

Corporate Parenting Panel

SUPPLEMENTAL AGENDA

DATE: Wednesday 2 October 2019

AGENDA - PART I

8. **CORPORATE PARENTING STRATEGY 2019/21** (Pages 3 - 22)
Report of the Corporate Director of People.
9. **CHILDREN'S SERVICES, IRO ANNUAL REPORT 2018/19** (Pages 23 - 42)
Report of the Corporate Director of People.

AGENDA - PART II

Nil

Note: In accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985, the following agenda item has been admitted late to the agenda by virtue of the special circumstances and urgency detailed below:-

<u>Agenda item</u>	<u>Special Circumstances/Grounds for Urgency</u>
8: Corporate Parenting Strategy 2019/21	The reports were not ready at the time the main agenda was published due to delays with reports clearance.
9: Children's Services, IRO Annual Report 2018/19	Members are requested to consider the report in order that they are informed of the Corporate Parenting Strategy 2019/21 and Children's Services IRO Annual Report 2018/19

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REPORT FOR: Corporate Parenting Panel

Date of Meeting: 2nd October 2019

Subject: Corporate Parenting Strategy

Key Decision: No

Responsible Officer: Paul Hewitt Corporate Director People Services

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Christine Robson , Portfolio Holder for Children and Families

Exempt: No

Decision subject to Call-in: No the decision is reserved to Council.

Wards affected: All wards

Enclosures: Corporate Parenting Strategy 2019 to 2021

Section 1 – Summary and Recommendations

This report sets out the Corporate Parenting Strategy

Recommendations:

To note and comment on the Corporate Parenting Strategy for referral to Cabinet for its consideration and recommendation to Council for approval.

Reason: All Councillors are Corporate Parents and need to understand and confirm how these responsibilities are being carried out. To adhere to the requirements of the Terms of Reference of the Corporate Parenting Panel.

Section 2 – Report

Looked After Children and Care Leavers are a vulnerable group. The Council has a responsibility to ensure those who have had a poor start to their lives and become Looked After are given high quality levels of care and support to ensure they are prepared for adulthood; and that good outcomes are achieved in their lives

The Strategy is attached and sets out the key priorities.

Regular performance reports are submitted to the Corporate Parenting Panel alongside which the priorities outlined in the strategy can be measured

The strategy outlines how Children Looked After In Harrow are provided with stable and secure placements and given support to ensure they are healthy and receive good quality education

Ofsted looked at the strategy as part of its inspection in January 2017 and noted that the strategy is detailed and sets out clear priorities and areas for improvement

Risk Management Implications

Risk included on Directorate risk register? Yes

If Harrow does not fulfil its corporate parenting functions it would fail to meet the requirements of increased inspection and regulatory framework for delivering safe and secure services across our partnerships. There is also financial risk to the MTFs savings if placement sufficiency is not achieved as this could result in an increase in high cost placements.

Legal Implications

In accordance with the Council's constitution, one of the roles of the panel is to consider and regularly review on an annual basis a corporate parenting strategy setting out key priorities and areas for action. The Corporate Parenting strategy will be submitted to Cabinet and full council for consideration and decision on approval.

Once a child becomes looked after, the local authority has a number of duties towards him or her under Children Act 1989 and associated legislation. In addition the local authority has duties to care leavers. These include:

- (a) to safeguard and promote the child's welfare, including providing advice, assistance and befriending;
- (b) to provide services for the child in addition to accommodation;
- (c) to ascertain and give consideration to the wishes and feelings of the child and family members;
- (d) to provide a complaints procedure;
- (e) to keep a child's care plan under review.

The Children and Social Work Act 2017 outlines 7 Corporate Parenting principles

- a) To act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and wellbeing of Looked After Children and Care Leavers
- b) To encourage those children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings
- c) To take into account the views wishes and feelings of those young people
- d) To help those children and young people gain access to , and make the best use of, services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners
- e) To promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for those children and young people
- f) For those children and young people to be safe , and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work
- g) To prepare those children and young people for adulthood and Independent living

Financial Implications

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

Equalities implications / Public Sector Equality Duty

Children Looked After in Harrow come from diverse backgrounds and have a range of needs which reflects that of the wider community. The Corporate Parenting strategy outlines how foster carers and placements are recruited to ensure these needs are met and how a range of services are available to meet their diverse needs. It also notes that the staff involved in working with Children Looked After reflect the local community

Council Priorities

Please identify how the decision sought delivers these priorities.

1. Building a Better Harrow

- Create a thriving modern, inclusive and vibrant Harrow that people can be proud to call home
- Increase the supply of genuinely affordable and quality housing for Harrow residents
- Ensure every Harrow child has a school place
- Keep Harrow clean
- More people are actively engaged in sporting, artistic and cultural activities in ways that improve physical and mental health and community cohesion

2. Supporting Those Most in Need

- Reduce levels of homelessness in the borough
- Empower residents to maintain their well-being and independence
- Children and young people are given the opportunities to have the best start in life and families can thrive
- Reduce the gap in life expectancy in the borough

3. Protecting Vital Public Services

- Harrow has a transport infrastructure that supports economic growth, improves accessibility and supports healthy lifestyles
- Healthcare services meet the needs of Harrow residents
- Everyone has access to high quality education
- A strong and resourceful community sector, able to come together to deal with local issues
- Harrow continues to be one of the safest boroughs in London

4. Delivering a Strong local Economy for All

- A strong, vibrant local economy where local businesses and thrive and grow
- Reduce levels of in-work poverty and improve people's job opportunities
- Harrow is a place where people and businesses invest

5. Modernising Harrow Council

- Deliver excellent value for money services
- Reduce the borough's carbon footprint
- Use technology and innovation to modernise how the Council works
- Improving access to digital services

Section 3 - Statutory Officer Clearance

Name: Jo Frost	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the* Chief Financial Officer
Date: 20 th September 2019		
Name: Aarti Hansrani	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the* Monitoring Officer
Date: 26 th September 2019		
Name: Paul Hewitt	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Corporate Director
Date: 20 th September 2019		

Ward Councillors notified:	NO, as it impacts on all Wards
EqIA carried out:	NO
EqIA cleared by:	Update report.

Section 4 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact: Peter Tolley, Divisional Director Children and Young People

Background Papers: None

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Corporate Parenting Strategy 2019 to 2021

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Appendix The corporate parenting pledge

‘Elected Members of the Corporate Parenting panel demonstrate a clear commitment to improving the life chances of children looked after. They have oversight of detailed performance information and analysis, with a range of professionals presenting reports. This helps them to clarify, challenge and question activity. Mandatory training enhances their understanding. The corporate parenting strategy is detailed and it sets clear priorities and the areas for improvement’

1. “Introduction

Corporate Parenting is the term used to describe the duties and responsibilities of a Local Authority in respect of the children looked after by the authority. Parental responsibility for looked after children is the responsibility of the whole council, not just children services. In addition the Local Authority should enrol the support of its partner agencies in helping them to fulfil their obligations in respect of their corporate parenting responsibilities for the children looked after by the council.

Corporate parenting relates to all children looked after by the authority, wherever they are placed, including young people receiving after care services up to, in some circumstances, 25 years of age.

Corporate parenting is about offering at least the same standards of care as would a ‘reasonable parent’ in respect of the children looked after by the council. The outcomes for children who have been looked after can be poor with the reasons which brought them into care such as abuse, neglect, separation, loss and rejection significantly affecting their subsequent life experiences. As adults; they do less well educationally; they are over represented in the criminal justice system; have poorer health outcomes including an increased risk of suffering from mental health difficulties; have an increased likelihood of becoming homeless and experience economic and relationships difficulties in their own families.

It is important that being looked after responds effectively to this disadvantage.

The thrust of corporate parenting is about improving the life chances of children looked after – protecting their welfare, promoting their wellbeing, enhancing their lives and helping them reach their full potential. Everyone should have high aspirations for, and expectations of, children who are looked after

A key strand of corporate parenting is that it should be undertaken in consultation with children and young people who should have a say about how services for them are provided on both an individual and collective basis.

