

SCRUTINY REVIEW OF CORPORATE PARENTING

10 MARCH 2011

REPORT OF THE CHAIR OF THE REVIEW PANEL

ISSUES PAPER

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of this paper is to bring together all of the significant evidence received in the course of the review and highlight the key issues for discussion at the concluding meeting.

Definition

- 1.2 Looked after children and young people (LACYYP) are children in the care of the Council through a care order made by a court or voluntary agreement with their parent(s). They can be looked after in a children's home or by foster carers or by other family members. Care leavers are children who have been looked after by the Council and are still provided with assistance, advice and guidance. Children and young people do not like the term but it is a term that is generally understood by people.
- 1.3 The term does not have a formal legal definition but it recognises that a local authority should have the same interest in the progress and achievements of children and young people in its care as a reasonable parent would have for their own children. The responsibility applies to the local authority as a whole and not just the Children and Young People's Service (C&YPS). It requires ownership and leadership at a senior level and includes a key role for elected Members.
- 1.4 Local authorities do not only have a role in providing services. They also have a wider role in working with local strategic partners, as a "place shaper" and in promoting community cohesion. The Council could therefore potentially use its position and influence to promote the interests of LACYYP through a wide range of channels.

Background

- 1.5 Being a good corporate parent means that the Council should:
- Accept responsibility for children in it's care and make their needs a priority
 - Seek for them the same outcomes any good parent would want for their own children
- 1.6 Whilst LACYYP have a right to expect the same life opportunities and outcomes as other children, they may nevertheless experience disadvantage. Research indicates that they experience significantly poorer outcomes across a range of measures, including health and education:

- Nearly 50% of LACYP have a diagnosable mental health disorder compared to 10% in the general population. Figures for those in residential care are even higher.
 - Between a quarter and a third of rough sleepers have been looked after by local authorities as children
 - Children who have been in care are two-and-a-half times more likely to become teenage parents.
 - Young people who have been in care are disproportionately likely to become unemployed
 - Young people who have been in care are disproportionately likely to end up in prison
 - Twenty-six per cent of prisoners have been in care as children, compared with just two per cent of the total population
- 1.7 Education plays a particularly important part in improving the life chances of LACYP. In 2008, only 14% of LACYP achieved 5 A* - C GCSE grades compared to 65.3% of all children. Disruption caused by constant placement moves can have a particularly adverse affect on performance. It may not so much the fact of being in care that causes them to miss out on education but the circumstances which lead to them entering care. In such circumstances, ensuring LACYP have the right support to be able to participate fully in school life is very important. For example, they may need specific help to catch up. A high proportion of LACYP see entering care as having been good for their education.
- 1.8 The previous government brought in the following initiatives to raise the educational attainment of looked after children:
- Each local authority now has a “virtual school head” to champion the educational needs of all LACYP;
 - Each school has a designated teacher for LACYP;
 - Children at risk of falling behind at school have a personal educational allowance; and
 - One-to-one tuition is available if necessary for some looked after children
- 1.9 Although education is very important, LACYP have a range of other needs. For example, many can also experience poor health outcomes. LACYP share many of the same health risks and problems as their peers but they frequently enter care with a worse level of health due to the impact of poverty, abuse and neglect. Evidence suggests that looked after children are nearly five times more likely to have a mental health disorder than other children. Local authorities, primary care trusts and strategic health authorities must currently have regard to statutory guidance issued in November 2009 on promoting the health and well-being of looked after children, which requires children in care to have a personal health plan. They must:
- Be registered with a GP
 - Have their immunisations up to date
 - Receive a regular health assessment and dental checks.
- 1.10 They also have a right to expect the same leisure opportunities as other children and to take part in out of school activities.
- 1.11 LACYP face particular challenges when they leave care. The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 sets out local authorities’ responsibilities to help children leaving care develop a

'pathway plan' to independence with the help of a personal adviser. Assistance must currently be provided for care leavers up to the age of 21. The expectation is that Councils should provide the support a good parent would give on housing, education, training and employment. This can make the difference between achieving independence and requiring long-term help. Whilst Councils have a statutory duty to keep in touch with care leavers until they are aged 21, (and beyond that if they are in education), parents normally remain in touch and offer help and advice to their children throughout their lifetime.

1.12 When they are elected, all Councillors take on the role of 'corporate parents'. They have a duty to take an interest in the well-being and development of LACYP as if they were their own children. Although the Cabinet Member for Children's Services has particular responsibilities, the responsibility to act as corporate parents is held by *all* Councillors, regardless of their particular role. There is an expectation that systems, processes and support should be in place to enable them to fulfil that role. This was emphasised in the launching of the *Quality Protects* programme in 1998, when the Secretary of State wrote to all councillors about their role and said:

"Elected councillors have a crucial role. Only you can carry it out. You can make sure that the interests of the children come first. You bring a fresh look and common sense. As councillors you set the strategic direction of your council's services and determine policy and priorities for your local community within the overall objectives set by Government."

1.13 The role of Councillors as corporate parents is defined in 'Think Child' (1999) as the following:

- **"find out** – get the facts and follow them up
- **make decisions** – play your part in the business of the council
- **listen to children and young people** – find out from them how your council's services work for them and remember that children are citizens too
- **be a champion for children** – take a lead in your community in putting children first"

1.14 Communicating with LACYP and obtaining their views is undertaken in a range of ways. The Care Matters White Paper required that every local authority set out a "pledge" to children and young people in its care. Every child and young person's care or pathway plan must reflect how the commitments made in the pledge will be delivered for that individual child. There was also a requirement to set up a Children in Care Council to enable regular dialogue and involvement from LACYP in developing and delivering services and to monitor the implementation of the pledge. There should also be mechanisms in place for involving young people in care in the recruitment of key staff members.

