

REPORT FOR: **CABINET**

Date of Meeting:	18 November 2010
Subject:	Terms of Reference of Beyond Limits, Harrow's Children in Care Council and The Harrow Pledge
Key Decision:	No
Responsible Officer:	Catherine Doran, Corporate Director Children's Services
Portfolio Holder:	Councillor Mitzi Green, Portfolio Holder for Children's Services
Exempt:	No
Decision subject to Call-in:	Yes
Enclosures:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Draft Children in Care Council Terms of Reference• Draft Harrow Pledge• Recommendation from Corporate Parenting Panel – 12 October meeting

Section 1 – Summary and Recommendations

This report outlines the progress in formalising the terms of reference of Harrow's Children in Care Council, which will henceforth be known as Beyond Limits and, in addition, the drafting of the Harrow Pledge.

Recommendations:

That

- the draft terms of reference of Beyond Limits be adopted, in particular,

the interface proposals between Beyond Limits and Corporate Parenting;

- the Harrow Pledge, as outlined by Beyond Limits be adopted;
- the appointment of 2 members of Beyond Limits from a pool of the 4 as non-voting members to the Panel on an as and when basis be approved.

Reason: (For recommendation)

There is an expectation on Local Authorities from Care Matters-Time for Change, 2007 to set up Children in Care Councils as a way of ensuring that children who are looked after have a voice.

Local Authorities are also expected to produce a Pledge which describes how, what and the way children looked after will be treated.

There is also an expectation that local Children in Care Councils monitor the implementation of locally produced Pledges and in conjunction with Corporate Parenting Panels.

Approving the recommendation of the Corporate Parenting Panel would provide a forum for Children Looked After (CLA) to participate and influence policy, and enable them to discuss issues relating to their own direct experiences of the services they have received.

Section 2 – Report

Introductory paragraph

The corporate priority implicit in this report is in relation to improving the support for vulnerable people

It will provide a further voice to Children Looked After and contribute to the monitoring and effectiveness of the Harrow Pledge, which is a statement of what Children Looked After should expect from corporate parents

The Terms of Reference and Harrow Pledge have been amended slightly since their consideration by the Corporate Parenting Panel to reflect what can be appropriately delivered by the Council and these are being recommended for approval.

Options considered

None

Background

Care Matters – A time for Change, 2007, stated that every local authority should establish a Children in Care Council to ensure that every child has the opportunity to air their views and “to put their experiences of the care system directly to those responsible for corporate parenting including the Director of Children’s Services and Lead member”

The Children and Young Persons Act, 2008, placed a number of requirements upon Local Authorities and Elected Members. The legislation aimed to improve outcomes for children in care and their families with corporate parenting, and listening to the voice of the child or young person being key elements.

In the context of Children in Care Councils and the Pledge there was an expectation by Care Matters that Local Authorities should put in place arrangements to ensure that:

- Children in Care Councils were established to provide a dialogue between children looked after, Senior Officers and Elected Members around the needs of children looked after, as well as the planning, delivering and monitoring of services, and that
- Each child looked after should know what to expect from his or her corporate parents by way of a Pledge.

The Pledge appears as part of a raft of measures by Care Matters – A time for Change, 2007- to improve and strengthen the role of local Councils as corporate parents.

Young people, senior managers and Members held a London wide series of consultation events in 2007 and 2008, which resulted in the drafting of a “London Pledge”. Harrow was a signatory to the London Pledge in November 2008. Both the Corporate Director and Lead Member approved it.

The expectation was that at very senior Council positions a commitment would be made in respect of what children who were looked after could expect from their “Corporate Parents”. The London Pledge was seen as a “blueprint” for the development of Local Pledges. In addition it was to be a commitment that young people should expect the same level of services whichever Council was responsible for them.

The white paper was very clear that young people’s involvement in developing their own pledge – giving them the chance to shape and influence the parenting they receive – was essential to its success.

As part of this process, the white paper proposed that each local authority should have a “Children in Care Council” that was instrumental in the process of feeding in young people’s views on the content of the pledge as well as participating in the on going monitoring and review mechanisms put in place to measure its success.

