

REPORT FOR: Corporate Parenting Panel

Date of Meeting: 3rd April 2012

Subject: Access to Leisure facilities for Children Looked After and young people who are Leaving Local Authority Care

Key Decision: No

Responsible Officer: Catherine Doran
Corporate Director of Children's Services

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Mitzi Green

Exempt: No

Decision subject to Call-in: Yes

Enclosures: Yes

1.0 Summary and Recommendations

- This report seeks to inform the Corporate Parenting Panel about how children looked after and young people leaving care will be supported to access leisure facilities in Harrow.
- Panel members are invited to consider recommendations contained in section 3.12 and give guidance on subsequent Cabinet or Portfolio Holder decision making arrangements.

2.0 Introduction

2.1 Children looked after (CLA) and young people who are leaving care (care leavers) must be supported by Harrow Council, as Corporate Parents to support them to lead a healthy lifestyle and enable them to participate in local leisure activities

2.2 In order to support leisure activities and prioritise the needs of CLA and young people leaving care, direct communication and partnership network has been established with Community Services, leisure facilities. The Chair of the CLA Life Chances Forum (who is also an officer member of the Corporate Parenting Panel) has been able to develop a positive relationship to support the role of the Council as Corporate Parents. The intention will be to promote and support CLA and young people leaving care to participate and enjoy engagement with local leisure activities in Harrow.

2.3 The terms of reference for the CLA Life Chances Forum focus on improving the life chances and outcomes for CLA. The forum is to scrutinise current processes, maximise the benefit of local partnerships and address specific issues to improve access to leisure facilities and support healthy lifestyles for care leavers. An integral aspect of this work will be to ascertain the views, wishes and feelings of CLA and care leavers.

2.4 Representatives of the CLA Life Chances Forum and partnership with Leisure Services is:

- CLA Service Manager
- Children's Placement Service Manager
- Virtual Head Teacher
- Leaving Care Team Manager
- CLA Team Manager
- Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children Team Manager
- CLA Nurse practitioner
- Children with Disabilities Team Service Manager
- Harrow Foster Carer's Association
- "Beyond Limits" Child in Care Council
- Independent Visitor Scheme co-ordinator
- Early Intervention Service Manager

3.0 Issues

3.1 Consultation with Children looked after and Care Leavers

Children Looked After and young people leaving care have expressed an

interest to their social workers to participate with local leisure activities in Harrow and be able to regularly exercise. However, cost and motivation has been a factor.

3.2 An event took place on 16th March, to promote the engagement with leisure activities and CLA with Harrow Leisure Centre and partner centres, this was promoted by the Olympic heavy weight boxer, Anthony Joshua. This event was supported by the portfolio holder for Children's Services, the Corporate Director of Children and Families and the Chief Executive of Harrow Council.

3.3 We would want to ensure that we meet our responsibilities in respect of legislation and Corporate Parents to promote and support the leisure activities and participation for CLA and young people leaving care.

3.3 Leisure facilities

Harrow Leisure centre is contracted to be managed by Greenwich Leisure Limited (GLL), a private organisation managing the centre. The leisure centre is located close to Harrow Weald station and has easy access to Harrow surrounding areas. The leisure centre boasts a large gym and swimming pools, with various other facilities ranging from indoor badminton and football facilities and dance studios. This environment is ideal for CLA and care leavers to engage with gym activities, swimming and exercise classes.

3.4 The Bannister centre is also available for running clubs and athletic engagements for young people. Arrangements will be sought with other services operated by GLL, nationwide for CLA by Harrow Council to support participation and engagement.

3.5 CLA and young people placed outside the borough will be supported with engagement to local facilities, where partnership opportunities will be made with leisure services in their area.

3.6 In 2008, Harrow Council and Watford Football Club established a partnership to rebuild a local youth club and develop the Cedars Youth Club site. A new building is due to be opened this year, where there will be leisure and exercise facilities available to all CLA and young people leaving care, in addition to engaging young people with education.

3.7 Access and opportunity

As Corporate Parents, it is important that we enable our CLA and young people to use all services and facilities operated by the Council, to promote engagement, healthy living and aspirations. CLA and careleavers are the most disadvantaged group in our communities, so it is important that we demonstrate our responsibility as Corporate Parents and ensure our CLA and young people leaving care have the opportunity and access to services and facilities that would otherwise be too costly to participate with.

3.8 Life Skills Programme & Healthy living

To support all CLA being ready to live independently in their own tenancy once they turn 18 years old, a new Life Skills Programme has been developed

with teenage CLA, care leavers and a range of partners during 2011. The new Life Skills Programme, which is launched at the Corporate Parenting Panel today, provides an individual programme tailored to meet the unique needs and circumstances of all care leavers to equip them with the necessary skills, confidence and experience to live independently and enjoy healthy lifestyles and participating in leisure activities.

