

CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

MINUTES

3 APRIL 2012

Chairman: * Councillor Mitzi Green

Councillors: * Christine Bednell * Chris Mote (1)
* Margaret Davine * Janet Mote
* Brian Gate

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

63. Welcome

On behalf of the Panel, the Chairman welcomed Diane Edwards and Charlie Richardson to the meeting who had attended to represent Beyond Limits (Child in Care Council). They had attended the meeting to discuss Agenda Item 8 – Lifeskills Programme for Children Looked After. The Chairman explained that their input would be invaluable and also welcomed Sue Bush who had worked closely with Diane and Charlie on the Lifeskills Programme.

The Chairman also welcomed Councillor David Perry, who was in attendance for Agenda Item 7 – Access to Leisure Facilities for Children Looked After and Young People who are Leaving Local Authority Care.

64. Attendance by Reserve Members

RESOLVED: To note the attendance at this meeting of the following duly appointed Reserve Member:-

Ordinary Member

Councillor Lynda Seymour

Reserve Member

Councillor Chris Mote

65. Declarations of Interest

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

66. Minutes

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 10 January 2012 be taken as read and signed as a correct record.

67. Public Questions, Petitions and Deputations

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

RESOLVED ITEMS

68. Access to Leisure Facilities for Children Looked After and Young People who are Leaving Local Authority Care

The Panel received a report which informed the Panel about how Children Looked After (CLA) and Young People Leaving Care would be supported to access leisure facilities in Harrow.

An officer reported that the Chair of the Panel had attended an event on 16 March 2012 to promote the engagement with leisure activities and CLA with Harrow Leisure Centre and partner centres. Engaging with key colleagues was a key aim of the Council.

Harrow Leisure Centre was an ideal environment for CLA and Care Leavers to engage with gym activities, swimming and exercise classes. The Bannister Centre was also available for athletic engagements. Additionally Harrow Council and Watford Football Club had established a partnership to develop the Cedars Youth Club site. Leisure facilities would be available here for all CLA and Young People Leaving Care.

The officer further reported the following:

- CLA and Young People Leaving Care would be invited to join the Harrow Leisure Centre to use swimming and gym facilities. The memberships would be reviewed in 3 months time;
- CLA would also be invited to join Cedars Youth Club to use their facilities. Watford Football Club had also shown an interest to further promote leisure facilities and education with CLA and young people leaving care, where the CLA Life Chances Forum would develop this partnership arrangement, working closely with the Early Intervention Service.

Councillor David Perry, Portfolio Holder for Community and Cultural Services addressed the Panel and made the following representations:

- it was important that the future of Leisure Services in Harrow supported the Corporate Parenting role of the Council;
- it was a good opportunity to establish the future specification of leisure service provision and establish the key objectives and aims the Council wished to have in place;
- discounts had been offered by the Leisure Services Provide to CLA;
- a cross cutting approach was required and this had been demonstrated by the event which had taken place on 16 March 2012;
- there were plenty of opportunities available for CLA particularly in relation to the run up to the Olympics.

In response to questions raised, the Portfolio Holder for Community and Cultural Services also made the following comments:

- Harrow Leisure Centre had previously conducted 'taster' days to encourage an uptake in membership. This was something that could be investigated again;
- it was important that inclusion was recognised as a key theme for CLA;
- there were many free green gyms in parks across the borough. There was also a skate park provided by the Council. These were options that could be considered for use by CLA;
- it was important to note that the Harrow Arts Centre also provided a range of activities ranging from arts, music and drama. These were other activities that could be utilised by CLA.

During the discussion on this item, Members of the Panel raised a number of issues which officers responded to as follows:

- if all young people took up the discounted offers in relation to the Leisure Centre membership fees, it would cost the Council approximately £30k. However it was expected that not all young people would engage in this scheme. As part of the proposals within the report, a survey would be conducted on who would take up the discounted offers. Other initiatives would also be investigated;
- it was important that an inclusive, not exclusive approach was taken. It was important that CLA were not treated differently to other young people or be made to feel as a separate group.

