

CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

MINUTES

3 OCTOBER 2011

Chairman: * Councillor Mitzi Green

Councillors: * Christine Bednell * Varsha Parmar (3)
* Margaret Davine * Lynda Seymour
* Janet Mote

* Denotes Member present
(3) Denotes category of Reserve Member

44. Attendance by Reserve Members

RESOLVED: To note the attendance of the following duly constituted Reserve Member:

Ordinary Member

Reserve Member

Councillor Brian Gate

Councillor Varsha Parmar

45. Declarations of Interest

RESOLVED: To note that there were no declarations of interests made by Members.

46. Minutes

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 12 July 2011, be taken as read and signed as a correct record.

47. Public Questions, Petitions and Deputations

RESOLVED: To note that no public questions were put, or petitions or deputations received at this meeting.

RESOLVED ITEMS

48. Information Report - Activity and Performance

An officer introduced a report which set out key data relating to Children Looked After (CLA) and Children with Child Protection Plans (CPP). The report also included the performance position for key indicators for Children's Social Care. The officer advised that:

- overall performance was good, with six adoptions being granted;
- new key performance indicators had been devised to monitor areas such as absence from school.

In response to questions, officers advised that:

- the successful adoption of younger CLA meant that the 16-17 year old cohort remained higher than in previous years;
- out of the 19 CLA that took their GCSE's, 6 had special educational needs and 2 were seeking asylum. These children studied meaningful courses that were appropriate to their learning and sat alternative examinations;
- placement disruptions in May/June 2011 prevented 2 CLA from sitting their GCSE examinations;
- cumulative performance figures reflected that the cohort taking their GCSEs may not have engaged in the same way throughout the course of the school year;
- each child had a Personal Education Plan (PEP). An allowance of £500 could be granted should a child have a specific need that could not be catered for through their plan;
- the Council was seeking to recruit a permanent Virtual Headteacher (VHT). An action plan which took account of the work undertaken by previous VHTs to enable the new recruit to target areas of greatest priority was being compiled. Six candidates had been short-listed for interview. A new VHT could be in place by November 2011, dependant on the duration of notice;
- including a column in the report which highlighted how many CLA were in each key performance category would be considered.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

49. Information Report - Annual Report Fostering and Adoption

An officer introduced a report which provided a summary of the adoption and fostering service in Harrow. He advised that:

- the adoption and fostering service was also responsible for areas such as Inter-country Adoption, Special Guardianship and Adoption Counselling;
- the work being conducted was that of a standard which was being recognised nationally;
- short break placements funded by the Government Aiming High grant, provided children with disabilities the opportunity to remain at home and have regular breaks with their families.

In response to a question, officers advised that Children Looked After were not obliged to leave their placement when they reached eighteen years of age. Support was provided until they felt confident enough to make that transition. The decision to leave their placement was taken in conjunction with each young person, their social worker and the Placements Team and was considered on an individual basis. Staff at the Honey Pot Lane Residential Unit assisted young people in making such decisions. The Leaving Care Team also offered support during this time to ensure a smooth transition to independence.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

50. Celebrating Achievements of Children Looked After - Update

An officer provided a verbal update on the progress made with the arrangements for celebrating the achievements of Children Looked After (CLA) event. She advised that the event would:

- take place at the Harrow Arts Centre on 16 November 2011;
- be attended by CLA and care leavers;
- be arranged with the assistance of Beyond Limits;
- include refreshments and entertainment;
- be open to all birth parents;
- welcome nominations for awards in categories such as participation and improved behaviour.

The Chairman confirmed that as Corporate Parents, all Harrow's Councillors would be invited to the event. Due to limited capacity, the invite would need to be accepted within a set timeframe.

RESOLVED: That the update be noted.

51. INFORMATION REPORT - Children's Services Complaints Annual Report 2010-11

An officer introduced a report which set out the statutory Children's Services Annual Report for 2010/11. He advised that:

- a significant amount of work had been undertaken to make feedback more accessible to young people. This included providing a free-phone telephone number and a text messaging service;
- since the introduction of mediation in 2005/06 the number of complaints that were escalated had continued to significantly reduce. Feedback from young people on mediation was positive;

In response to questions, officers advised that:

- mediation participants were also informed that their complaint could be escalated should they wish to do so;
- correspondence between parents reflected that the focus was on what the young person wanted;
- an independent person could be enlisted to advise on what would be best in particular cases.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

52. INFORMATION REPORT - Corporate Parenting Panel Work Programme 2011/12

The Chairman of the Panel introduced a Work Programme which listed topics for the Panel to consider at each meeting. This did not preclude further items from being presented to the Committee if necessary. She reiterated that the Work Programme would be a standing item at the end of each agenda for information purposes.

An officer proposed that the Work Programme be shared with those from Beyond Limits to promote two-way engagement and allow them to suggest topics which they believe the Panel should consider.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the Corporate Parenting Panel Work Programme 2011/12 be agreed;
- (2) the Work Programme be shared with those from Beyond Limits.

53. Further Announcements

Criminal Record Bureau (CRB) Checks

To advocate transparency and as a matter of best practice, the Chairman reminded Members of the need to ensure that a CRB check had been conducted within the last three years. Information on how to complete the check would be sent to those who were unfamiliar with the process.

Meeting with Beyond Limits

The Chairman requested officers to liaise with Beyond Limits to arrange another less formal meeting at a time and venue that was suitable for them.

Executive Summary

An officer would undertake to compile an executive summary of the discussion at future Corporate Parenting Panel meetings to ensure that topics considered were recorded in a manner which was more attractive to young people.

RESOLVED: That the items be noted.

(Note: The meeting, having commenced at 6.00 pm, closed at 7.15 pm).

(Signed) COUNCILLOR MITZI GREEN
Chairman

Officer Attendance:

Gail Hancock - Head of Service, Safeguarding and Family Support

Peter Tolley - Service Manager, Family Placement and Support

Dipika Patel - Team Manager, Children's Social Care, Performance & Data Quality

Adeline Abraham – Children in Care Participation Officer