1.15 It is not only councillors who are corporate parents. Council officers across the council (not just in children's services departments) share in the responsibility and other partners also have a duty to cooperate to ensure looked after children's needs are met.

1.16 Haringey is currently responsible for 601 looked after children and 462 care leavers. The largest age group is children between the ages of 10 and 15. The numbers have gone up significantly in recent years. The numbers in Haringey are well above the national average and track those of statistical neighbours. Encouragement and support is given to families to

provide care where possible. Children cared for by such “kinship” arrangements are not categorised as looked after.

- 1.17 The “Care Matters” white paper required the Council to create an environment for care which was safe and which aimed high for children and young people. Stability is an important factor and social workers play a key role within this. Specific work is also undertaken in preventing young people from coming into care. There was an expectation arising from Care Matters that each local area would develop a pledge for looked after children based on its corporate responsibilities. London Councils agreed on a London wide pledge, which Haringey had signed up to. In terms of participation, there was also a requirement to set up a Children in Care Council.
- 1.18 The Council’s Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee undertakes a monitoring, challenge and scrutiny role in respect of looked after children. In particular, it receives a considerable amount of statistical information. In addition, the Council also undertakes its corporate parent role through the following:
- Total Respect training for professionals on how to communicate effectively with children and young people;
 - Regulation 33 visits to children’s homes
 - Fostering and Adoption Panels
 - Fora for consultation and participation
 - The roles and responsibilities of the Leader, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People and the Children and Young People’s Service
 - The Children’s Trust arrangements and the HSP Board
 - The local Safeguarding Children’s Board
- 1.19 All looked after children are required to have a named Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO). This person plays a very important role as a mentor for the young person. Such individuals are not connected with the decision making process. Their primary focus is to quality assure the care planning process for each child and to ensure that his/her current wishes and feelings are given full consideration.
- 1.20 65% of Haringey care leavers are in employment, education and training (EET) and 94% are in appropriate accommodation. It can be difficult to keep track of them after the age of 21 as this could only be done with their agreement.

2. Stakeholder Perceptions

Foster Carers

- 2.1 The Panel listened to the views of a number of foster carers and support staff. It was noted that prospective foster carers could have the perception that private agencies paid more than the local authority. However, although private agencies charged more, they also took a percentage of the amount. When carers spoke to the local authority, they realised that there was no financial benefit to working for an agency. In the past, only private agencies had offered out-of-hours support but the local authority now also provided this.

2.2 The following points were raised by carers:

- The recruitment process was felt to be onerous but it was acknowledged that guidance had to be followed. Haringey had high standards and it was inevitable that there would be drop out during the recruitment process. There had been long waits in the past to hear the results of applications to foster and it had sometimes been quicker to use agencies. This had improved and there was now a welcome programme for new carers which included an invitation to the support group.
- Support groups for foster carers funded by the Council and run through Haringey Foster Carers Association worked very well. They were well run and beneficial for carers. The Chair of the Foster Carers Association had played a very important part in this.
- A constant social worker could make a significant difference. Turnover of social workers seemed to go through phases. Sometimes there was stability and sometimes there were a lot of changes and/or gaps. In some cases, the young person did not know the social worker had changed. In such cases, contact had to be with the team manager and responses to enquires could take time.
- All foster carers also had a social worker and they could be used in circumstances where the young person could not contact their own social worker. However, it was felt that it was important that the young person was able to speak to their own social worker and they could become frustrated if this was not possible. If social workers were very good, they could be given additional work and this could lead to them having case loads that were too heavy. In addition, the transition to leaving care did not always work well.
- Education was the biggest challenge that faced LACYP. The children that performed better were generally those that had received tutoring at home. Provision of this had provided a real benefit for children. The need for tutoring was established by the social worker – some children got it whilst others did not.
- It could be difficult for social workers to engage with young people on certain issues such as sexual health if they were of a different gender and it would therefore be better if they could be matched according to this. However, there was a shortage of male social workers.
- Young people could visit their foster carer after they had left care. They saw foster carers as their parents and had a different relationship with them to the one they had with their social worker. The young people saw themselves as part of the family. Social workers were not always accessible and were subject to change.
- It could be difficult for young people who went out of London for their higher education as there might not be anywhere for them to go during vacations.
- It was considered that there was a need for support to address challenging behaviour by young people as it was important that they understood boundaries. Working to impose discipline on them would be better than constantly moving them. The service did not wish to have to move children in such circumstances but had to if carers were unable to cope. Challenging behaviour was sometimes due to the experience of trauma.

