

## CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

14 JULY 2009

Chairman: \* Councillor Janet Mote

Councillors: \* Husain Akhtar \* Mitzi Green  
\* Miss Christine Bednell \* Mrs Myra Michael  
Mrs Margaret Davine

\* Denotes Member present

**PART I - RECOMMENDATIONS - NIL****PART II - MINUTES**79. **Appointment of Chairman:**

**RESOLVED:** To note that Councillor Janet Mote had been appointed Chairman of the Corporate Parenting Panel for the Municipal Year 2009/10.

80. **Attendance by Reserve Members:**

**RESOLVED:** To note that there were no Reserve Members in attendance at this meeting.

81. **Declarations of Interest:**

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

82. **Appointment of Vice Chairman:**

**RESOLVED:** That Councillor Christine Bednell be appointed Vice Chairman of the Corporate Parenting Panel for the Municipal Year 2009/10.

83. **Minutes:**

**RESOLVED:** That the minutes of the meeting held on 7 April 2009 be taken as read and signed as a correct record, subject to the following amendment:

- Minute 77: That the spelling of "Corum" be amended to read "Coram".

84. **Public Questions, Petitions and Deputations:**

**RESOLVED:** To note that no public questions were put, or petitions or deputations received at this meeting under the provisions of Advisory Panel and Consultative Forum procedure rules 16, 14 and 15 respectively.

85. **INFORMATION REPORT - Activity and Performance:**

The Panel received an information report of the Corporate Director of Children's Services, which set out key data relating to Children Looked After (CLA) and Children with Child Protection Plans (CPP), including key performance indicators up to the end of May 2009.

An officer outlined the following key points and issues:

- Core assessment performance had improved and the Local Area Agreement (LAA) target for 2009/10 was being met. However, the data for June was expected to show a decline in performance due to unexpected staff absence as a result of illness and special leave;
- initial assessment performance had dropped and managers were taking immediate action to address the situation;
- the data indicated that the number of Looked After Children being placed outside of the borough had increased dramatically. Whilst the matter was being investigated, it was thought that the increase was mostly the result of new data that better identified placement addresses.

Following questions from members of the Panel, officers clarified the following:

- Following the Baby P incident, the Council was finding it increasingly difficult to recruit new social workers and that this was a nation-wide problem. However, the department was managing well and core assessments remained a non-negotiable priority for staff;
- as performance data was generally only concerned with key targets, the statistics often failed to highlight much of the positive work that went on behind the scenes;
- the Council had successfully reduced its reliance on temporary social workers and approximately 75% of staff were now permanent. The Council was also working with the West London Alliance to improve its recruitment techniques. At the request of the Chairman, officers agreed to provide a full breakdown of staffing numbers at the next meeting;
- the performance data indicated that children aged between 10 and 15 years were most likely to become Looked After. A detailed breakdown of this age bracket would be provided to the Panel at its next meeting to help Members better understand the contributing factors;
- the number of children in secure accommodation had increased from 1 to 3 and such fluctuations were to be expected. The cost of funding a child in secure accommodation was £3,000 to £4,000 per week, although the Council was only expected to pay one third of the sum if the child had been detained due to criminal activity;
- considerable work had been undertaken to improve the family support function of social services in order to reduce the number of children entering the care system. The Council had also run a number of "Strengthening Families" courses which had been well attended;
- officers would explore the possibility of producing data that considered how referral sources had changed over time, taking into account the loss of Health Visitors;
- the use and nature of Child Protection Plans (CPP) varied depending on a child's individual circumstances;
- in addition to Looked After Children and those with a CPP, there was a large group of children that had been identified as "Children in Need". Social Services were working increasingly closely with this group in order to prevent escalation.

Following a request by Members at the previous meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel for data detailing the number of Looked After Children missing 25 days or more of education, an officer tabled a document (Appendix 1) which outlined key information. Following questions from Members of the Panel, officers clarified that:

- Out of borough absence was to be tackled using the new Education Welfare Officer (EWO) who would be expected to liaise with the Personal Educational Plan (PEP) Coordinator to identify those at risk of absenteeism;
- the decision of the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) to record study leave as authorised absence had been strongly opposed by local authorities;
- for some children, school attendance was not the main concern, especially in cases when safeguarding was the priority;

- officers would look into the possibility of providing the Panel with data showing Looked After Children's attendance over a period of time to allow the Panel to monitor progress.

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

86. **INFORMATION REPORT - Participation in the Pledge and the role of the Children in Care Council:**

The Panel received an information report of the Corporate Director of Children's Services which outlined the progress made towards developing a 'Children in Care Council', which would support the Corporate Parenting Panel in their deliberations, in line with the implementation of the London Pledge in Harrow.

