

# REPORT FOR: **CABINET**

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<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	9 February 2012
<b>Subject:</b>	Corporate Parenting of Children Looked After by Harrow Council
<b>Key Decision:</b>	No
<b>Responsible Officer:</b>	Catherine Doran, Corporate Director Children's Services
<b>Portfolio Holder:</b>	Councillor Mitzi Green, Portfolio Holder for Children's Services
<b>Exempt:</b>	No
<b>Decision subject to Call-in:</b>	No
<b>Enclosures:</b>	Appendix 1: Organisational chart Appendix 2: Harrow Pledge Appendix 3: Performance score card

## **Section 1 – Summary and Recommendations**

This report sets out to;

1. Confirm the Council's cross cutting corporate responsibilities for children who are looked after
2. Provide examples of how these responsibilities are being discharged
3. Set out future priorities to improve and strengthen services

Recommendations:

- For all elected members and reserve members of the Corporate Parenting Panel to have a satisfactory, up to date CRB check

- To strengthen current arrangements by increasing officer participation on the Corporate Parenting Panel (as outlined in number 2.9 below)
- For Portfolio Holders to attend the Corporate Parenting Panel as and when requested to do so by the Chair of the Corporate Parenting Panel
- For all elected members to try and attend the Corporate Parenting display on 12 April 2012 before the full Council meeting
- To support and promote the needs of children looked after and those leaving care and make a statement confirming Harrow's commitment to the work set out in this report

Reason:

- To make a positive impact on the life chances and outcomes of Harrow's children in care and those leaving care
- To demonstrate how Harrow discharges its Corporate Parenting responsibilities

## **Section 2 – Report**

### **2.0 Introduction**

Harrow Council is committed to deliver its corporate parenting responsibilities to Children Looked After and Care Leavers. Harrow Council seeks to emphasise this commitment by enhancing the role of the Corporate Parenting Panel in accordance with the above recommendations.

2.1 In 1998 Frank Dobson, the then Secretary of State, wrote to all councillors to launch the "Quality Protects" initiative. This was a five year programme aimed at transforming Children's Services. It launched the concept of Corporate Parenting and placed a collective responsibility on all Local Authorities to achieve good parenting for all children in public care. "Care Matters" was the implementation plan and introduced Child in Care Councils (CiCCs) to develop a regular dialogue with children in care to involve them in shaping and delivering services. Corporate parenting requires ownership and leadership at a senior level and includes all elected members. Corporate parents are required to understand the needs of children in the care of the Local Authority and ensure that these needs are being met appropriately.

2.2 The statutory guidance outlined in "The Roles and Responsibilities of the Lead Member for Children's Services and the Director of Children's Services" (2009) sets out the Local Authority's corporate responsibility to children in care and those leaving care. The Local Authority is corporately responsible for improving their wellbeing, prioritising their needs and seeking the same outcomes any good parent would want for their own children.

2.3 There is a wealth of evidence to illustrate the additional vulnerability of children looked after (CLA) and Care Leavers (CL) which shows how they are often disadvantaged in terms of a range of outcomes, including health and education. CLA and CL are over represented in terms of unemployment, homelessness, mental ill health and in the criminal justice and prison system.

2.4 Harrow Council has signed up to the London Pledge and has also developed a local Harrow Pledge. The Pledge illustrates the commitment that the Council has to discharge its corporate parenting responsibilities. See Appendix 1 for a copy of the Harrow Pledge.

2.5 The Corporate Parenting Panel, chaired by the Children's Services Portfolio Holder, has responsibility for ensuring that the corporate duties are discharged effectively across the Council. The Council is actively engaged with the Harrow Local Safeguarding Children's Board to ensure that CLA and CL's are well protected and safeguarded across the local partnership. The care, protection and support of CLA and CL is a priority for both the Council and the local partnership.

2.6 The implementation of the Children's Services new operating model provides a timely opportunity to reflect on examples of existing good practice and outline areas for further development. Whilst the Corporate Parenting Panel strives to raise the profile of CLA and CL in all aspects of Council business and seeks to ensure that the corporate parenting responsibilities are understood, appreciated and championed, this requires an on-going commitment from all elected members, officers and partners.

## **2.7 Organisational Background - Corporate Parenting Panel**

2.8 The Corporate Parenting Panel works with a number of cross party elected members and officers to identify and address the needs of CLA and CL. On an annual basis the Corporate Parenting Panel, in conjunction with the Child in Care Council called "Beyond Limits" and "Young Voices", a CLA participation group, hosts a Corporate Parenting display and information stall prior to the full Council meeting. This will take place this year on 12 April 2012 in the Member's Lounge. This is an attempt to promote the Council's corporate parenting responsibilities and enable elected members to talk with CLA and CL about their views and experiences.