- Support services could respond more quickly. This was particularly true of the Tavistock and audiology. Emotional support was available through the Tavistock Centre but it was not always wanted by children or carers or suitable for children. Many children went once and did not go back. Although some children needed counselling, others would be more suited to mentoring. Both the Tavistock and CAMHS had long waiting lists. There was little support that was available below this level.
- Support for foster carers had improved in recent years. In particular, there was more consistency in the supervising of social workers. A continuing concern was the time that it took to deal with allegations against carers and the poor communication that often accompanied suspensions of them. However, if an allegation was made, the service had an obligation to investigate it.
- It was felt that young people could be better prepared for leaving care by a period of semi independent care. Processes were not always explained as well as they could be. Young people did not always know all their entitlements.
- Carers helped young people to prepare for leaving care. They were given £52 to live on and, to assist with this, they were taught budgeting skills. However, young people could sometimes not be prepared for the range of costs associated with independence, such as heating and lighting. The accommodation that they were offered was not always of a particularly high standard. The teaching of skills to prepare young people for independence was included in the care plan.
- It was suggested that all children in care could given a trust fund that the Council controlled and that they received at the age of 18. The allowance given to carers currently included an element for saving for young people but not all carers were good at using this effectively. A trust fund could replace this. The longer that children were in care, the more money that they would get. It could also be extended to those cared for by agency carers. It was noted that the Council had looked at this option previously but it had proven to be difficult to set up.

2.3 It was noted that a lot of care was taken in ensuring that placements were appropriate. The majority of carers were now black and there was now more of a problem with placing white children. There was a particular need for more foster carers from Eastern Europe. It was important to place children where they would feel most comfortable. Carers could play a role in encouraging children to develop an awareness of their own culture and background. It was noted that young people who returned to the home of foster carers needed to be CRB checked if there were new foster children. There could sometimes be problems with envy where there were new children in the home.

Care Leavers

2.4 The Panel met with a group of care leavers from a range of backgrounds to obtain their views. All had been fostered and none adopted. Several of them were still in touch with foster carers and some still regularly visited them. However, such contact tended to diminish in time. The length of placements varied and there were often a number of social workers

that they had contact with. The majority of them were currently in higher education. The following points were raised:

- The experience of being in care could affect their outlook on life. There was not much opportunity to talk about this. Support from social workers was good but sometimes they were over stretched. Young people got less attention as they got older but they still felt that they needed someone to provide support and guidance. Social workers were only available to provide support for them during the day and not out-of-hours.
- People could be wary of them and they were often reluctant to disclose that they had been in care because of this. Sometimes people were not aware that how they responded could be upsetting. Their reluctance to disclose could be a limiting factor on friendships as it meant that they put up barriers. Being in care could result in them being wary of becoming too close to people. They felt more able to be open with other people who had been in care. They were able to look after themselves and had adapted to being in care. They had learnt to be independent at an early age.
- Care leavers were frequently affected by loneliness and lack of social contact. There was nowhere for them to meet other people from a similar background and socialise. They met in cafés occasionally but this cost money. Although there were youth clubs, these cost money to attend which put them off going. In addition, youth clubs could be dangerous places due to the post code rivalries that existed. Just wearing the wrong clothes could result in trouble.
- Some of the accommodation that they were given was not regarded as being very good. Although they were given £500 to help them settle in, this was not felt to be sufficient. They were given some information and advice about housing but felt that more assistance could be provided. It could be hard to make ends meet and it was easy to get into debt.
- They thought that they could be better prepared for leaving care through being given more explanation of life outside of care and what they would need to do. The sudden change could be traumatic and could happen when people were still very young.
- It could be tough being in higher education. Bills and travel costs had to be met and the student loan was not enough to cover these. It was particularly difficult for them to go to university outside of London as they would lose their home. It was noted that local authorities were now required to assist with this. A bursary was now available which amounted to around £2,000 over the period of the course. The young people had not been aware of this. The current situation meant that most young people in their situation would not go to university outside of London.
- In terms of work, they stated that they could find themselves worse off if they obtained work as they would lose all their support. The 16 hours cut off point did not encourage people to work.
- They would all be interested in acting as mentors for other young people coming out of care. A mentoring scheme would be beneficial as young people might be more inclined to listen to advice from their peers.

- They all felt that personal advisers were very useful and provided a good range of information on options

Study Centre

- 2.5 The Chair and Councillor Solomon also visited the Study Centre for LACY. They had been very impressed with the dedication shown by the young people in attending the centre as many had come a long way. The centre was also not very accessible. The young people felt that the centre had helped them to improve their performance and all of them were keen to attend.

Cabinet Member for Children and Young People

- 2.6 The Panel received evidence from Councillor Lorna Reith, the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People. She stated that the Council's Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee looked in detail at services provided by the Children and Young People's Service (C&YPS) for looked after children and, in particular, relevant statistical information. This included the numbers of children in care, their age groups, feedback from visits and educational performance. The Advisory Committee had a specific role in listening to the views of children in care. Some had come to meetings of the Committee and engagement events had been held, sometimes hosted by Tottenham Hotspur. A Children in Care Council had also been set up and had now met twice.
- 2.7 An officer from the Council's Housing Support and Options team regularly attended the Committee. It also considered issues relating to the Council's two children's residential homes – Muswell House and Haringey Park. She felt that the Committee provided a good element of challenge to C&YPS. It was less able to address the wider corporate parenting agenda and the role of other Council services and partners. Services such as parks and leisure had a particular role as both providers of services and potential sources of work placements. However, economic circumstances were currently very challenging and it was now difficult to arrange things like apprenticeships.
- 2.8 A lot of Council staff would be leaving shortly due to the budget cuts and one option that could be explored was to ask if any of them would be interested in becoming foster parents. The service was first and foremost looking for people who lived in the borough but this was not essential.
- 2.9 There was a specific officer in the leaving care team with responsibility for finding work placements and opportunities at a wide range of organisations had been found. However, due to the junior status of the post, its influence could be limited. She felt that other parts of the Council had the potential to contribute more through, for instance, providing work placement opportunities. The Panel noted that one possibility would be to involve care leavers in the Haringey Guarantee scheme.
- 2.10 Papers from the Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee contained a wide range of statistical information. She noted that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had considered statistics on missing children but she felt that they did not tell the full story. For example, the

figures did not state how long the absence had been or how often. The issue was taken very seriously and if there was any suggestion that the whereabouts of LACYF were unknown, the Police were informed. It was a complex area and statistics required a degree of interpretation and explanation.