In addition to enrolling the support of all chief officers within the local authority and partner agencies such as police, probation, youth justice, connexions, health and schools, the local authority should harness the support and resources of local communities, sport and leisure facilities, business and faith groups.

The Children and Social Work Act 2017 outlines 7 Corporate Parenting principles

- a) To act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and wellbeing of Looked After Children and Care Leavers
- b) To encourage those children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings
- c) To take into account the views wishes and feelings of those young people

- d) To help those children and young people gain access to , and make the best use of, services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners
- e) To promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for those children and young people
- f) For those children and young people to be safe , and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work
- g) To prepare those children and young people for adulthood and Independent living

2. Our Vision

As corporate parents we are committed to ensuring that every child looked after has the best possible start in life, is given help to achieve their potential and experience safe and positive parenting.

- We want our children and young people to be happy and healthy, to be safe and protected from harm and sexual exploitation and be supported into adulthood.
- We want our children to have everything that good parents want for their children.
- We want our looked after children and young people to work with us, along with their parents and carers, in shaping how we manage and organise the planning, resources and services that support and care for them.
- We want them to achieve their potential especially in education, to make the most of the opportunities offered and to participate in the decisions affecting their care and their lives.
- We want our looked after children to be in placements that are as close as possible to their homes where they feel safe, happy and taken care of.
- We want our looked after children and young people to be supported in maintaining their culture, ethnicity and religion and to be supported to maximise the opportunities available to them.
- We want young people leaving care to be prepared for independent living, and supported to participate fully as active citizens into adulthood.

3. Achievements to date and examples of good practice

- Looked after children are offered, as a priority, places in their preferred schools in the borough
- Annual achievement celebration for looked after children, organised by children and young people, beyond educational attainment
- Annual foster carer celebration and awards evening
- All children are given extra tuition according to their need
- The Staying Put scheme enables care leavers to remain with their foster carers after their 18th birthday
- Care Leavers claim their entitlement to Housing Benefit appropriately
A Care Leavers Charter and local Offer developed with young people
- Full engagement with 2 year old, and 3 and 4 year old nursery offers
- Virtual School promotion of pupil premium funding use and monitoring for impact
- Increase in the number of care leavers at university
- Improved exam results and education achievement

4. The Corporate Parenting Strategy

4.1 Corporate Parenting Panel

This strategy outlines our aspirations for looked after children and young people and sets out the actions we intend to take to achieve them.

Harrow Council is ambitious for looked after children and young people and our priority is to secure the very best care and opportunities for them. To achieve this we will work in partnership with children, young people, their families and partner agencies to ensure that children and young people enjoy their childhood and succeed in adult life. This commitment includes those care leavers for whom we have responsibility to support their transition into adulthood. This means that “children in care should be cared about, not just cared for”.

The Corporate Parenting Panel¹, a Council Committee, made up from elected members, provides strategic leadership to ensure the council is delivering its corporate parenting duties. It has responsibility to advise officers about actions to improve outcomes and life chances for all its Looked After Children and Care Leavers and comment on reviewing and developing policy in key areas such as the review process. The Corporate parenting panel can recommend that a strategy is referred to cabinet for further recommendation and then approval by Council. Agendas, reports and minutes are published on the council website.

All councillors hold a responsibility as corporate parents. Members’ induction is mandatory with training offered or all councillors at least annually.

4.2 Key reference documents used to hold officers and providers to account for CLA life outcomes include:

Management Performance reports

Quarterly performance activity reports
Children & Families Complaints Annual Report

Placement and planning – quality and timeliness:

Statement of Purpose for the Adoption Service – for annual CPP approval
Statement of Purpose for the Fostering Service – for annual CPP approval
Placement Sufficiency Strategy²
Independent Reviewing Officer Annual Report –
Adoption and Fostering Panel Annual report
Case Tracking Annual Report

Education, employment and training specific – attainment and achievement of potential:

Virtual Head teacher Annual Report
Virtual School Development Plan
Not in employment, education or training [NEETs] Care Leavers - twice yearly reports

Health including dental checks

Regular Provider reports

Participation

Children and young people’s engagement and feedback – twice yearly reports

Crime: youth offending/re-offending

Housing and Childrens Services Protocol for homeless 16 to 17 year olds

¹<http://www.harrow.gov.uk/www2/mgCommitteeDetails.aspx?ID=788> Purpose, role & membership

² See priority 6.4

4.3 Management performance information is required by the corporate parenting panel to enable robust scrutiny of performance, to inform priorities and determine what action needs to be taken.

To inform the work of the corporate parenting board and to enable it to set priorities performance management information is necessary. This information relates to the life chances of children looked after, supported by research and evidence as to where activity can be directed which makes a difference. This focuses on the areas where children looked after historically do not do well and which, if improved, make a difference as to how they will fare as adults. This includes:-

- Improving their educational achievement, school attendance and attainment,
- Getting a job and living in a good standard of accommodation on becoming a care leaver
- Promoting their health (both physical and emotional),
- Having stable placements
- Supporting offenders to reintegrate into work, education and establish positive relationships
- Mitigating the negative impact of young people who go missing
- Supporting care leavers who are parents to successfully care for their children

5. What makes a difference?

The following are a range of activities which can act as protective factors and can help militate against some of the disadvantage which may have been experienced by looked after children. They are also actions undertaken by a good parent to give their children a good start in life. Because of their experiences, some children may need extra support to take advantage of opportunities offered.

5.1 Education

Education is probably the single most influential factor in ensuring that children welfare and success as adults. Things which support educational achievement and attainment of looked after children are that they are:-

- offered, as priority, places in the schools that are best for them
- not excluded from school
- provided with extra help and tuition, particularly at test and examination times
- encouraged and supported to go on to further and higher education

5.2 Placements

Harrow has developed a robust Placement Sufficiency Strategy which outlines the range of placement options and interventions. Including fostering, family and friends care, residential care and a range of semi-independent provisions

Harrow is also working with other boroughs within the West London Alliance to ensure greater placement choice and value for money across West London. This includes a framework for semi Independent provision.

5.3 Interests and talents

Having an interest or a talent is a very significant factor in improving children's life chances and hence when a child has an interest or a talent whatever this is it should be nurtured and

developed improving self-esteem and achievement which often result in much better outcomes in adult life.

Supporting children's interests and talents can be achieved in the following ways, by:-

- Identifying a mentor within the Council who can coach, encourage and develop these skills and talents
- Making available resources to purchase any special equipment, clothing or materials to enable the child to participate on an equal footing with other children

5.4 Health

Improving children's health and wellbeing involves ensuring regular medical, dental checks and eye tests and being concerned and alert to children's wellbeing both physical and emotional and responding in a timely and appropriately manner.

5.5 Jobs, apprenticeships and work experience

Harrow and its partner agencies are major employers in the borough and in respect of looked after children they are the 'family businesses'.

As 'family businesses' the following opportunities could be made available to looked after young people in when they leave school:-

- Work experience opportunities particularly in preparation for higher or further education
- Priority access to apprenticeships within the Council
- Priority access to employment with the LBH or its partner agencies
- Making available LBH employees to help prepare/equip young people for world of work, higher or further education

Employees could offer support and guidance to looked after young people and care leavers in respect of work experience, jobs, apprenticeships, further and higher education on both a professional and personal capacity, if appropriate.

5.6 Offending

Young people's lives can be blighted by offending behaviour. It affects their ability to obtain and keep jobs, maintain stable relationships and somewhere decent to live. Diverting young people from and reducing offending is critical to their life experiences as adults.

The Youth Offending Service has a key role in working with looked after children who offend.

5.7 Celebration of achievements

As well as focusing on activities to improve their life chances it is important to recognise and celebrate the achievements and successes of looked after children.