2.9 Much of the work to support the Corporate Parenting Panel is undertaken by Children's Services. However, there is a drive to extend and improve engagement and participation of other internal and external partners. A recent review of arrangements has led to the following proposal which Cabinet is asked to agree;

- Standing officer membership to be extended to include;
  - Divisional Director - Targeted Services
  - CLA Service Manager
  - Placement Service Manager
  - Virtual Head Teacher
  - CLA Designated Doctor
  - Quality Assurance & Improvement Service Manager
  - Performance Service Manager
  - Housing Manager
  - Leisure Manager
  - Corporate Resources Senior representative

- To promote meaningful and purposeful consultation with the Child in Care Council;
  - a programme of meetings for members and officers to meet with CLA and CL informally in-between Panel meetings
  - to share the work programme and invite comment and suggestions
  - to provide a CLA and CL friendly version of Panel minutes
  - to promote and publicise the Corporate Parenting agenda prior to the full Council meeting in April 2012
  - to re-run training provided by "Young Voices" & "Beyond Limits" for Corporate Parents

2.10 The Corporate Parenting Panel has established a work programme designed to highlight specific issues during 2011 / 12. Below is a summary of these issues;

- Leaving Care and the transition to independence
- Services for unaccompanied asylum seeking children & young people
- Fostering and adoption services
- Housing arrangements for young people leaving care
- Leisure opportunities for children looked after
- Education and attendance
- Health
- Complaints and advocacy
- Life Skills Programme

## **2.11 Children's Services**

2.12 Following an extensive period of stakeholder consultation Children's Services is implementing a new operating model. There will be four Divisions in the Children's Services new operating model. These are outlined in the revised Children's Services organisational chart which is attached at Appendix 2. The majority of children's social work services are now located in the Targeted Services Division and there is a dedicated CLA Service to lead and co-ordinate all CLA and CL services under one line management structure.

2.13 The CLA Service Manager chairs the multi agency CLA Life Chances Forum which co-ordinates work with CLA and CL at an interagency operational level. For example, the Teenage Placement Strategy (TPS) is now being embedded operationally and is regularly monitored and reviewed by the CLA Life Chances Forum. The CLA Life Chances Forum reports into both the Local Safeguarding Children's Board and the Corporate Parenting Panel.

2.14 The CLA Service includes a Virtual CLA Team responsible for a range of complimentary support services that are delivered alongside the CLA Teams and in partnership with other internal and external partners. These services include:-

- Independent Visitor Partnership Scheme (HOPE)
- “Your Voice, Your Choice” Advocacy Service (Kids Can Achieve)
- CLA Nurse Practitioner (PCT)
- Sexual Health Specialist Nurse Advisor (PCT)
- Child & Adolescent Mental Health Service (CNWL)
- Substance Misuse Service (COMPASS)
- Young People’s Housing Officer (Housing)
- CLA Participation Officer

2.15 The appointment of a new permanent Virtual Head Teacher in December 2011 heralds a step change in CLA academic achievement and attendance. A targeted review and action plan sets out how improvements will be made by the dedicated CLA education staff (outlined below) working together with schools/educational establishments and other relevant partners;

- CLA Education Welfare Officer
- CLA Personal Education Plan Co-ordinator
- Connexions Personal Advisor
- Welfare Call – providing daily CLA school attendance data

## **2.16 Schemes and initiatives**

Examples of joint working between members of the Virtual CLA Team include the following:-

- Revised Life Skills Programme to help CLA and CL to acquire appropriate life skills to enable a successful transition to young adulthood
- Joint Children’s Services – Housing Protocol to deal with vulnerable 16 and 17 year olds presenting as homeless or requiring accommodation
- Opportunities for Care Leavers to secure training and employment have been created through the Council’s decisions to directly employ apprentices, create apprentices through the Sustainable Procurement Policy and its Procurement Pledge on Employment and Skills. The Council will use its own position as an employer and buyer of goods and services to create apprenticeships and will identify Care Leavers to benefit from those opportunities.