- 2.11 In terms of education performance, this was very good in comparison with children in care in other local authorities but still had not reached the standards achieved by children not in care. Many children in care now went to university.
- 2.12 She felt that the practical needs of young people leaving care were addressed well. Housing support was particularly effective. Care leavers were in the highest priority band for housing. Young people could be accommodated in a wide range of accommodation including some that was semi independent. Care leavers all received a lump sum allowance to assist them with the transition. All young people received specific guidance on finance and budgeting. There was also input from health partners.
- 2.13 She had particular concerns about emotional support. Care leavers could become very vulnerable and loneliness was a big problem. Most young people were still living at home at the age that young people left care. They therefore did not have the same support networks. Two young care leavers had died in the previous year. It was unclear whether these cases were suicide or neglect but care leavers were a high risk group. There were particular challenges in meeting the needs of young people who came into care as teenagers, such as those affected by the implications of the Southwark judgement. These young people could be very damaged.
- 2.14 One option that could be explored was mentoring, which some other local authorities had set up. She had asked the Leaving Care Service to consider how emotional support could be improved and a report was being prepared for the Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee. Although peer support could be developed, some young people did not wish to be defined as being in care.
- 2.15 A lot of work was undertaken on the issue of pregnancy. The dangers of becoming pregnant were explained. However, some young people who had no family wished to create one of their own. They also felt that having a child gave them status. This view point was common even amongst fostered children. They could become very lonely if the father of the child did not remain with them.
- 2.16 There were good links with some services such as Housing and Adults. Other services had the potential to play a greater role as corporate parents. In reference to leisure, it was noted that if leisure passes were bought for children in care the cost of these came out of the budget for C&YPS.
- 2.17 It was not always easy to track the progress of care leavers so that lessons could be learnt from successes as well as those who had encountered problems. It was more likely to be those who had been successful that kept in touch.
- 2.18 The fostering and adoption team had been split between those who dealt with existing carers and those responsible for recruiting new ones. Improvements had taken place since this had

been implemented and further progress was anticipated. The Council now worked with five other authorities as part of a consortium.

Opposition Spokesperson

- 2.19 Councillor Allison felt that the current Cabinet Member had helped to improve services in a short space of time but there was still a particular need to focus on outcomes and improvements needed to be sustained.
- 2.20 She stated that feedback from family courts suggested that improvements in the preparation of cases for court needed to be made. In particular, there had been issues with the preparation of cases which had led to some cases being referred back to court several times. In addition, there had been an overspend of £1.5 million in legal costs. She had raised her concerns with the Director, who had given assurances about the situation. She was concerned that some children might be being taken into care unnecessarily. Practical solutions could be found to help keep children out of care. It was much cheaper to support families than to use the care system.
- 2.21 She felt that the recruitment of foster carers should be given to specialist organisations. People became foster carers for a range of reasons and this was not addressed sufficiently in recruitment advertisements. There were also delays in information being sent out to prospective carers. She felt that the Council should seek to recruit the best foster carers from private agencies. She was of the view that the recruitment panel could be made less intimidating. There were 12 professionals on it and many local authorities had smaller panels.
- 2.22 She stated that one of Haringey's children's residential homes had been judged as inadequate in an OFSTED inspection in 2009. Action had been taken to respond to the inspections recommendations. The home had recently been re-inspected and this had identified some areas from the earlier inspection that were still outstanding. She had raised concerns about the home on several occasions. There was a very high turnover of staff in residential homes. One of the Council run homes was intended for assessment and children and young people were only supposed to stay for a few weeks. However, some were staying for up to 6 months. The other home was for medium to long term placements. She was of the view that the residential homes could be more assertive in retrieving children who had not returned when supposed to but this had staffing implications.
- 2.23 She also expressed concern that Red Gables, which was one of the main contact centres, was not being used as much as it should. Schools were sometimes being used and this was not appropriate. She felt that more suitable locations needed to be identified for supervised contact visits.
- 2.24 She felt that work experience was particularly important to young people. Even a few weeks could make a difference.

3. Education

- 3.1 The Panel noted that specific measures had been taken by the Council to help ensure that LACYP have access to a good education. Children in Haringey perform significantly better

than those in statistical neighbours. All care plans for children under five describe arrangements for the child to access high quality early years education. Measures are also taken to ensure that children are not moved during years 10 and 11 except in exceptional circumstances and that those placed out of borough have the same access to education as those in borough. There is provision of £500 a year for looked after children who are at risk of not achieving expected standards.