6. Key Priorities

6.1 Improve the education attainment and school attendance of looked after children; narrow the gap with other children

The role of Harrow Virtual School³ is to raise the attainment and outcomes of Harrow's Children Looked After⁴(CLA). The Virtual School do this by challenging and supporting the

⁴.

schools, as well as providing a support service to a number of stakeholders in order to ensure that all Harrow CLA and Care Leavers receive a high standard of education and are involved in appropriate educational activities. The Virtual School focus their work on raising the aspirations of young people and relevant professionals so that they can reach their potential and move forward into further and higher education and gainful employment. The Virtual Headteacher Annual Report informs the corporate parenting agenda regarding CLA educational attainment, school attendance, employment and training, to accelerate progress to Narrow the Gap.

Designated Teachers network

Training and support is provided through the linked teachers from schools in Harrow. This has recently been combined with the group run by the Local Safeguarding Children Board, to enable more joined up work.

Alternative education provision

- Personal Education Plans (PEPs) and Pathway plans more outcome focused and specific.
- Raise attainment outcomes – target for each child or young person to match national standards
- Improve attendance % of all CLA and reduce exclusions
- Increase liaison and support to reduce time students are not registered at school, especially where placed out of borough and attending
- Further raise awareness and understanding of all placement staff and allocated social workers regarding the significance of PEPS and Pathway plans
- Evaluate and report the impact of the Pupil Premium for CLA.

6.2 Improve the involvement and participation of young people in all services for children looked after and care leavers

Participation

Children and young people looked after will be treated with respect by all who are involved with them, and have access to a range of activities to facilitate their participation in service development.

Ofsted January 2017 'Harrow Children looked after benefit from an impressive range of creative and innovative participation and engagement opportunities, and an active Children in Care Council, Beyond Limits'

Harrow's **Participation Strategy**⁵ sets out our vision for involving children and young people in influencing the services which we provide. Their views will be listened to and they will be involved in making decisions about their lives. They will be involved in the planning, provision and evaluation of the services they need. They will know how to get information and support as well as how to raise a concern.

The child's voice will be at the centre of all decision making and we will take time to talk to children on their own and can tell the child's journey.

Our aim is that participation is a routine element of practice for all practitioners and managers, keeping the voice of the child at the heart of decision making :That there is a culture that changes things for children and young people and that we work together and we improve the quality of case work and managing risk to the child. We hold the child's perspective and we develop effective systems that keep children safe using the ideas they offer us.

⁵

The Children in Care Council “Beyond Limits⁶”

The Beyond Limits group is for all children and young people who are looked after aged 11-25 years, separated into an older and younger groups for age appropriate activities.

Meeting monthly, currently around a core group of 6-8 young people, the group aims to listen to the opinions of children and young people and to be the voice for all children looked after. It liaises with a range of professionals to resolve the difficulties young people may encounter. All councillors in the Corporate Parenting Panel are regularly invited to these meetings and activities

Child’s Voice Monthly newsletter

A monthly newsletter has been developed to promote the child’s voice, celebrate good practice and to encourage staff to listen to children and young people, taking action when appropriate. An editorial team, including children and young people, is being developed.

Pre LAC Review consultation

The Independent Reviewing Officer consults with children looked after two weeks prior to their statutory review. Young people are supported by their placements, carers, social worker, advocates or the Children’s Participation Co-ordinator if required. Online and printed feedback sheets are provided, and work to refresh the content and improve response rates is in progress.

Celebration of achievement awards – annual event

An annual event is held to celebrate the achievements and attainment of children and young people who are looked after. This event is organised in consultation with young people who co-host the event, and perform. The next event is on 23rd October 2019

Leaving Care Charter –

The Leaving Care Charter was reviewed and re- launched, following consultation with young people.

The Care Leavers Local Offer

The 2017 Children and Social Work Act outlined a duty for each local authority to publish a local offer for Care Leavers. Harrows local offer is on the council website and has been consulted on and promoted with our Care Leavers.

Leaving Care Forum

The Leaving Care Forum meets quarterly, as a well attended forum which offers young people the opportunity to have direct contact with senior managers. Further work is being undertaken to enable young people to lead and develop the forum for themselves.

The young people have been very engaged in these sessions and offer valuable feedback and input into service development e.g. refreshing the charter, developing ‘what a good placement looks like’ highlighting what’s important to young people in placement matching and clarifying what support is required in order for us to ensure as many young care leavers as possible are able to go to the university of their choice.

6.3 Children looked after will be happy and healthy, safe and protected from harm and sexual exploitation: improve the physical, emotional and social health and wellbeing of children looked after and care leavers

6

Children Looked After are the responsibility of the local authority in the same way as we are responsible for our own children. We therefore require the same standard of health and wellbeing, but often these children enter the care system with worse levels of health due to poor parenting, chaotic lifestyles, poverty, neglect and abuse. Therefore it is the role and the responsibility of the Provider of these services, to ensure health and wellbeing needs are addressed and outcomes improve to the same standard as peers in Harrow.

Specific outcomes we are aiming for all Children Looked After to Achieve:

- Reach their developmental milestones at appropriate age
- Good physical health including attaining a healthy weight, taking regular exercise and eating a balanced and nutritious diet
- Improved levels of oral health and fewer dental cavities
- Immunised against preventable diseases
- A wider and more positive social and healthy lifestyle including strong self-esteem, positive image of self (including body image), free from bullying and free from violence and abuse
- Good mental, emotional and behavioural health and a strong sense of personal and emotional wellbeing.
- Harrow and the CCG have jointly commissioned the CLA Health service from CNWL which has seen a positive increase in the health outcomes for Looked After Childrens. This service has been extended for a further 2 years
- Harrow and the CCG have also commissioned Barnardos to provide services for the emotional needs of children and young people with Looked After children being a priority group. This service has already started taking referrals and is being formally launched in July
- Educational attainment and attendance improved as a result of better health and wellbeing
- Less harmful use of substances including alcohol, drugs and tobacco
- Healthy and appropriate relationships and awareness of good sexual health
- Reduction in the number of CLA becoming teenage parents
- CLA placements are stable as a result of having health and wider needs met
- CLA know where to go for health and wellbeing support, and are able to self-manage their health needs when they leave care (including physical health, sexual health, mental, emotional and behavioural health, oral health, diet, exercise, substances, sun safety, parenting skills, medicines and minor ailments, accident prevention, etc).

6.4 Safe and stable placements: provide a choice of good quality placements that provide security, stability, safety and high standards of care

As corporate parents it is imperative that we commission the right accommodation and supporting services available so that outcomes for each child and young person are the best possible. Harrow's Placement Sufficiency Strategy forms part of the commissioning strategy that we are in the process of developing for our Children Looked After.

Harrow Ofsted report January 2017 'The sufficiency Strategy is clear and coherent with relevant priorities linked to present and future need. Appropriate commissioning arrangements are in place to ensure that there is a range of placements to meet the needs of children looked after.'

In the strategy we set out the supporting legislation, needs of children looked after, and the resources at our disposal, and set out resulting actions for changing the internal and external market of services that we rely on.

Based on feedback from children and young people looked after, care leavers, and primary and secondary legislation, we have the following aims for our CLA services:

1. All children looked after are placed in appropriate placements with access to the support that they need, as identified in their care plan
2. Resources are available to respond to predicted demand for a range of needs and emergencies
3. Services are provided within the local authority area as far as possible or within the West London Alliance boundaries, except where this is not consistent with the welfare of a child, or is a specialist placement that it is not possible to commission locally
4. Children and Housing services have robust joint working protocols to meet the needs of those who are at risk of becoming looked after at the age of 16 and 17 as a result of homelessness
5. A sufficient range of accommodation and support packages are available to care leavers to facilitate their pathway plans and to ensure all transitions are undertaken in a planned and supportive manner. This includes a clear staying put policy to enable care leavers to remain with their foster carers up to the age of 25 if desired and appropriate
6. Services are of a high quality and deliver the specific outcomes identified in the care plans of children looked after
7. A range of placement choices are developed to meet the needs of the diverse Looked after children population in Harrow
8. Systems are in place to ensure careful matching of placements and to prevent disruption and to ensure placement stability

Placement stability is an incredibly important indicator of performance, as stability can be linked to permanence and better outcomes. Stability is therefore a good proxy-indicator for the positive outcomes we want to achieve.