2.17 There are a number of examples of innovative schemes and initiatives that have already been delivered and are being developed further in 2012. Examples of this work includes the following:-

- Mentoring Service developed within the Youth Offending Team and being expanded to benefit a wider group of young people, including CLA & CL
- Tate Art Programme delivered on an annual basis where CLA art work is show cased at the Tate and the Civic Centre.
- Royal Shakespeare Company programme of weekly drama sessions for 20 CLA including theatre and stage workshops and a visit to Stratford Upon Avon.
- V Talent Volunteer Programmes between 2009 and 2011 involving 15 volunteers, many of whom were CLA and CL aged 16 – 25 years old

and not in work or education, undertaking 30 hour weekly posts at Harrow Council doing meaningful work and gaining valuable experience

- National Citizen Programme involving CLA participating alongside V Inspired and the Dame Kelly Holmes Legacy Trust to learn new skills and take an active role in the community
- Care2Work is a national initiative funded by the Department for Education and led by the National Care Advisory Service providing young people with an opportunity to develop skills for future employment through paid placements. Local plans are under development for 2012
- CLA and CL Achievements Awards Ceremony celebrating individual successes in respect of academic achievements, improvements with behaviour and attendance, further and higher education and engagement in leisure and out of school activities.

## **2.18 Resources**

### **Financial Implications**

Although there are no direct financial implications arising from the recommendations set out in the report the Council's role as Corporate Parent does entail significant costs. The CLA and CL placement budgets total £6.8m in 2011/12 and are volatile, needs lead and high risk budgets.

2.19 The challenges in respect of the availability of suitable placements for 'challenging teenagers' and 'parent and child' present a financial risk, as this lack of supply can lead to increases in placement costs. However this risk is being actively managed by the service through initiatives such as the Teenage Placement Strategy.

2.20 The potential lack of adequate supply of suitable accommodation for those young people leaving care poses a more significant risk. In 2009/10 the leaving care placements budget experienced a significant overspend which was partly addressed by ensuring that all CL had a clear pathway to independence including access to suitable accommodation. The potential lack of suitable housing is likely to lead to young people remaining for longer in higher cost placements thereby causing a budget pressure on the leaving care placements budget. This issue has been addressed at the Corporate Parenting Panel on 10 January 2012 and further work is underway with the Housing Portfolio Holder and the Housing Department.

2.21 Significant work has taken place over the last few years to improve the way in which the Children's Placement Procurement and Commissioning Team secure placements for CLA & CL. Close working continues to take place with the corporate Finance and Procurement Teams.

2.22 Examples of effective financial strategies include:-

- Developing the Harrow-Coram Adoption Partnership to promote adoption so that CLA cease to be looked after
- Increasing the number of in-house foster carers and decreasing reliance

on independent fostering agencies

- Reviewing foster carer allowances
- Introducing means tested allowances for adoptive parents and special guardians that are reviewed on an annual basis
- Managing the local market to develop preferred providers for semi-independent accommodation
- Convening annual Placement Challenge Panels for 16 – 25 year old CLA and CL to scrutinise placement arrangements pre and post the transition to independence at 18 years
- Changing the use of Honey Pot Lane to address the long standing under occupancy and historic overspend and provide a more appropriate semi independent resource for older CLA and CL
- West London Alliance partnership work to develop a sub-regional solution to high cost placements, for example specialist residential, semi-independent living and Mother and Baby placements

2.23 Significant placement challenges exist locally in the following areas:-

- Housing resources for CL - current demand outweighs allocated housing resources. There are 22 Locata nominations for 38 CL.
- Elsewhere on the cabinet agenda is the report on HRA reform which shows that the housing service intends to develop a range of additional housing initiatives that will mitigate against other housing related general fund pressures including the shortage of housing provision for Looked After Children.
- The new housing strategy for nominations and future investment will fully embrace the corporate responsibilities the Council has to Looked After Children and create the resource and flexibility within the system to respond to variation in demand.
- Parent and child placement resources - These are generally in short supply across the region. Whilst there has been some success in recruiting local Parent & Child Foster Carers this resource needs to be developed further to avoid more costly out of borough residential parenting assessment placements.
- Placements for challenging teenagers - including specialist foster carer placements and semi-independent placements.

2.24 CLA and CL placements are a high cost area of spend for the Council. The children's placement budget is a volatile, needs lead, high risk budget and significant work has taken place over the last few years to improve the way in which the Children's Placement Procurement and Commissioning Team secure placements for CLA & CL. Close working continues to take place with the corporate Finance and Procurement Teams.

2.25 Examples of effective financial strategies include;

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- Placements for challenging teenagers - including specialist foster carer placements and semi-independent placements.