The officer explained that, as discussed at the Panel's previous meeting, the Children in Care Council was being developed using members of the existing Young Voices Group. It was expected that the Children in Care Council would consist of approximately 5 children.

Following questions from the Panel, officers clarified that:

- It was expected that formal links between the Children in Care Council and the Corporate Parenting Panel would be maintained, initially, via a small 'steering group' of Councillors. These Councillors would work closely with the Children in Care Council and report back to the Corporate Parenting Panel on a regular basis;
- once the Children in Care Council had developed the necessary confidence and skills, it was hoped that the children could attend the Corporate Parenting Panel to raise issues that they considered to be important to Looked After Children in Harrow;
- it was important that the terms of reference of the Corporate Parenting Panel be reviewed to ensure that the relationship between it and the Children in Care Council was formally established.

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

87. **Chairman's Announcements:**

Young Voices Group

The Chairman informed the Panel that a number of Councillors had met with members of the Young Voices Group on 21 May in the Members Lounge. She stated that the meeting had been a great success and that she was pleased to see the children developing leadership skills. The Chairman thanked the officer that had organised the event.

CRB Checks

The Chairman informed the Panel that all Members of the Corporate Parenting Panel had now been CRB checked.

Member Training

The Chairman informed the Panel that a Corporate Parenting Training session had been run by the Member Development team on 22 June.

Scrutiny Review

The Chairman informed the Panel that she had been involved with a recent Scrutiny Review concerning the safeguarding of Children and the recent adoption inspection.

Tate Modern

The Chairman asked an officer to inform the Panel of the work the Council had been doing with Tate Modern in regards to Looked After Children. The officer explained that two Harrow Looked After Children had worked with an established artist to design and create a piece of art depicting urban life. The resulting piece was due to be exhibited at Tate Modern between 14 July and 6 August. Following this, the piece was due to be displayed in Harrow in the window display at Milton House.

(Note: The meeting having commenced at 6.07 pm, closed at 7.26 pm)

(Signed) COUNCILLOR JANET MOTE  
Chairman

Appendix 1

**Officers in  
attendance:**

Andreas Kyriacou

Senior Co-ordinator, Children  
Looked After

David Harrington

Service Manager, Performance  
Management

APPENDIX 2Additional Information on Children Looked After missing 25 days or more from education

The panel requested additional information on this performance indicator, as the 2008/09 target was not reached.

**Key factors identified for this cohort:**

- 14 CLA reported as missing 25 days or more.
- The CLA Education Welfare Officer is currently working with 9 of the above 14 young people.
- Of the 14 CLA, attendance ranges between 50.6% and 83.1%.
- The 14 CLA are in Years 8 to 11 (Secondary school age pupils).
- 2 of the 14 are disabled CLA who have missed school due to illness.
- 9 of the 14 are attending schools outside of Harrow.
- 2 of the 14 attend a PRU following permanent exclusions.
- 1 of the 14 is an Asylum seeking unaccompanied young person who has not been absent since starting school.
- 2 of the 14 are currently on study leave. **Note**, Study Leave is seen as an absence.

**Management considerations**

- Although the present performance needs to be improved it fares better than 3 years' ago. Since that time concerted effort has been made to reduce absenteeism by way of:
  - ❖ Monitoring attendance by Welfare Call.
  - ❖ The appointment of a CLA Education Welfare Officer (EWO).
  - ❖ The recent appointment of a Personal Education Plan (PEP) coordinator.
  - ❖ The appointment of the Virtual School Heads.
  - ❖ Increasing placement stability, which is a key indicator for improving educational achievement and attendance.
  - ❖ Likewise, finding placements, and in particular foster placements, within Harrow and the neighbouring Local Authorities.
  - ❖ The strategic pulling together of services and resources by the Life Chances Forum.
  - ❖ The continuing monitoring through the Child Care Panel.
- It is clear that more work needs to be done with, and for CLA placed out of the Borough, as 9 of the 14 young people fall within this cohort. This will be a key role for the PEP coordinator and CLA EWO.
- The PEP Coordinator will also have a key role in identifying, through the PEP review process, those CLA at risk of missing school and the support which is required
- Early recognition and response is key as the majority of this cohort have multi faceted issues which impact on each other

Andreas Kyriacou, on behalf of:  
Anna Tenconi, Principal Education Welfare Manager  
Gail Hancock, Head of Service, Safeguarding, Placements and Family Support  
14 July 2009