Access to Resources Team

We have established an Access to Resources Team which commissions external placements and we aim to use only those providers who have an OFSTED judgement of good or outstanding. We are members of the West London Alliance project looking at shared commissioning of placements for children who are looked after. The Access to Resources Team has a responsibility to ensure careful matching of the placement to best meet the assessed needs of the child or young person. Strengths and difficulties questionnaires are completed and help identify where additional support may be required.

Fostering

We recognise that children do best in local placements where they can remain close to family, friends and their community, We have a robust targeted recruitment strategy to ensure we have a diverse range of foster carers to meet the needs of children looked after. Foster carers have access to a comprehensive training programme to ensure they have the skills to meet the needs of the young people they care for, and they are supported by the fostering social worker through robust supervision.

Children and young people receive information about their placement in advance and are listened to if they have concerns at any time.

Residential Care

Harrow has low use of residential care and only considers this after alternatives have been tried or assessed as unviable. We aim to use only those providers who have an OFSTED judgement of good or outstanding.

The decision for a child or young person's placement is based on their need and tends to end with one of the following accommodation options and additional services for specific needs. Accommodation options include:

- Internal foster care

- External foster care
- Internal residential care
- External residential care
- Parent and child assessment
- Semi-independent and care leavers

Adoption

Harrow is the lead local authority in the Regional Adoption Agency – Ambitious for Adoption. This builds on the success of our long standing adoption partnership with Coram, a voluntary adoption agency. Three members of Coram staff will continue to be co-located with Children and Families social workers to ensure our good practice and strong adoption outcomes continue

6.5 Identity: looked after children know who they are and why they are looked after; feel valued and respected by others and their individual needs arising from gender, race, culture, disability, sexuality and religion are understood and met

Our staff and managers are committed to the following

- Continue to recruit foster carers that reflect the diversity of the local community
- Ensure all young people permanently fostered and adopted have lifestory books and later life letters
- Ensure young people develop a positive identity, emotional resilience and self esteem
- Ensure the work force reflects the diversity of the local community

6.6 Smooth transition to adulthood and independence: ensure children looked after and care leavers receive focused support at key transition points in their lives

The Leaving Care and Unaccompanied Asylum Children Team are responsible for those young people leaving care. They have developed a range of opportunities with partner agencies to support young people as they make the transition to adulthood.

Independent Skills

The Catch 22 Programme was introduced 2 years ago as a follow on from the Lifeskills Folder. Catch 22 Folder was put together to give young people who are in or leaving care information and advice to help prepare them for adult life.

The experience of leaving care and starting life as an adult is different for everyone. It can be a time of joy, discovery, worry, excitement and many other emotions but one thing that applies to everyone is the fact that the more you know, the better prepared you are for whatever comes your way. The Catch 22 provides information around, health, EET, money management, accommodation, having you say, lifeskills and family relationships. Social Workers and carers work jointly with the young people to complete the folder which is introduced when the young people turn 18.

Life skills Workshop

The Lifeskills Workshop was introduced 6 years ago and has been running successfully with a group of 20 young people attending annually.

The Lifeskills Workshop brings together professionals from health looking at sexual health, drug and alcohol and mental health, housing and benefits and EET all providing information as well as young people undertaking practical skills such as cooking, budgeting, writing CV's and interview skills.

MyBank - Money works

MyBank is an independent training organisation focusing on money management. Mybank run a course for Harrow young people looked after. Twice a year the course runs over 2 days and the young people receive a Level 1 - Personal Money Management certificate. Money Works provides survival money management skills to young people in need.

Education, Employment and Training

The Leaving Care and Unaccompanied Asylum Children Team has a careers advisor based within the service. Their primary role is to work with those young people who are not in employment, education or training and to support other workers in engaging with this group of young people.

Not in Employment, Education or Training Panel [NEET]

The NEET Panel meets monthly and targets those young people not engaged in EET. It consists of a range of professionals from different disciplines to offer advice and guidance around engagement and access to a range of services. A robust action plan is then developed to actively engage with the young person.

Housing sub group

This has now run successfully for 12 months, to ensure maximum benefit for meeting quarterly, with representatives from Housing, LCT & UASC, Housing Benefit, Council Tax, and more recently Supporting People (Council Adults' Team). The housing department will continue to attend the Corporate Parenting Panel on a regular basis.

All young people that have been put forward have successfully claimed housing benefit and there have been no issues to date. This can be seen as an important improvement towards independence.

Leaving Care Charter

The Leaving Care Charter was recently re-launched and outlines the Local Authority's commitment to Care leavers and specific areas of support, financial, practical and emotional.

PAFT (Parents as first Teachers) Programme

The Family Centre PAFT programme, designed to work with teenage parents, has developed a dedicated course for care leavers. The aims of the course are to increase parent knowledge of early childhood development, improve parenting practice, provide early detection of developmental delays and health issues and prevent child abuse and neglect and to increase children's school readiness and school success.

Clinic in a box

Working in partnership with the sexual health nurse we offer advice and information in respect of sexual health. There is a drop-in service and she attends the lifeskills course annually.

Leaving Care Forum (see 6.2 earlier)

Staying Put policy

Lead worker NEET

Increased Leaving Care grant made by the Council to support the transition

Appendix A: Corporate Parenting Pledge⁷ to Looked After Children

For a better future

Harrow Council provides care and support to those children and young people who, for whatever reason, cannot live with their birth family. For some this may be a short time and for others it may be longer. However long or whether you live with foster carers, residential care, adoptive parents or another member of your family we are committed to giving you the best start in life possible - helping you to be the best that you can be.

The Local Authority is your corporate parent - which simply means trying to do everything that a good parent does throughout your time in our care. Our commitment to you is made by the politicians, who represent the community in the running of the council, all directors and senior managers and our staff, who provide care and support for you.

Children and young people who are in our care or who have been in our care in the recent past have told us what kind of good care and support they need to be the best they can be. We have listened to this and the commitments we make in this children's pledge reflect this.

Our pledge

We pledge to work together to provide you the best possible care and support to help you be the best you can be in your life - now and in the future. To do this we will:

1. **Provide you with a safe home to live where you feel happy and taken care of.** This means that wherever possible you will have a choice about where you live and that you will not be moved from a settled home unless absolutely necessary, or if it is deemed to be in your best interests.
2. **Provide you with the support you need to do well in education.** This means that we will make sure you have the opportunity to go to a school where you can flourish, get the support outside of school to do well in exams and have access to college and university.
3. **Listen to you about things in your own life and about the care that you receive from us.** This means that we will always make sure that you are involved in decisions that are made about your own life and that we find ways to help you tell us your views if you find this difficult. We will also make sure that there are opportunities to tell us what you think about the care that you receive and that if you have a complaint you get the help to get heard.
4. **Be honest with you about things that have happened in your life and the decisions that are made about your care.** We know that at times it is difficult to understand what has happened to you and why certain decisions are made about your care. We can't promise that you will always agree with these decisions. But, we will always be honest with you about the reasons for these decisions and, where possible, what has happened in your life.
5. **Help you to develop good relationships with the people that you care for and the people in your life that are most important to you.** This means that, as far as possible, we will provide you with opportunities to see those people that are important to you in your life. We will help you to develop and maintain relationships and friendships with the people that provide care and support for you and other children and young people.

