

CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL MINUTES

2 DECEMBER 2014

Chairman: * Councillor Mitzi Green

Councillors: * Simon Brown * Janet Mote
* Margaret Davine * Lynda Seymour (1)
* Kairul Kareema Marikar

* Denotes Member present

† Denotes apologies received

20. Attendance by Reserve Members

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

Ordinary Member

Reserve Member

Councillor Christine Bednell

Councillor Lynda Seymour

21. Declarations of Interest

RESOLVED: To note that the following interests were declared:

- Councillor Simon Brown declared a non-pecuniary interest in that his daughter was now employed by Central and North West London NHS Foundation Trust;
- Councillor Janet Mote declared a non-pecuniary interest in that her daughter was employed as a nurse at Northwick Park Hospital;
- Councillor Kairul Kareema Marikar declared a non-pecuniary interest in that she had been appointed as a school governor and was responsible for safeguarding Looked After Children.

22. Minutes

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of 1 October 2014 be taken as read and signed as a correct record, subject to the amendment of the Officers Present list to correctly reflect all Officers who were present.

23. Public Questions, Petitions and Deputations

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

RESOLVED ITEMS

24. Activity and Performance Report

An officer presented the report of the Interim Corporate Director of Children and Families, which contained the following:

- the number of Child Protection Plans and Repeat Child Protection Plans had risen, and this was in part due to sibling groups being put on repeat plans which increased numbers;
- cases in which Review Child Protection Conferences were being held late were being audited to determine the reasons for this;
- performance had been below expected levels for care leaver outcomes, and this remained a priority for improvement;
- long-term placement stability was below target, however some placement changes could take place for positive reasons, such as moving to a permanent placement, and this had been the case with some Looked After Children.

After taking questions from Members of the Forum, officers advised that:

- a repeat Child Protection Plan could indicate that the original intervention had not been effective, however, the purpose of a plan was to make the child safe and sometimes repeat plans were an appropriate measure;
- Children's Services would look at the statistics presented in the report, but were not solely driven by them, and any action taken was taken primarily in the best interests of the child;
- schools were the main source of referrals for children, which was why referrals decreased during the summer break and increased again in September;
- more younger children were being brought to the attention of Children's Services, which was positive as it allowed Children's Services to intervene early and safeguard the child at an earlier time in their life;

- Judges were more likely to look to extended family members to provide temporary or permanent care for children, as this was often considered more beneficial than a foster placement;
- there had been an increase in mother and baby foster placements;
- measures in place to improve outcomes for care leavers had been included in a report at the previous meeting of Corporate Parenting Panel, and senior managers had been discussing what apprenticeships Harrow Council could offer;
- there had been a problem with young people refusing health assessments, and some young people had refused multiple times;
- the sexual health nurse had a good relationship with a lot of young people.

A Member of the Panel commented that it would be beneficial to monitor how many young people were refusing health assessments.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

25. Corporate Parenting Strategy

An Officer presented the strategy to Members of the Panel for their comments. Members commented that:

- under point 2 “Our Vision”, the third bullet point should be moved to the top of the list and emphasised with bold text;
- under point 4.1, paragraph 5 should read “Members’ induction is mandatory” and the sentence about corporate parenting being the responsibility of all Members should be emphasised;
- in paragraph 7.6, it should be added to the strategy that Housing Officers are invited to meetings of Corporate Parenting Panel;
- performance indicators should be attached to the strategy.

Officers agreed to draw up an action plan to accompany the strategy.

Members of the Panel stated that they would like the strategy to be presented at a meeting of Cabinet, with a view to presenting the strategy at a meeting of full Council in 2015.

RESOLVED: That amendments be made as per Members’ suggestions, and an action plan be drawn up to accompany the strategy to be presented at a future meeting of Cabinet.

26. Fostering Recruitment Report

An Officer presented a report about the recruitment of Foster Carers, which included the following:

- there is a national shortage of foster carers that also affects Harrow;
- about 10% of enquiries about foster caring went on to become foster carers, as such the strategy set out to debunk myths and dispel fears held by potential foster carers;
- retention was important, as well as initial recruitment;
- training and support was the most important thing for foster carers;
- the target for recruitment was a net gain of 13 foster carers per year.