3.9 The Life Skills Programme will focus on the timely acquisition of appropriate life skills for all care leavers. This includes a readiness assessment for a broad range of issues, including appropriate practical skills for self care, food preparation and promote exercise, emotional resilience and well-being needs and support requirements for education, employment and training conditions that will support a successful transition to young adulthood, including managing and maintaining a tenancy. This will all be included in the programme activity.

3.10 Access to Leisure and healthy living

CLA and young people leaving care will be invited to join the Harrow Leisure centre, where they will have an initial membership for 3 months , to use swimming and gym facilities. Exercise classes are an additional cost and will be considered on an individual basis. The memberships will be reviewed and evaluated in 3 months time, considering the number of CLA and young people leaving care who join and take up regular leisure activities and healthy living.

3.11 CLA will be invited to join Cedars Youth Club, where they will also be able to utilise the leisure facilities and services. Watford Football Club have also shown an interest to further promote leisure facilities and education with CLA and young people leaving care, where the CLA Life Chances Forum will develop this partnership arrangement, working closely with Early Intervention Service.

3.12 Proposed Recommendations

The Corporate Parenting Panel are asked to consider the following recommendations in order to address the Council's corporate parenting responsibilities for children looked after and care leavers as it relates to access to leisure facilities:

- a) To support all CLA and young people leaving care to have access to Council leisure facilities and be supported with community integration and healthy living lifestyles
- b) To provide a view about the financial assistance that should be provided by the Council to enable young people to access leisure facilities
- c) To develop and establish leisure partnership arrangements for all Harrow Council looked after children and young people leaving care placed outside of borough
- d) Recommend that a survey is undertaken to estimate how many young people will want to take up the opportunity to regularly attend the leisure centre
- e) To support the collective endeavours of the CLA Life Chances Forum and task them with the responsibility for developing clear operational

systems and processes for monitoring and reviewing how the access to leisure project and partnership with Community Services for CLA and young people leaving care will be addressed by the Council

3.20 Environmental Impact

There is no specific environmental impact from the issues outlined in this report.

3.21 Financial Implications

GLL have agreed that they will offer a 30% discount CLA and young people leaving care to use the leisure facilities.

The standard charges for an 11– 15 year old is £19.95 per month, for use of the gym (supervised) and swimming, with a £10 one off administration charge. For a young person 16 – 18 (and student) the cost is £30 per month plus a one off £20 administration charge.

With a 30% discount and no administration fees, the monthly costs would be:

- 11 – 15 year old would be £13.95
- 16 – 18 year old would be £21.00
- 18+ would £21.00

This represents £41.85 for 3 months and £167.40 per year for a CLA (under 16) and £63.30 for 3 months and £253.20 a year for a student/young person leaving care or those over 18.

Based on the current care population there are 65 young people 11 - 18 within the borough and 73 over 18. If all young people took up the opportunity it would cost a total of £7,341 for 3 months (£2,720 for all CLA and £4,621 for young people over 18). To ensure that memberships are being used an initial survey will be undertaken of young people intending to use the facilities plus a review to ensure regular useage. If all young people take up the offer the full annual cost would be an estimated £30k and would be funded from the existing CLA budgets.

3.22

Cedars Youth Centre and other Harrow Council initiatives are being developed to enable access to leisure facilities for children looked after and young people leaving care.

3.23 Risk Management Implications

All related risks are recorded in the Children's Services risk register. There is a significant reputational risk from a poor inspection of social care, where support to children looked after and young people leaving care are crucial to mitigate risks and demonstrate developing practice and procedure support to this cohort.

3.24 Equalities implications

CLA and care leavers are additionally vulnerable child in need. The 2009 statutory guidance "The Roles & Responsibilities of the Lead Member for Children's Services and the Director of Children's Services" highlights the need for Local Authorities to work corporately to improve the well-being of looked after children and young people leaving care, to make their needs a priority and seek the same outcomes that any reasonable caring parent would want for their own children. CLA consistently fare worse than their peers across a range of indicators including health, education, training, employment, homelessness and offending.

3.25 Corporate Priorities

CLA and care leavers are additionally vulnerable by virtue of the experiences that led them into Local Authority care and in respect of the poor outcomes that many CLA and care leavers experience when compared to their peers, The Council's corporate priorities include providing care and protection to those who are most in need and this includes CLA and care leavers.

4.0 Statutory Officer Clearance

Name: Emma Stabler	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Chief Financial Officer
Date: 21/3/12		
Name: Sharon Clarke	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Monitoring Officer
Date: 15/3/12		

5.0 Performance Officer Clearance

Name: David Harrington	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the* Divisional Director Partnership, Development and Performance
Date: 19/3/12		

7.0 Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact:

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