⁷ http://www.harrow.gov.uk/info/200161/children_looked_after/487/harrow_pledge/2

6. **Provide you with support and opportunities to enjoy your life and have interests and hobbies of your own.** This means that we will make sure you have information and access to opportunities and activities outside of education that you enjoy.
7. **Provide you with the support you need when you leave care to become independent and be the best you can be in adult life.** This means that we will make sure that you have choices about how and when you leave care and that we will make sure we support you to be prepared for independence and have the help you will need to make independence work when you leave care.

We make these pledges to you and will do our best to always fulfil each one. There are many teams involved in helping make these pledges happen - from Children's Services to Housing and Health. We will make sure that we work together to do this.

Harrow Council - Corporate Parenting Panel

The Harrow Pledge is endorsed by the Corporate Parenting panel on behalf of the Council.

All policy and procedures relating to children looked after are overseen by the Corporate Parenting panel.

Members and senior officers from the Council meet to discuss the performance, service delivery and aspirations for the Council in respect of Children Looked After and young people leaving care. Beyond Limits representatives also attend the Corporate Parenting panel.

This panel is lead by members to challenge, scrutinise and support the services for children looked after.



REPORT FOR: **Corporate Parenting Panel**

Date of Meeting:	2 nd October 2019
Subject:	Children's Services, IRO Annual Report 2018/19
Key Decision:	No
Responsible Officer:	Paul Hewitt Corporate Director People Services
Portfolio Holder:	Councillor Christine Robson , Portfolio Holder for Children and Families
Exempt:	No
Decision subject to Call-in:	No
Wards affected:	All
Enclosures:	Harrow Council – Children's Services, IRO Annual Report 2018/19

Section 1 – Summary and Recommendations

This report details information about the children looked after activity in Harrow during the period 1 April 2018 through to 31st March 2019 and is an evaluation of the work of the Independent Reviewing Officers.

Recommendations:

Panel is requested to consider and note the content of the report.

Reason: The local authority has a statutory responsibility to ensure that there are Independent Reviewing Officers reviewing the Care Plans for Looked After children and young people. (See report attached)

Section 2 – Report

Introductory paragraph

The Independent Reviewing Officer is a statutory requirement and their role is integral in ensuring that the local authority provides a quality service to its Looked After population which is in line with the Council's vision and corporate priorities.

Options considered

None.

Current situation

See report attached.

Legal Implications

The role of the IRO is set out in sections 25A-25C, Children Act 1989; statutory guidance issued under s7 of the Social Services Act 1970 – the IRO Handbook 2010 and the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010, in particular regulations 36, 45 & 46 and schedule 7.

Financial Implications

There are no financial implications as a result of this report.

Equalities implications / Public Sector Equality Duty

The looked after population comprises of children and young people from a wide background of cultures, ethnicities, languages and religions and part of the role of the IRO is to check that a child's needs are being met in all these areas.

Council Priorities

The Council's vision:

Working Together to Make a Difference for Harrow

Please identify how the report incorporates the administration's priorities.

- Making a difference for the vulnerable
- Making a difference for communities
- Making a difference for families

Section 3 - Statutory Officer Clearance

Name: Jo Frost	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the* Chief Financial Officer
Date: 20 th September 2019		

Ward Councillors notified:	NO, as it impacts on all Wards
EqIA carried out:	NO
EqIA cleared by:	Update report.

Section 4 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact: Shirley Dye, Quality Assurance Manager.
Telephone: 020 8736 6934, Email: Shirley.dye@harrow.gov.uk

Background Papers: None

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**Harrow Council
Children's and Young People
Services
IRO Annual Report 2018-2019**

Harrow Council – Children’s Services IRO Annual Report 2018/19

The Contribution of Independent Reviewing Officers to Quality Assuring and Improving Services for Children in Care

This Annual IRO report provides quantitative and qualitative evidence relating to the IRO Services in Harrow as required by statutory guidance.

The IRO Annual Report must be presented to the Corporate Parenting Board and the Local Safeguarding Children Board.

Purpose of service and legal context

The Independent Review Officers’ (IRO) service is set within the statutory framework of the updated IRO Handbook, linked to revised Care Planning Regulations and Guidance which were introduced in April 2011. The responsibility of the IRO has changed from the management of the Review process to a wider overview of the case including regular monitoring and follow-up between Reviews. The IRO has a key role in relation to the improvement of care planning for children Looked After and for challenging drift and delay.

The National Children’s Bureau (NCB) research ‘The Role of the Independent Reviewing Officers in England’ (March 2014) provides a wealth of information and findings regarding the efficacy of IRO services. The foreword written by Mr Justice Peter Jackson; makes the following comment:

The Independent Reviewing Officer must be the visible embodiment of our commitment to meet our legal obligations to this special group of children. The health and effectiveness of the IRO service is a direct reflection of whether we are meeting that commitment, or whether we are failing.

The NCB research outlines a number of important recommendations with three having a particular influence on IROs work plan priorities:

1. Where IROs identify barriers to their ability to fulfil their role, or systemic failures in the service to looked after children, they must raise this formally with senior managers. These challenges and the response should be included in the Annual Report.
2. IROs method for monitoring cases and how this activity is recorded should be clarified.
3. A review of IROs core activities and additional tasks should be undertaken. There is a need to establish whether IROs additional activities compromise independence or capacity.

Key messages – learning and improvement

This Annual IRO report provides quantitative and qualitative evidence relating to the IRO services in Harrow, as required by statutory guidance.

Improvement priorities identified for 2018/19 included:

- Improving the quality of IRO reports to ensure they have SMART recommendations
- To continue to monitor Health Assessments/SDQs to ensure that they are supporting physical and emotional health outcomes
- To continue to monitor the quality of Personal Education Plans and that they are being used to support children and young people
- To continue to support and deliver training sessions with regards to CSE
- To continue to monitor care planning and escalate through the Dispute Resolution Protocol and Care Planning Group, where there is unreasonable delay or no permanency plan by 2nd Review.

Professional Profile of the IRO Service

The IRO Service sits within Quality Assurance and Service Improvement with its core functions consisting of reviewing plans for children in care and monitoring the Local Authority in respect of its corporate parenting and safeguarding responsibilities. Their position within this service area has supported the IROs need for independence and challenge as their management line, up to and including the Head of Service, is different to that of the children and young peoples' social workers and managers.

The IRO Service is located in the Civic Centre. This location supports effective work with social work teams. The team had been very stable for a number of years with children and young people experiencing continuity of IRO. The IROs bring a wealth of knowledge and stability to the service which is additionally supported by the fact that there are now a number of Child Protection Conference Chairs who also have the skillset to chair Looked After Reviews. This helps to ensure that work is completed within timescales, particularly at points of pressure within the service.

IROs are part of Quality Assurance and Service Improvement and are qualified Social Workers. There are 3.2 permanent IRO posts which are currently covered by 4 members of staff, 2 full-time and 2 part-time. In terms of gender and diversity, the profile of the service does not reflect the Looked After population, most pertinently as the IROs are all female. However, the IROs do reflect diversity with regards to their ethnicity and cultural backgrounds.

The IROs are managed by a full-time Quality Assurance Manager who provides them with supervision and working within Quality Assurance and Service Improvement ensures that there is a culture of continuous review and development of the service.

Administrative Support

The IROs are supported by business support workers who manage and arrange the administration of the reviews, send out invitations and consultation documents and distribute the IRO recommendations and reports.

Quantitative information - Looked After population and the IRO service

Key Messages

The Looked After population for 2018/2019 has ranged from 162 to 170. IRO caseloads have been between 49 – 68 per fte IRO. This compares well with the recommended case load of 50-70 set out in the IRO Handbook. A total of 525 Reviews were Chaired by IROs in the year ending 31st March 2019.