## 2.27 Performance Issues

There were 154 CLA in Harrow on 30 November 2011. The breakdown by age, ethnicity and gender is as follows;

### Age:

Under 1	13
1 - 4 yrs	11
5 - 9 yrs	16
10 - 15 yrs	45
16 - 17 yrs	69

### Gender:

Male	97
Female	57

### Ethnicity:

Asian	27
Black	31
Mixed	32
Other	18
White	46

2.28 There are many performance issues associated with the support, care and protection of CLA and CL. Appendix 3 provides a summary of CLA and CL key performance indicators. There are targeted practice and performance action plans in place to address the following key performance indicators;

- CLA education achievement and attendance
- CLA Health
- CLA placement stability;
  - number of moves
  - length of placement

## 2.29 Environmental Impact

There are no specific environmental risks associated with this report.

## 2.30 Risk Management Implications

Ensuring that CLA and CL reach their full potential and achieve positive outcomes is a corporate responsibility. Failure to deliver effective services that improve the life chances and outcome for CLA and CL will obviously impact adversely on these individuals and will also damage the reputation of the Council and the local partnership. Poor practice and performance would have adverse impact on individual children and young people, the local community, the Council and partners. Ofsted, the appropriate inspection and regulatory body for Children's Services, is required to undertake inspections to ensure that local services safeguard and promote the welfare of CLA and CL. It is imperative that the Council delivers high quality services and is judged to meet the required service standards. All relevant services are currently judged

to be "Good" or "Outstanding" by Ofsted and Ofsted rated Children's Services as "Outstanding" overall in this year's annual assessment. The full Ofsted inspection of Safeguarding and Looked After Services is outstanding and will be undertaken following notification which will be received before the end of this reporting year.

## **2.31 Equalities implications**

CLA and CL are a particularly vulnerable group by virtue of the circumstances that brought them into local authority care and due to the additional disadvantage that they experience in respect of a wide range of opportunities and outcomes. The Council has a corporate responsibility to support and promote the needs of CLA and CL in an attempt to safeguard and protect their welfare and redress the inequality that exists. For this reason there are significant equalities implications and the Council, working together with the local partnership, are required to promote the needs and circumstances of CLA and CL in all aspects of its work.

## **2.32 Future Challenges**

Despite the good work to date, there is no room for complacency and a number of challenging areas continue to require co-ordinated activity and targeted resources to address specific practice and performance issues. The current priority areas for CLA and CL include:-

- Education, training and employment for CLA and CL
- Housing resources for CL making the transition to independence
- Placement Choice and Stability
- Health services and outcomes for CLA and CL

2.33 Tackling these issues requires a commitment from all services within the Council and co-ordinated support from across the local partnership. There are targeted action plans designed to address practice and performance issues to bring about service improvements that will have a positive impact on CLA and CL.

2.34 There are a number of examples of innovative practice that have been held up as models of best practice elsewhere and it is proposed that these are reviewed to see what Harrow can learn. A number of these examples focus on training and employment for CLA and CL and some of these are outlined below;

- Training workshops to enable CLA and CL to become "Peer Care Consultants" receiving accredited training in an area of interest including recruitment panels, interviewing young people and training for trainers
- Paid work placements (on a full or part time basis) for CLA and CL aged 16 – 24 within Council Departments
- Unpaid work placements (up to two weeks) for CLA aged 15 – 18 within Council Departments
- CLA and CL who have been looked after for at least 6 months have entitlement to a free annual leisure pass

- Education Champions who are senior officers who work behind the scenes as silent advocates to track and monitor educational outcomes. Champions do not have direct contact with young people but act as if they were “pushy parents”.

### 2.35 Corporate Priorities

CLA and CL are additionally vulnerable by virtue of the circumstances that brought them into the care of the Local Authority and the additional disadvantage that they may experience in terms of reaching their full potential. Children Looked After and Care Leavers are in most need of the Council’s care and protection.

## Section 3 - Statutory Officer Clearance

Name: Emma Stabler	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Chief Financial Officer
Date: 11.01.12		
Name: Helen Ottino	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Monitoring Officer
Date: 10.01.12.		

## Section 4 – Performance Officer Clearance

Name: David Harrington	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Divisional Director Partnership, Development and Performance
Date: 10.01.12.		

## **Section 5 – Environmental Impact Officer Clearance**

Name: John Edwards.

Date: 10.01.12.



on behalf of the  
Divisional Director  
(Environmental  
Services)

## **Section 6 - Contact Details and Background Papers**

Contact: Gail Hancock, Divisional Director – Targeted Services

Pinner Road offices; 02098 863 5544

Background Papers: None.

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

**NOT APPLICABLE**

*[Call-in applies]*