After taking questions from Members of the Panel, an officer advised that:

- there were currently approximately 70 foster carers in Harrow, and they had different approval and matching criteria, however most would potentially be able to foster from a wide age range;
- in-house foster caring provided better value-for-money than independent foster care, and generally provided better outcomes for looked after children, especially in mother and baby placements;
- Harrow was part of the West London Alliance, which was beneficial as costs such as large training events and media campaigns could be shared with other boroughs;
- the length of time from making an initial enquiry to becoming a foster carer was around eight months, though this would differ from person to person;
- feedback from potential foster carers who did not complete the process was being analysed in a more systematic way, so that potential applicants could be better informed;
- potential foster carers could attend meetings with current foster carers, and overall recruitment had been successful as Harrow had some very skilled foster carers;
- an update on recruitment would be given at the meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel in July.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

27. CLA Health Service Update

The Designated Nurse for Safeguarding presented a report, which included the following:

- the new Service Level Agreement had been well-developed;
- Harrow Clinical Commissioning Group had allowed a two-year contract to be drawn up, to allow the new provider more time to make necessary improvements and changes to the service;
- the transition would start on 30 January 2015 and the launch date would be 30 April 2015;
- data would be gathered in a better way, so progress could be reported at the request of the Panel;
- the quality of health assessments had been greatly improved, but non-attendance had impacted on timelines.

An Officer presented an update on School Nursing, which included the following:

- school nurses were procured through the West London Alliance;
- the School Nursing Workforce was currently about fifteen people;
- children under 5 were covered by Health Visitors, and 5 – 19 year olds were covered by school nurses;
- there were now 6 qualified school nurses on the workforce;
- there had been 8,000 children per school nurse, there were now 6,000;
- the intense and ongoing needs of some children and young people were being addressed by the school nurse as well as the Children Looked After Team;
- the service was informed by consultation, and mental health, obesity and dental care were focus points.

After taking questions and comments from Members of the Panel, the Designated Nurse advised that:

- the Health Visitor or School Nurse would usually be the lead health professional for the child, and the Children Looked After Nurse worked closely with them to provide support.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

28. Children Looked After Achievement Event

An Officer gave a verbal report about the Children Looked After achievement event. The verbal report included the following:

- the event would be held on 19 February 2015, and invitations would be distributed during the second week of December 2014;
- the formal event would include speeches from Councillors, live entertainment and awards, then the event would continue informally for those who wanted to stay;
- a working group made up of young people and social workers were arranging the event;
- there would be different categories of awards given to young people.

RESOLVED: That the verbal report be noted.

29. Beyond Limits Event

An Officer presented a verbal report regarding the Beyond Limits Event. Seven young people had met with four Councillors to discuss what they wanted from the Councillors as Corporate Parents, which included the following:

- the distance between schools and the young people's placements was affecting their attendance, so they required extra support and funding so they could use the most efficient way of travelling;
- Corporate Parents needed to ensure that pocket money rates were consistent and that all Children Looked After were aware of them;
- computer or laptop access was vital to children and young people so that they could undertake their studies.

After taking questions and comments from Members of the Forum, an Officer commented that:

- the aim of the sessions was for the young people to feel comfortable talking to the Councillors, which was why the meetings were held in a familiar environment for the young people;
- some young people stay after homework club to socialise and play table tennis;
- regular engagement was important to instil trust and familiarity with Members.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

30. Virtual School Report

The Virtual Headteacher presented the tabled report, which was the finalised version of the report included on the agenda. The report reflected the year 2013 – 14 and included the following:

- the Virtual School now included a 6th form;
- the school had been audited by Ofsted in order to highlight areas for improvement;
- the Virtual School staff had been working to minimise disruption to children, and there had been no permanent exclusions in the year 2013-14;
- children in Years 10 and 11 were being monitored very closely;
- school placement for Looked After Children took longer than was optimal;
- one to one tuition was very effective for Looked After Children, as they were likely to have longer periods of absence which led to gaps in their learning;
- £500 per term was being allocated, and some funds were being kept aside for the more vulnerable children in Years 10 and 11.

After taking questions and comments from Members of the Panel, the Virtual Headteacher advised that she would bring the plan to the next meeting, and advise on the number of children who had had managed moves.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

31. Any Other Urgent Business

Members discussed the date of the next meeting, and concluded that there was too long a gap between the meeting of 2 December 2014 and the next scheduled meeting, 21 April 2015. The Chair proposed the date of 17 March 2015, and Members and Officers agreed.

RESOLVED: That the next meeting of Corporate Parenting Panel be held on 17 March 2015, pending agreement from the Nominated Member of the Opposition.

32. Agenda Tracker

RESOLVED: That the Agenda Tracker be updated in line with Members' comments.

(Note: The meeting, having commenced at 7.30 pm, closed at 9.15 pm).

(Signed) COUNCILLOR MITZI GREEN
Chairman

Officers present:

Sue Dixon, Designated Nurse for Safeguarding and Children Looked After

David Harrington, Head of Business Intelligence

Robert Maragh, Interim Commissioning Manager, Barnet/Harrow Public Health

Jane Munroe, Interim Headteacher, Virtual School;

Kamini Rambellas, Divisional Director of Targeted Services

Peter Tolley, Service Manager, Targeted Services