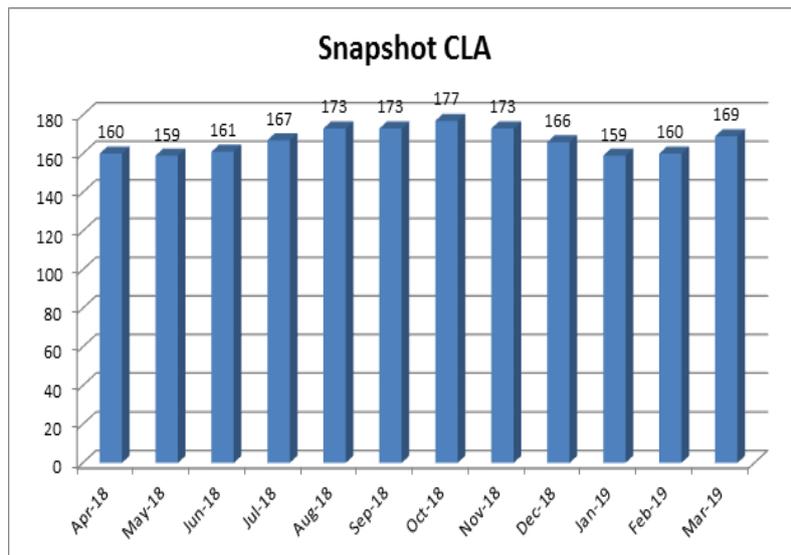
The majority of children and young people who started to be Looked After were aged at 16 plus (41.8%).

9 Looked After Reviews concerned children and young people with a disability. In these circumstances the increased time required to elicit the wishes and feelings of a child with additional needs is to be recognised.

In terms of permanency outcomes during 2018/19, 28.8% of children and young people returned home to live with parents; 5.9% with other person with parental responsibility, and a smaller number were adopted, (4.2%).

The CLA Reviews were held within timescale, (100%). Any Review that is likely to be out of timescale is discussed with the Quality Assurance Manager and it is only in the most exceptional of circumstances that a Review will go out of timescale, details of which would also be reported to the Head of Service for Quality Assurance and Service Improvement.

Looked After population during 2018/19:



The age profile of children and young people entering care during the period:

- 14.8% of children who started to be looked after during the year ending 31st March 2019 were aged less than 1.
- 9.0% of children were aged 1 to 4.
- 9.0% of children who started to be looked after were aged 5 to 9.
- 25.4% of young people who started to be looked after were aged 10 to 15.
- 41.8% of young people who started to be looked after were aged 16 and over.

A national benchmarking survey (December 2013) identified that the average caseload for IROs ranged between 49 and 95. Within Harrow, IROs have had caseloads of between 49 and 68 per fte worker during the period 2018/19. Caseloads for IRO's in Harrow remain well within guidance requirements, and all IRO's have a balanced caseload so that complexity and distance are shared equitably across the service.

During 2018/19, IROs have continued to assume a number of other responsibilities with their Championing roles in the areas of permanency planning, Health Assessments, Personal Education Plans (working closely with the Virtual School) and Participation. One IRO attends meetings with the Virtual School plus other key staff to take forward issues to do with education, attendance, exclusions and Personal Education Plans, including issues to do with their completion and uploading on to the child's casefile in a timely manner. An IRO has also attended designated teachers events linking their role with education, the role of the IRO and looked after children procedures. One of the IROs undertakes training for foster carers with regards to the role of the IRO and the Looked After Children process. IROs also have links with the social work teams and attend Team meetings, including with the Fostering Team, Children Looked After and Children in Need Teams, Leaving Care and Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children Team and the Children and Young Adults Disabilities Service (CYADS). One of the IRO's delivers induction session on the role of the IRO to new trainees on a yearly basis. This helps to improve consistency within the social work teams and to build up good working relationships between the IROs and social workers.

During the year the number of Looked After population has been stable, with higher numbers reaching 173 in August and September 2018 and 177 in October 2018 before reducing to the numbers that have been seen throughout the year of between 159 and 169.

Permanency Outcomes

During the period 2018/19, the majority of children have achieved permanency through a return home to live with parents 28.8% or with relatives 5.9%, with 4.2% being adopted.

The profile in terms of children leaving care as at 31st March 2019:

- 28.8% Returned home to live with parents/relatives.
- 5.9% Special Guardianship Order granted.
- 13.6% Moved in to Independent Living.
- 2.5% Age assessment determined child is aged 18 or over
- 4.2% Adopted
- 2.5% Sentenced to Custody.
- 0.8% Care taken over by another Local Authority.
- 35.6% Care ceased for any other reason

Entitlements and Advocacy

The All Party Parliamentary Group for Looked-After Children and Care Leavers Inquiry (2013) asked children and young people what the most important entitlements for looked-after children and care leavers were. The All Party Parliamentary Group selected the five that the children and young people said were most important for looked-after children and for care leavers.

IROs have routinely considered children and young peoples' experience of the ten entitlements and have raised issue with the local authority where appropriate.

IROs findings on the five entitlements for looked-after children for the year ending 31st March 2019

1. There is an expectation that all looked after children have a care plan that says what their needs are now, what will be done to meet those needs and the plans for their future. However there are occasions when IROs have highlighted that these need to be updated to reflect the child's current situation.
2. There is an expectation that all looked after children have a care plan that sets out their views, particularly for those aged 4 years and above.
3. 100% of children of an appropriate age, had information about their entitlements, including information about decision making processes and professionals' responsibilities to hold a review before any significant decision is made in relation to their care plan. This information is sent out by the CLA admin and includes 'The Young Person's Guide to Care Planning', 'CLA Guide Leaflet' and 'Independent Visitor

Leaflet', complaints procedure information and for open to the Leaving Care Team, a copy of the Leaving Care Charter.

4. There is an expectation that when a social worker visits a child or young person they must speak to them alone unless the child or young person refuses, or it is not appropriate at that time or the social worker is unable to.

IROs findings on the five entitlements for care leavers (As at 31/03/2019 there were 190 young people open to the Leaving Care Team)

5. 100% of children had information about their entitlements, including their entitlement to a £2,000 setting up home allowance.

10% of young people received ILG grant of £2,000 for setting up home allowance, (all young people nominated for LOCATA) in the period 2018/19. The Leaving Care Charter is sent out to all relevant young people stating their entitlements.

6. 100% of young people had information about their entitlements, including information about what the local authority must provide to the young person in relation to help with costs of being in education or training up until the age of 21 (or 25 if the young person is still in education).
7. 100% of young people had information about their entitlements, including information about what help the local authority must provide in relation to the costs of getting and keeping a job (up until the age of 21 if the young person is in education, employment or training).
8. 100% of relevant young people (aged 16-21) have a Pathway Plan and received a copy of their Pathway Plan. They also all have a personal advisor (PA) or qualified social worker. The Pathway Plan is a holistic assessment and every young person completed 'my action plan' which is part of the Pathway Plan. There is also a mechanism to inform if they are dissatisfied with their Pathway Plan through the Participation Officer, Advocate, LINAB or Leaving Care Forum (held twice a year). There are no reports of any young people stating they were dissatisfied with their Pathway Plan.
9. Of 21 young people, 10 are in higher education and provided with vacation accommodation (or money towards it).

Advocacy provision in Harrow is currently provided by Community Solutions (Harrow Mencap) as part of commissioned services. IRO's can make referrals through Change, Live, Grow to IVS. The Youth Justice Board commission's advocacy services for young people detained in young offender institutions (YOIs) and secure training centres (STCs).

IROs routinely check that children and young people know about advocacy and how it can support them in having a real say in decisions affecting their lives. This is evidenced by the IRO recording within the Review report indicating when an advocate is involved.