- 3.2 The Council tries to ensure that children in its care go to the best schools available. The Virtual Head works with the Council's Admissions Service to ensure that all LAC were placed appropriately. The current admission criteria for both Haringey primary and secondary schools puts children in care as the highest priority. School admission appeals are made if applications for preferred options were unsuccessful. Efforts are also made to put gifted children in schools that would enable them to realise their full potential.
- 3.3 There is a requirement for all looked after children to be allocated a designated teacher to promote their educational achievement and this role is being strengthened in Haringey. There is now also guidance for local authorities on how to support carers in the SEN process. Additional funding is now provided for looked after children to have the opportunity for 2 hours free extended activities per week. Home school agreements are also being reviewed in order to ensure that full consideration is given to foster carers and residential staff. Training for foster parents now addresses educational achievement and how to support children's literacy. School governors also have a role and specific training is now provided.
- 3.4 The Panel received specific evidence from Attracta Craig, the Haringey Virtual School Head. The educational performance of Haringey's LACYP was a success story. Performance compared very well with that achieved nationally and in other London boroughs. However, although the borough was doing very well, the aspiration was to do even better. This would allow young people to be more successful and independent and to close the gap with other children.
- 3.5 Her service had high expectations for young people and had submitted more challenging targets than the ones that have currently been set but these were turned down. Good grades at GCSE were very important and helped to keep young people out of the NEETs (not in education, employment and training) category. The ages between 16 and 19 could prove challenging if young people had not secured 5 passes at A – C.
- 3.6 69% of care leavers were in employment and training, although this did not necessarily mean that they would go on to do well. A lot was now being done to address the educational performance of LACYP and this focussed on the whole period of their education, up to 19 years of age. One of the reasons why the virtual school had been set up was to enable an overview to be taken. The service had not previously realised just how important the years between 16 and 19 were.
- 3.7 Moving children during the year of their GCSEs could be particularly detrimental and was avoided wherever possible. Consideration was now being given to what could be done to support 'A' level performance. There was currently a mismatch between birth dates relating to placements and the dates for 'A' Level exams which could lead to difficulties - whilst care ended at 18, exams took place the following June for most young people.

- 3.8 A number of tools were used to monitor progress. Data was used and the progress of children was tracked. It could nevertheless be challenging. 40% of LACYP had been the subject of fixed term exclusion in the last academic year and schools could find them hard to handle. However, there had only been one permanent exclusion. There had been a training programme for designated teachers. Haringey had had a virtual head teacher for some time and had brought this in prior to it being made compulsory for local authorities. Of particular note was the partnership with Tottenham Hotspur who were involved in providing a range of opportunities and events for LAC, including work experience. All LACYP were offered after school tuition. There was a drive to encourage more of them to take up the offer. In 2009, although 66 offers were made, only 29 were accepted. The amount of tuition was fixed at 10 hours per academic year.
- 3.9 GCSE results for 2010 were as follows:
- 17% 5A* - C including Maths and English
 - 31% A5* - C
 - 71% 1A – G
- 3.10 Only 2 young people out of the 31% of LACYP that got 5 passes between A and C had been predicted to gain such passes two years ago at KS3. Those who achieved 5 A-C grades all took up at least one of the following opportunities :
- 20 hours after school tuition in KS4 (14 young people)
 - Attended Study Club (4 young people living in Haringey)
 - Visited Highgate Independent School as part of Study club for science lessons (4)
 - Work experience at Spurs as part of To Care is To Do (2)
 - Attended aspirational trip to London Eye, Spring 2010 (5)
 - Attended previous Children in Care Awards Events (8)
 - Involved in activity days at Spurs when in Year 9 (2)
 - Part of volunteer mentoring scheme when in Year 9 (2)
- 3.11 This was in addition to remaining in the same school and care placements in Key Stage 4 and Haringey Virtual School maintaining regular contact with school Designated Teachers throughout. Interventions can also be a range of simple and small things like getting to know the young people, showing an interest and having high expectations.
- 3.12 Young people were not always successful though and things could happen to them which inhibited their performance. For some young people, getting 1 A-G pass might be a significant achievement and it was important that the achievements of all young people children were celebrated. The service worked closely with headteachers and school governing bodies to ensure that they fulfilled their statutory responsibilities.
- 3.13 The Panel noted that the service had been short listed for four Children and Young People Now awards. This included:

- One for corporate parenting for the work to develop a book club. This involved working with the Library Service and the Big Green bookshop to deliver books to children's homes.
 - The Learning Award for their Study Club. This had existed since 2005 and involved young people between key stages 2 and 4 meeting every week with staff from the Tuition Service.
 - There had also been a nomination for Third Sector Engagement for their South Africa project. This had entailed children and young people who were considered at risk from going into residential care getting the chance to go to South Africa.
- 3.14 In addition, BBC's Newsround were using the borough as an example of how children in care could do well academically. The Council was accountable for how well LACYP performed academically. In addition, there were also designated teachers and school governors for LACYP. All governing bodies have been:
- Sent information pertaining to the 'Statutory Guidance for Children in Care'; recognised and adopted by the DfE
 - Offered bespoke training on strategic management of school systems in the context of this guidance, to ensure LACYP make rapid and accelerated progress
- 3.15 15 schools have taken up the bespoke training delivered directly to them in their school. There were also 3 schools booked in for this training before the Christmas break. This was viewed as proving very effective in addressing the strategic management of LACYP in schools.
- 3.16 Governing bodies have responsibility for the oversight of the role of the Designated Teacher of Children in Care. On most governing bodies, this role is generally taken on by the either the Chair of Governors or by the Governor with responsibility for Safeguarding and Child Protection.
- 3.17 The Panel commented that targets for the education attainment of children in care appeared to be relatively unambitious. It was noted that the targets were nationally set as part of the local set of performance indicators and the Council was therefore unable to set higher ones.

