation and also to secure the co-operation of colleagues across departments and within the rest of the Children’s Trust as a corporate parent. The white paper also expects that:

*“... pledges to be developed locally through the Children’s Trust arrangements and may include a regional dimension. They should ensure that:*

- *Children in Care are aware of basic statutory requirements with which local authorities should already be complying*

- *Children are aware of the key opportunities and benefits offered to them locally*
- *Children in Care are supported to engage with positive activities as much as possible*
- *Children in Care have been consulted and involved in developing the Pledge, including those with special needs and disabled children; and*
- *The Pledge is regularly reviewed and reflected in the local Children and Young People's Plan or equivalent."*

The Government will monitor local authorities' arrangements and structures that support young people's input into service planning, including the Pledge, and will want to see evidence of "meaningful" involvement in decision-making relating to their care.

The purpose of this framework is to help local authorities create a structure for young people

In line with White Paper recommendations, the following process is proposed:

- To have "Have Your Say " days for 3 different age groups (5yrs- 10yrs, 11yrs-18yrs, 18yrs+) of Looked after Children across the Borough and Children placed outside borough.
- The attraction for these events will be that it will have fun activities attached to them. These events will be planned and led along with the young people of the "Young Voices Group".
- During these events "The London pledge" will be explained to the Children and Young people.
- A range of consultative tools will be used to gain the opinions of the Children and Young people. They will be asked to mark the top 5 priorities that they think that are relevant to Harrow's CLA population. The data from these events will be collated and feedback to the Director of Children's Services, Senior Managers and Corporate Parenting members with the view to establishing a Steering Group to take the Pledge forward
- The Consultation events could also be a platform to access more children and Young People who are interested in becoming the core members of the Children in Care council. These candidates can then further be trained in matters relating to the pledge along with the representatives of the "Young Voices group".
- Representatives of the Children in Care Council will then sit with steering members of the corporate panel and finalize the contents of the pledge that is specific to Harrow.
- These priorities can then be implemented along with the individual pledge for every Child Looked After in Harrow.
- The cost of the consultation events will be approximately £2000, (include hire of venue and facilitation.)
- We can also link up with A National Voice/ Who Cares Trust to gain professional training for the Young people and Corporate Parents.

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

The development of a Children in Care Council will support transparency of provision and establish a tool for monitoring the development of the pledge locally and its impact on the young people for whom Harrow has a direct responsibility.

It places Harrow inline with other local authorities nationally and creates a platform for young people in Harrow to share good practice and initiatives nationally and internationally

### **Section 4 – Financial Implications**

There are no financial implications for the Corporate Parenting Panel.

Name: **Barbara Worrall**

on behalf of the  
Chief Financial Officer

Date: **3 July 2009**

### **Section 5 - Contact Details and Background Papers**

**Contact:** Therese McAlorum, Childrens Participation Team  
Manager (5244)

**Background Papers:** Appendix to London Pledge