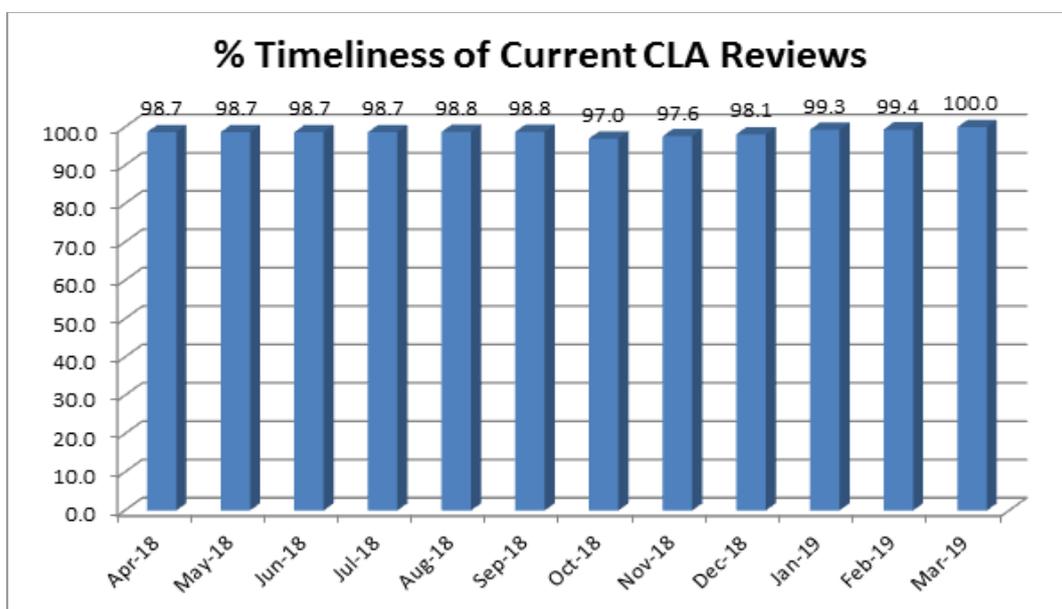
From data collected from the IRO Chairs reports there were 39 looked after children with an advocate during the period 2018/19.

IROs have continued to help ensure that children have access to advocacy but it is important that they continue to discuss at Reviews and record in their reports whether a referral to an Advocate is appropriate, including when this has taken place. Advocacy can be essential for the children and young people and these processes can make a vital contribution to safeguarding and promoting their welfare and rights.

Within the initial pack that is sent by the looked after administrators to all children when they first become looked after there is information about their review, the Access to Records leaflet, advocacy, The Harrow Children’s Pledge, how to make a complaint and information about Independent Visitors; also the Young Peoples Guide to the Care Planning and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010. The Independent Reviewing Officers check within the Review as to whether a child or young person has received all of this information and whether they understand the information including the Harrow Children’s Pledge.

Timeliness of reviews

100% of Looked After Reviews took place within the statutory timescales. IROs completed some reviews in a series of meetings to ensure the relevant people were involved and the meeting remained child focused and friendly.



Qualitative information - Achievements and impact of IRO service

Key Messages

IROs routinely check whether children know about individual advocacy and how to make a complaint. They also check at Reviews whether an independent visitor is needed, and any communication needs requiring additional or specialist support.

Children and young people's preparation and involvement in Reviews

Only 3.7% of children and young people did not participate in their Reviews for the year ending 31st March 2019. During the period over 81% of children and young people over the age of 4 did participate. Participation includes attending and/or contributing to their Review.

IRO's have supported and encouraged young people to be actively involved in their review including a role in part chairing their own review or setting their own agendas wherever appropriate.

Quality of Care Planning

IROs continue to monitor the quality of care plans and raise through the Monitoring Forms and Dispute Resolution Protocol any concerns about the quality of care plans or the care planning process. Children and young people can expect to contribute to their care plan and to expect that they will have their own copy. IROs routinely check that the care planning process has helped children and young people to have their say about matters important to them and helped them to understand what is happening and why.

Progress-chasing Activities between Looked After Reviews

All children and young people are sent details of their IRO in the initial pack when they become looked after. IROs will follow up after Reviews on the most complex of cases and expect to be informed of significant meetings to do with a child and to be consulted with regards to changes in care planning, significant events or the disruption of a placement. This period has involved building and testing a system on Mosaic where IROs will be provided with an update from the social worker at the midpoint between Reviews.

Management oversight

The revised statutory Guidance states that operational social work managers must consider the decisions from the Review before they are finalised. This is due in part to the need to ensure any resource implications have been addressed. Once the decisions are completed the Manager has 5 days to raise any queries or objections. This has been achieved by the IRO electronically sending a Task to the relevant manager once the decisions have been completed. The manager then has 5 working days to complete the Task if they are happy with the decisions or respond to the IRO if they do not agree with any of the decisions. The outcome of these across the period indicates that managers are overwhelmingly satisfied with the decisions made at Reviews.

Children's Views about their IRO and their review process

The Participation Officer has been supporting a system of feedback from children and young people to obtain their views. This also allows them to comment about their experience of their IRO. During the period 2018/19, the Participation Officer continues to meet individually with children and young people, shortly before their review to obtain more detailed information with regards to their views. A consultation form is completed and made available to the IRO before the review. Their views are also contained within the IRO reports following Reviews.

Examples of written feedback from children and young people:

I know her, but cannot remember her name; she is kind and understands me

I have support from the CLA nurse

My IRO will make sure my needs are covered and check the social worker is supporting me

I know what my IRO does

I have no family in the UK

I would like to move to a larger room in my placement

I know who my IRO is, she is very good

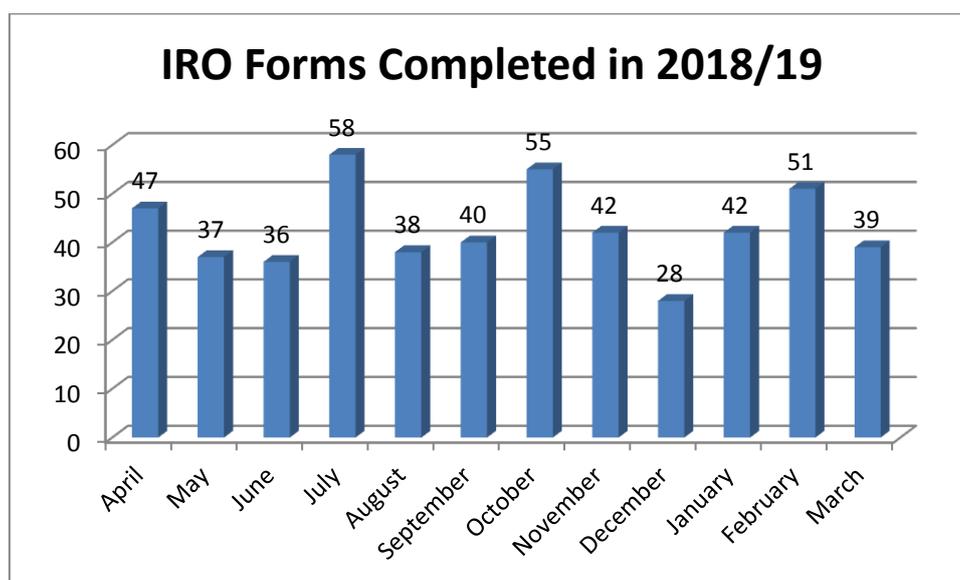
I like my IRO, she's nice

Quality Assurance of the IRO Service

Identifying good practice, problem resolution and escalation

There has been extensive development of processes to highlight and resolve issues identified through the use of the IRO Monitoring Form and Dispute Resolution Protocol. The IROs also identify examples of good practice.