During the discussion on this item, Members made a number of comments which included the following:

- there could be potentially a significant impact on the Council's resources in providing a subsidised membership for CLA young people leaving care. It was important that this was balanced against the need to encourage membership so that no one was prevented from joining on the basis of costs;
- free taster sessions would be very useful and a vital tool in encouraging CLA and Young People Leaving Care to become members of the Leisure Centre. Seeking extra resources to support this would also be helpful. Sport for England could be approached for support particularly as the Olympics would be taking place shortly;
- finances would be difficult in the future and it was important to bear this in mind. It was hoped that there would be an element of priority in the CLA budget for subsidising Leisure Centre membership fees. The health benefits achieved would outweigh any financial benefits;
- it would also be wise to consider funding to assist foster care families. This would also produce positive outcomes and be consistent with an inclusive approach.

At the conclusion of the debate, the Chairman thanked Councillor David Perry, on behalf of the Panel, for his attendance and contributions.

RESOLVED: That the following issues be noted for consideration on future Cabinet or Portfolio Holder Decisions:

- the Panel's support for all CLA and young people leaving care to have access to Council leisure facilities and be supported with community integration and healthy living lifestyles;
- the Panel's comments be noted in relation to the financial assistance provided by the Council to enable young people to access leisure facilities;
- the Panel's support to develop and establish leisure partnership arrangements for all of the Council's looked after children and young people leaving care placed outside of the borough;
- the Panel's support for further investigation into developing reciprocal arrangements with other boroughs for leisure facilities for CLA;
- the Panel's support for a survey to be undertaken to estimate how many young people will want to take up the opportunity to regularly attend the leisure centre;
- the Panel's support for exploring the possibility for further 'taster' sessions to be conducted by Harrow Leisure Centre;
- the Panel's support for 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.

69. Lifeskills Programme for Children Looked After

The Panel received a report which provided information on the Harrow Lifeskills Programme for Children Looked After and their transition to adulthood and Leaving Care Services.

The officer reported that the concept had been conceived in 2009. A working group was then established in 2010 under the framework of the CLA Life Chances Forum. The following issues were also reported:

- the success of independent living was increased where young people were provided with ongoing support, monitoring, evaluation and review;
- the CLA Lifeskills Programme would enable an assessment and evaluation of need regarding the progress and completion of the CLA Lifeskills Programme, the allocated social worker, foster carers, carers and key support services for young people. Recognition of achievements would also be captured and acknowledged through the process;
- the CLA Lifeskills Programme would help assess and recommend transition to independent living and nomination for Council tenancy accommodation;
- there would be plenty of opportunities for consultation on the programme, so revisions could be made. A number of young people had already been consulted on the programme;
- if young people with special needs embarked on the Programme it would be conducted at a pace which fitted in with their needs;
- the Programme could eventually be made available electronically to make it more interactive;
- the 'Beyond Limits' organisation would be involved in reviewing the Programme. An update report would then be provided to the Panel next year.

During the discussion on this item, both Diane Edwards and Charlie Richardson made representations to the Forum which included the following:

- the CLA Lifeskills Programme was very positive. It was a concept which had grown in its nature in promoting independence and developing young people. Extra support was required for young people and this had become increasingly important in the current national economic climate;

- the programme should take into account young people with special needs. The programme may take longer for them to complete and this had to be taken into account;
- it was of vital importance that young people were supported in relation to budgeting and spending money. This would aid them generally in their lives and would help influence them to make the correct choices;
- it was important that the CLA Programme catered for everyone and was able to adapt to different needs;
- those young people who had conducted the Programme were willing to utilise their experience to assist those who were currently embarking on the Programme.

During the discussion on this item, Members of the Forum raised a number of issues which were responded to by officers as follows:

- the Programme would contain a unit relating to budgeting. This would involve understanding how to deal with utility bills on a monthly and yearly basis;
- visits would still be conducted by social workers for any young person experiencing difficulties. The established Independent Visitor would also be able to assist with any difficulties.

Members of the Forum made a number of comments during the item which included the following:

- the CLA Programme was a wonderful resource and it was useful for the Forum to receive feedback directly from service users;
- it would be worth investigating if those young people who had conducted the Programme would be willing to act as mentors to those who were currently conducting the Programme. Peer mentoring was a valuable tool.