It also emphasised the whole local authority's responsibility across all departments for children in care.

Corporate Parenting have been updated on the progress made by the Participation Team in developing a "Children in Care Council" which would support the Corporate Parenting Panel in their deliberations, in line with the London Pledge.

In summary this has involved:

- Regular meetings with a number of young people;
- Training the young people to lead on training of Members and officers;
- Training of Members and Officers by the young people themselves, with the support of the Care Matters Partnership.

Corporate Parenting Panel was provided with an update on 7th April 2009 on the progress made to develop a "Children in Care Council" which would support the Corporate Parenting Panel in their deliberations, in line with the London Pledge.

The members of Beyond Limits have drafted a Terms of Reference with input of other children looked after. The young people discussed what they wanted to be known as and finally opted for Beyond Limits. It is an expression of the young people wanting to push the limits of what they can achieve in life, that they want to go beyond the thinking that their potential is limited for whatever reason.

In relation to the Harrow Pledge:

- Corporate parenting have been fully informed of the progress in the implementation of the London Pledge, and in particular the implications for Harrow Council
- Beyond Limits have canvassed a wide group of children looked after to produce a Harrow Pledge

The Harrow Pledge is consistent with the London Pledge, in that it does not contain anything different to that which has already been approved at Director and Lead Officer level in respect of the London Pledge. Overview and Scrutiny Committee were appraised on 21st April 2009.

Implications of the Recommendation

Approval of the recommendations would align Harrow with similar initiatives and good practice across other London Councils in respect of the role of Children in Care Councils and the implementation of locally drawn Pledges.

Further work is required:

- Beyond Limits will participate in the training and launching the Pledge to officers, staff, and members;

- Children Services will assist Beyond Limits in all specific tasks, as required, such as the selection of representatives and seeking the views of children looked after;
- Officers will develop the Pledge so each child looked after will be aware how the Council will deliver on each of the 7 points. This will be made public and placed on the Harrow Council web site;
- Each child looked after will have an individualised Pledge embedded within their care plan and which will be scrutinised at his or her child care review.

Financial Implications

Beyond Limits will be assisted by Children Services officers to meet and provide training. 2k is required annually for refreshments, activities and travelling. This financial cost is being met by way of the Care Matters grant held by the Divisional Director, Children's Services, Safeguarding, Family Placement & Support.

Performance Issues

There are no performance indicators by this proposal.

However, there is an expectation by Care Matters that Local Councils should have Children in Care Councils in place and, for London, at least, locally drawn Pledges. In fact, Pledges are in place nationally.

It is accepted that excellent Councils have in place clear strategies for listening to, learning from, developing, and monitoring services and outcomes for children looked after in partnership with young people. Children in Care Councils and locally drawn Pledges provide 2 significant vehicles in the journey.

Our success in this area will be subject to outside scrutiny, in particular Ofsted and it is important that both the Children in care Council and Pledge are in place.

Environmental Impact

None

Risk Management Implications

Risk included on Directorate risk register? **No**

Separate risk register in place? **No**

The risks are as outlined in the previous section.

Equalities implications

Given the nature of the report this was not deemed as necessary.

Corporate Priorities

The corporate priority implicit in this report is in relation to improving the support for vulnerable people

Section 3 - Statutory Officer Clearance

Name: Emma Stabler	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Chief Financial Officer
Date: 20 October 2010		
Name: Helen Ottino	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Monitoring Officer
Date: 3 November 2010		

Section 4 – Performance Officer Clearance

Name: David Harrington	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Divisional Director Partnership, Development and Performance
Date: 21 October 2010		

Section 5 – Environmental Impact Officer Clearance

Name: John Edwards	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Divisional Director Environmental Services
Date: 20 October 2010		

Section 6 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact:

Andreas Kyriacou, Senior Professional, Safeguarding and Review,
Children Looked After andreas.kyriacou@harrow.gov.uk
Tel: 020 8424 7642

Background Papers:

Draft Minutes and Report considered by the Corporate Parenting Panel

**Call-In Waived by the
Chairman of Overview
and Scrutiny
Committee**

NOT APPLICABLE