Monitoring Forms

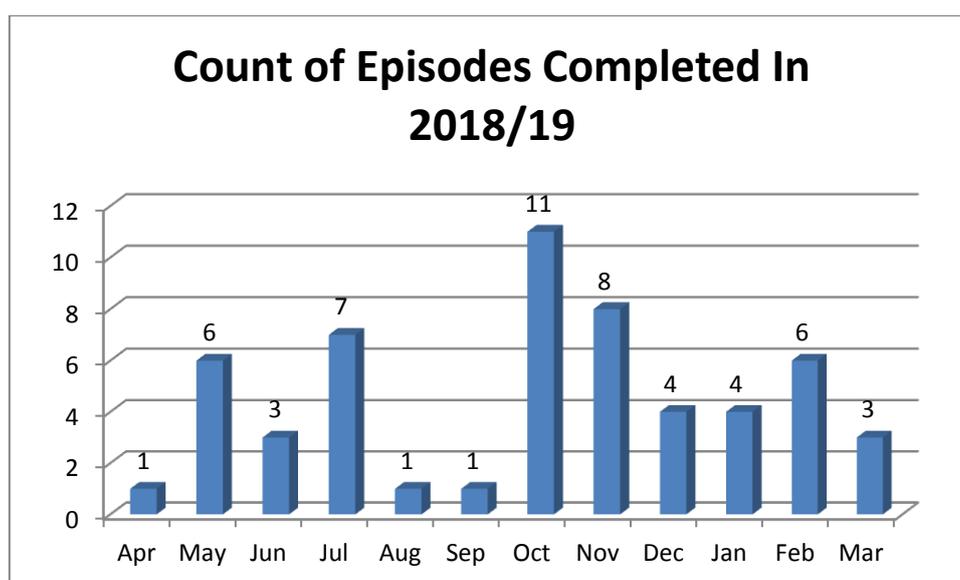


Key information obtained through the Monitoring Forms completed by IROs:

- By 2nd Review, there was a Permanency Plan in place for very large majority of 87% of children. Those where there was not a Permanency Plan by 2nd Review tended to be complex cases being in care proceedings, with assessments not yet completed and there being more than one potential plan, dependent on the outcome of those assessments.
- With regards to social worker visits, across the year a very large majority of 83% took place within timescale. This meant that 17% of visits did not take place within timescale and these were addressed by the IRO, either through the use of the Monitoring Form or the Dispute Resolution Protocol.
- Across the year over 80% of children and young people had an up-to-date Health Assessment at the time of their review. The Children Looked After Health team continued to work to improve practice to ensure that health information was relevant, timely and uploaded on to the child's casefile as promptly as possible. The IRO with the championing role for health was also involved in liaising with the Children Looked After Health team and a representative from that team came to IRO team meetings to provide information and help inform the IROs of how best to help drive up practice through the reviews.

- Across the year over 60% of children and young people had an up-to-date Personal Education Plan at the time of their review. This meant that 39% of cases either needed a Personal Education Plan to be completed or updated. It should be noted that the Virtual School have been working to address this but there have remained some challenges with regards to schools and social workers completing the format after a PEP in a timely fashion and for them then to be uploaded on to the child's casefile. However this remains an on-going priority within Children's Services to ensure that Personal Education Plans are up-to-date and on casefiles.

Dispute Resolution Protocol



Key information obtained through the Dispute Resolution Protocols initiated by IROs:

- Throughout the year 86% of Dispute Resolution Protocols were raised and resolved at Stage 1, between the IRO and Team Manager which represented a very large majority. These related to visits not being within required timescales; PEPs or Health Assessments having been completed but not being on the child's casefile; PEPs or Health Assessments being outstanding; Care Plans needing updating or completing and Pathway Plans needing completing or updating. All of these were resolved at Stage 1 by the outstanding actions being completed or dates set for required actions to take place and managers taking forward visit timescales to ensure these improved to the required levels.
- 14% of Dispute Resolution Protocols were resolved at Stage 2, between the Quality Assurance Manager and relevant Head of Service which represented a very small minority and equated to 8 Dispute Resolution Protocols. One was raised in respect of a sibling group of two, due to IRO concerns that the matter of the Care Plan not being updated had been raised at stage 1; had been a recommendation of the previous review and remained outstanding; in addition visits were not recorded on Mosaic and there was no evidence of management oversight recorded. Four other disputes raised at stage 2 were in relation to Pathway Plans remaining outstanding and visits not recorded on Mosaic. One case the Pathway Plan had been a

recommendation from the previous three reviews. One was raised due to IRO concerns that joint working with YOT was not effective and the Pathway Plan was not updated. The relationship between the young person and social worker was considered to be poor; a focus of the transfer of the case to the LCT was to build a relationship between the new worker and to create a meaningful Pathway Plan. Another stage 2 raised was in relation to a young person returning to live with his mother following assessment; the assessment and findings were not on case file; the IRO was concerned about this being confirmed as a long term placement; confirmation of an agreed support plan and confirmation that the LA was to consider revocation of the Care Order.

Supervision and training

IROs have scheduled monthly supervision and adhoc supervision as required. This is provided by their manager. IROs have Appraisals and are encouraged to attend training to meet the HCPC requirements plus areas of interest and development.

Any resource issues that are putting at risk the delivery of a quality service

The IRO role is not to identify the resources needed to meet a young person's needs but to ensure that the team around the young person, their carers' and the young person themselves understand the changing needs of the young person, and that services are appropriately identified and delivered. In addition their views on individual children and their care plans are fed in to the Child Care Planning Group which meets on a monthly basis, chaired by the Divisional Director, to ensure that planning is progressing in a timely manner so that permanency is achieved for looked after children as swiftly as possible.

Achievements for this last year

Quarterly reports providing analysis of the data; information from the Monitoring Forms and Dispute Resolution Protocol to help inform key issues in practice and performance for looked after children. This information is shared with the management team to identify areas for development and improvement. IRO's continue to highlight good practice and development directly with social workers and line managers.

Continued improvement in the quality of IRO reports and recommendations to ensure that recommendations are SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timely).

Monitoring of Health Assessments/SDQs to ensure that young people are supported with their physical and emotional health outcomes.

Monitoring of the quality of Personal Education Plans and that they are being used to support children and young people attend and attain in their education.

Where children have a period of missing from care, they have Return Home interviews and that there is an understanding of what the push pull factors are in order to reduce this happening.

Continue to monitor care planning and escalate through the Dispute Resolution Protocol and Care Planning Group, where there is unreasonable delay or no permanency plan by 2nd Review. Overall, there is good practice in Harrow regarding permanency planning.

Link with the Participation Officer, Complaints and Advocacy services to ensure there is continuous learning from feedback from children and young people; parents, professionals and carers. Overall young people report positively about the value of their relationship with social workers and carers.

Annual work programme with areas for improvement for next year April 2018 – March 2019

Targets for the following areas have been identified and the service expects to deliver improvements during the period, contributing to Key Measurable outcomes linked to the following:

- To continue to monitor Health Assessments/SDQs to ensure that they are supporting physical and emotional health outcomes.
- To continue to monitor the quality of Personal Education Plans and that they are being used to support children and young people attend and attain in their education and support their ambitions for a move towards independence, further education and employment.
- To continue to monitor care planning and escalate through the Dispute Resolution Protocol and Care Planning Group, where there is unreasonable delay or no permanency plan by 2nd Review. Reviews will continue to be delivered in a timely manner to meet statutory requirements.
- Maintaining standards of good quality IRO reports and recommendations which are SMART and to review in supervision.
- IRO service, including administrative staff to continue to monitor that correct processes are followed and help raise standards with regards to invitations being sent out in a timely manner with consultation papers; social worker's reports for reviews always completed before the review and that information is accurately recorded on casefiles and kept up-to-date to reflect the child's journey. This will include ensuring that a young person's NHS number is recorded and leads to good information sharing through the CP-IS project in partnership with NHS digital.

Overview and Summary

The IRO service continues to be vital in helping to ensure that care planning for looked after children progresses in a timely manner, including hearing the voice of the child and that there is a holistic approach to looked after children with consideration of their health needs, including mental health, as well as education, stability of their home and where

possible contact with their family and that, where appropriate, there is independent escalation and challenge to achieve this.

These remain challenging financial times for local authorities, and Harrow is no exception to this. Having such experienced, established and longstanding IROs has been very beneficial in providing more consistency for looked after children and has assisted with the process of challenge where it has been appropriate.

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