At the conclusion of the item, the Chairman thanked Charlie Richardson and Diane Edwards for their attendance and presented them with a card as a sign of the Council's appreciation for their participation.

RESOLVED: That the following issues be noted for consideration on future Cabinet or Portfolio Holder Decisions:

- the Panel's support of the CLA Lifeskills Programme, for all CLA aged 14-18 years old;
- the Panel's support of the distribution of the Lifeskills Programme to all looked after young people aged 14-17 years old and all young people who turn 14 in the future;

- the Panel's support of the collective endeavours of the CLA Life Chances Forum to task them with the responsibility for developing training, clear operational systems and processes for monitoring and reviewing how the lifeskills programme will be implemented by the Council;
- the Panel's request to the CLA Life Chances Forum to report back regarding the process and evaluation of the 1st year of the CLA Lifeskills Programme in April 2013;
- the Panel's noting of the contribution and feedback of CLA and care leavers regarding the development of the lifeskills programme;
- the Panel's support of the letter of recognition for CLA and young people leaving care.

70. INFORMATION REPORT - Activity and Performance

The Panel received a report which set out key data relating to Children Looked After (CLA) and Children with Child Protection Plans (CPP), plus performance position for Key Indicators for Children's Social Care.

An officer reported that information had been provided up until the end of January 2012. There had been 6 adoptions and 4 special guardianships granted in 2011/12 up to that point. The proportion of CLA aged 16-17 remained higher than in previous years. The number of CPP had decreased and was now lower than the number of CLA. The percentage of placements with in-house foster carers had increased. Additional information had also been included relating to education and health of CLA.

The officer also reported that:

- the figures quoted for absence of school sessions missed were slightly misleading. The Department for Education required that these were only provided for those who had been in care for a period of 1 year or more;
- there were a number of performance challenges in Quarter 3. Short term stability was an issue although long term stability had proved to be good;
- young people who went missing, Care leavers entering employment and accommodation were key issues to be resolved;
- 90% of CLA had up to date health checks by the CLA Nurse and this represented a good total compared to previous years, although it was acknowledged that there was still further work to do;

- in relation to CLA absences and exclusions, more work was needed to deal with the issues they presented by getting the right systems and support in place;
- there had been good progress in reducing the number of children with CPP for over 2 years.

During the discussion on this item, Members made a number of comments which officers responded to as follows:

- it was the Council's intention to include all absence figures in future reporting and not just those who were in care for a period of 1 year or more. This was important to allow for greater analysis of any issues.
- a lot of targeted work was being conducted to address the issues raised within the Key Performance Indicators. A report would be presented to the next Panel meeting to identify what was required and what the action plan would consist of;
- it would be helpful if data from other London boroughs was presented to the Panel so that benchmarking and comparisons could be made in addition to a brief narrative on each section providing context and analysis;
- it was officers' belief that there were currently 3 young people who were missing from care.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

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

The Chairman introduced a report setting out the work programme for the Panel. The Chairman reported that:

- the IRO Report would be presented to the meeting in July 2012;
- the report from the Virtual Headteacher required some further revision and would be presented to the next possible meeting;
- it would be helpful if there was permanent representation from Housing and Cultural Services on the Panel.

Officers also reported that:

- the Lifechances Action Plan would be presented to the October 2012 meeting of the Panel;
- it would be helpful to look at apprenticeships at the October 2012 meeting of the Panel;

- a report on exam results would also be presented at in the October 2012 meeting.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

72. Corporate Parent Display for Councillors

The Chairman reported that the Full Council meeting scheduled for 12 April 2012 had been cancelled. The next ordinary meeting was now being held on 5 July 2012. The display would therefore be arranged for this day.

The Chairman requested that officers send a reminder to all Members that the display was being held prior to the meeting.

RESOLVED: That the update be noted.

(Note: The meeting, having commenced at 6.00 pm, closed at 7.27 pm).

(Signed) COUNCILLOR MITZI GREEN
Chairman

Officer Attendance:

Catherine Halsall - Virtual Headteacher

Nick Crick – Service Manager Children in Need & Looked After Service

David Harrington – Service Manager, Performance Management

Adeline Abraham – Children in Care Participation Officer

Jonathan Williams – Service Manager – Quality Assurance and Service Improvement