4. Leaving Care

- 4.1 The Panel received evidence on how young people were prepared for leaving care and supported once they became independent. Emma Cummergen from the Leaving Care and Asylum Service reported that it currently worked with young people between 16 and 21. and provided personal advisers and an after care service. Their work included preparing pathway plans for care leavers, which help to prepare young people for the transition to adulthood. These were holistic plans and included reference to their families as well as education and employment and housing issues. They also dealt with both practical and emotional issues.
- 4.2 Work was undertaken with particularly challenged young people. Whilst some young people coped very well with the transition, others struggled. In particular, some had mental health issues and, in such circumstances, links needed to be developed with Adult social care

services. The service worked with the Tavistock Clinic to address mental health issues. Care leavers could have problems with relationships and struggle to make friends. The service could support young people who wished to make contact with their natural families. This could be a positive experience but could also be a great challenge. Some young people were able to keep a good relationship with their foster carers.

- 4.3 Residential social workers assisted young people in developing their life skills. There was a range of accommodation options for young people who left residential care at 16. If they were felt to be in substantial need, foster care was found. However, some young people were in residential care as they could not cope with foster care. Each young person had a key worker who would produce a LAC (looked after child) review. Care was reviewed continuously. Permanent accommodation was normally found when the young person was 18, although exceptions could be made if further support was needed. Accommodation was normally social housing.
- 4.4 New guidance was coming into force in 2011 which extended support until the age of 25. This would add an additional 10% onto current caseloads. The transition of support from C&YPS to Adults tended to be smoother if the referral took place before the age of 18. The lack of a diagnosis could be a barrier to this but they did not wish to unnecessarily stigmatise young people. Efforts were currently being made to improve the transition process. Once young people were known to Adults, there could be difficulties in engaging with them as there was a tendency for some to not turn up for appointments. C&YPS staff had to persuade them to attend in such circumstances.
- 4.5 Louise Jones, the Head of Integrated Youth Support reported that she managed both Connexions and the Youth Service and many care leavers attended their projects. The service had access to a young persons counselling service and could make referrals for mental health issues, substance abuse, trauma etc. Targeted support was available for young people at risk of offending.
- 4.6 The main purpose of Connexions was to help young people into employment and training. Although it was a universal service, much of its work was targeted. The service also received referrals. The support that could be provided was generally of a light touch but more intensive assistance could be provided if need be. Individuals could be passed onto specialist advisers or referred to other services if necessary. The service was proactive in making contact with young people before the age of 16 and had good sources of information. All young people were tracked until the age of 19. The relationship with young people was nevertheless purely voluntary. Particular attention was given to young people not in education or employment (NEETs). The service worked intensely with them and helped with things like the preparation of CVs. They liaised closely with Job Centre plus and Housing.
- 4.7 Connexions was funded by the Department of Education through Area Based Grant. However, this was to end in March 2011. The Youth Service received core funding but Connexions would have to revert back to being the Careers Service. Funding for the additional services that had been provided had been moved back to schools. Funding for career guidance for young people in care was to be given to schools but they could pass it back to Connexions if they wished. Careers education could also be undertaken as part of the school curriculum. The Connexions worker in the Leaving Care team was to be lost and there was concern about the implications of this as it would make such assistance less

accessible for care leavers.

- 4.8 Connexions had a database of apprenticeships. It was noted that all companies that were working on Decent Homes schemes were obliged to take on apprentices. Specific support was available for NEETs. Apprenticeships did not always lead to permanent jobs. However, providers were vetted to ensure that placements met an acceptable standard. All care leavers had a personal adviser that worked with them. All young people were tracked and statistics on NEETs were kept. It noted that the Leaving Care team kept their own statistics.
- 4.9 Paul Clarke from Economic Regeneration reported on the Haringey Guarantee scheme. It was aimed at people above the age of 16 to help them get into sustained employment. The aim was to remove any barriers to finding work. An action plan was developed that aimed to not only get people into work but to enable them to stay in work. The scheme provided employment advisers and wrap around services. Training opportunities could be provided in a wide range of areas such as social work, security, construction and fashion. Support was also given to people who wanted to establish their own businesses. Assistance could also be given on a wide range of issues such as drugs and alcohol problems and childcare. There were very good relations with Tottenham and Wood Green Job Centre plus. There were also good links with Connexions, who could refer to the scheme.
- 4.10 Nobody was ever written off. They helped people to develop specific job goals by constructing reverse career paths. Specific help could be given to young people with parental responsibilities. It was noted that Connexions had a special adviser that worked with teenage parents. The scheme was proactive in its approach and undertook outreach in the community. The future of the scheme in its current form was uncertain. However, it was likely that the opportunities that it provided would still be available in some form.
- 4.11 It was noted that all lone parents receiving benefit would be in regular contact with Job Centre plus. Different processes were in place according to the age of the individual. All young people under the age of 18 were required to be in contact with Connexions, with whom they worked closely. They had been able to provide access to apprenticeships and worked with various training associates. However, current availability of opportunities was patchy and many programmes were coming to an end. Young people between the age of 18 and 24 were eligible for the New Deal programme which was aimed at providing access to longer term employment options.
- 4.12 Helen Smith from Job Centre Plus reported that they dealt with young people with a wide range of needs. It was a universal service and they would not normally be aware that someone was a care leaver. There were close links with both the Haringey Guarantee scheme and Connexions. Some care leavers could be particularly attracted to a career in the armed services as it could appear to be an extension of the care background. It was noted that a lot of care leavers lacked self confidence and that Job Centre Plus could help to motivate them.
- 4.13 Denise Gandy, the Head of Housing Support and Options, stated that care leavers of above the age of 18 were considered for permanent housing when their placements ended. Care leavers were given 'reasonable preference' under the Council's allocations policy. Approximately 1,000 households were re-housed into social housing each year. This included roughly 200 one bedroom flats. There were currently around 20,000 on the

Council's housing register. A new policy was shortly to be introduced which would see the end of the points system. It instead placed people into bands according to their level of need. A quota of care leavers (currently set at 50) would be placed in band A, which was the highest level of need. This normally meant that they were re-housed in a matter of weeks/months rather than a longer period. The quota of 50 lets for care leavers would be reviewed each year to ensure that it was consistent with actual demand. They retained Band A status for six months. After this time, it was reviewed and, if appropriate, extended. It was noted that the Leaving Care team advised young people on what was the best option for them.

- 4.14 In situations where young people were placed out of borough, the responsibility to re-house young people rested with the home borough. If they wished to re-locate to where they had been placed, they would need to approach the Council in that area for assistance and, if necessary, make a homeless application. Alternatively, help could be given to them in finding private rented accommodation in that area. It was possible for young people to defer their right to be re-housed until after university if that was agreed in advance between the Housing Service, Leaving Care and the young person.
- 4.15 A social housing map was available that showed the location of properties, the nature of the area and what was available. If particular issues had been identified with a property, a decision could be made not to offer it to a young person and to deal with it as a "sensitive let". The service had someone who could assist people in bidding for properties and was able to look out for suitable properties for them. Consideration could be given to providing a specific resource for care leavers.
- 4.16 Care leavers received after care support up to the age of 21 and contact took place at least every 3 months. Homes for Haringey visited all vulnerable tenants although it was not clear whether this included care leavers.
- 4.17 Chris Chalmers, the Head of Service for Children in Care, reported that Oldham had required every Council service to put something in their business plan that would assist care leavers. She also felt that Council staff could help by acting as mentors and assisting with things such as mock interviews. This could help them to develop aspirations and build better self belief. The Council was still a large organisation and should be able to provide such opportunities. Ms Gandy felt that support could be improved by starting to work with the young person at an earlier stage to increase the opportunity for planned moves and a smooth transition. A mentor who was able to follow the young person for a sustained period of time would also assist. In addition, it was felt that the responsibility for children and young people in care could be shared more evenly across the Council.

5. Health, Well Being and Leisure

- 5.1 The Panel received evidence from the following on how the health, well being and leisure needs of LACYP were addressed. Chris Chalmers, the Head of Service for Children in Care reported that foster carers received a weekly allowance that was intended to cover the full range of needs. Checks were made on how the allowance was used. However, this could be more specific about levels of activity and sporting opportunities. It would nevertheless not be possible to ring fence any money for certain activities as allowances were subject to national parameters. In addition, around two thirds of foster carers lived outside of the borough.

- 5.2 Andy Briggs, the Head of Sports and Leisure reported that the Leisure Service was responsible for a wide range of facilities including parks and leisure centres. It was a universal service and did not target specific groups of individuals. However, there were specific arrangements for some groups at Tottenham Green Leisure Centre and children from residential care homes could obtain free access to the pool.
- 5.3 There were also partnership arrangements with Tottenham Hotspur who ran a number of schemes that specifically targeted children in care. There was also the Positive Futures scheme that was run by the Youth Service and aimed to get unemployed young people into sustainable employment. However, the future of this and some other schemes was currently in doubt due to budget cuts.
- 5.4 The service was aware of the fact that leisure opportunities were important to many disadvantaged groups. However, they did not want to stigmatise them by specific targeting. They instead preferred to, where appropriate, provide vouchers to partners that offered concessionary prices to specific groups of people. They could then also use facilities when they wished to.
- 5.5 There were reduced rates for the Haringey Active card offered to specific groups within the community. Discounts varied from 30% to 70%. Members of the Council had indicated that they were committed to continuing with this. The service promoted the use of its leisure centres but it was accepted that they could link up better with particularly disadvantaged groups within the community, such as children in care.
- 5.6 Entitlement to concessionary rates for children in care who were fostered was dependent on the status of their foster carer(s). No leisure services were provided free – they were already heavily subsidised. For example, the economic cost of a swim was £7. The service cost the Council around £2 million per year. If a particular group of people started to gain free entry, there was the danger that it would set a precedent.
- 5.7 They had no specific schemes to assist with the career development of young people who wished to work in the leisure industry. However, they worked closely with the College of Haringey, Enfield and North East London who ran specific placement projects. They also provided work experience for local schools. There was a substantial need for lifeguards and a rookie lifeguard scheme for under 16s was currently provided. There were further opportunities that could possibly be investigated including increasing awareness amongst staff of the needs of children in care.
- 5.8 The Leisure Service did not have a volunteer programme. Qualified staff were required by the service and it was essential for their qualifications to be maintained. There was a casual pool of staff who filled in on an “as and when” basis. There was generally a low turnover of staff. Volunteers were, however, used in parks. There were also opportunities outside of leisure centres. For example, sports clubs required volunteers on a regular basis and could sponsor individuals who wished to gain coaching qualifications. The service could nevertheless look at what could be done to assist in terms of work placements.

- 5.9 Mr Briggs reported that there were a number of leisure premises that could possibly be used as a venue for the virtual school if need be, for example Tottenham Green or Broadwater Farm. In addition, the libraries might also provide opportunities.
- 5.10 Ms. Lobatto reported that her team was commissioned by the Children and Young People's Service and was based at Bounds Green Health Centre. The team was multi disciplinary and included a psychiatrist, two psychotherapists, a family therapist and psychologist. Referrals came from social workers and other professionals. Specific packages of care were developed for individuals. The service took children and young people who were based in or around Haringey. They were currently providing services for 135 children in care, which was 22% of the total. It was highly likely that children in care would have mental health needs as they all came from difficult family situations. A small number had a specific psychiatric condition. Others were upset, unhappy, traumatised or neglected. Although some of the young people might feel that they did not want the service, they were referred as others, for instance their carers, teachers or social workers were worried about them.
- 5.11 There were two different services that were provided by the Tavistock NHS Trust:
- The Tavistock – Haringey service that was provided locally for children who were being fostered or in residential care or in transition between placements: and
 - The Fostering, Adoption & Kinship Care service provided centrally at the Tavistock Clinic in Swiss Cottage that was open to children in care once they had been permanently placed. |
- 5.12 It was a misconception to suggest that children could not access the Tavistock – Haringey service until permanently placed but it was acknowledged that the current arrangement could cause confusion. There was no waiting list for the local service although the Panel noted that foster carers had been of the view that the Fostering, Adoption & Kinship Care service did have waiting times. The central clinic was a pan London service that required a referral from a GP. The two services were very different. If issues needed to be addressed urgently, the local service was available.
- 5.13 It was a misconception to suggest that children could not access the service until permanently placed but it was acknowledged that the current arrangement could cause confusion. There was no waiting list for the local service although the central clinic had one. The central clinic was a pan London service that required a referral from a GP. The two services were very different. If issues needed to be addressed urgently, the local service was available.
- 5.14 The service liaised closely with Barnet, Enfield and Haringey Mental Health Trust. They offered flexible services in a range of settings and endeavoured to make them as accessible as possible. For example, home visits could be undertaken or clinics used for consultations. The Bounds Green location had the benefit of being co-located with nurses so physical and emotional issues could be better linked.
- 5.15 There was no formal system for following up on people who had come through the system. There were close links with social workers so there was an awareness of how many young

people progressed through the system. Long term outcomes were not known though. There were clear differences between childrens and adults services. The Leaving Care team might be in the best position to co-ordinate the monitoring of long term outcomes. If emotional issues were identified at a later stage, professionals would want to look at the earlier history of patients.

- 5.16 Judy Mace, Haringey Designated Nurse for Children in Care, reported that her service undertook a health assessment of children after four weeks in care. This was reviewed every six months until the child was 18. The service was offered first and foremost from Bounds Green but the nurses could visit if need be. If any needs were identified, these were followed up to ensure that children received the appropriate service. The system now allowed comparisons with the health of other children to be made and a tool had been developed that allowed a wider picture of health issues to be taken. This would be fully operational in a year.
- 5.17 Chris Chalmers reported they had had to wait until a third nurse was in place before starting to undertake health assessments. They were previously undertaken by GPs and the quality of them had been variable. Foster carers could also find it difficult to get appointments with GPs for children. The previous system had been a source of frustration to the service. Social workers and managers picked up on comments from assessments. There was now an electronic system for recording assessments and consideration was currently being given to uploading this directly onto case records.
- 5.18 A performance management tool had been developed so that progress could be monitored. It will capture relevant data and be linked in with other systems. Two of the nurses were specially trained in sexual health issues and it was discussed in detail with young people. They also could provide chlamydia screening and contraception. In addition, a lot of targeted work was undertaken and schemes like Teens and Toddlers used. A similar approach was adopted in respect of substance abuse. Work covered motivation and risks. Nursing staff liaised closely with social workers. They did not undertake blood tests, which were required for HIV tests, as these had to be done by doctors. It was noted that there was complex guidance on HIV testing. Tests were not routine and depended on the circumstances.
- 5.19 Emma Cumbergen from the Leaving Care and Asylum Service reported that the Leaving Care team provided a range of services for young people over the age of 18 as well as pathway planning. They also undertook targeted work. A number of care leavers were young mothers. There was currently a sexual health clinic on site although it was not clear whether it would survive the current budget cuts. This had been asked for by the young people and could also be accessed by their partners. Chlamydia testing and condom distribution was carried out. Dedicated personal advisers were also available to assist. In terms of the teenage pregnancy, a range of resources were available on site including virtual babies. A number of young girls who were in care aspired to be mothers from an early age. The motivation for this included a wish to create a family and to provide a child with a better start than they had been given. The service tried to influence young women to make different choices.
- 5.20 Young people in care had access to the borough teenage pregnancy worker. A proportion of them had been subject to emotional distress and some had suffered sexual abuse. Some had little interest in protecting themselves and could see parenthood as an opportunity to

have something of their own. Virtual babies could be used to give young people the opportunity of experiencing the reality of childcare. There was also a nurse who worked specifically with looked after children and could provide help and guidance. Whilst some care leavers lost their children to adoption, others were very good parents.

5.21 The service also supported a number of young fathers and assisted them in developing parenting skills. This could sometimes be difficult, especially where there were access issues. Efforts were made to keep young families together where at all possible. There were monthly targeted mother and toddler sessions and the partnership between nurses and families generally worked well. There was currently a dedicated post to address substance abuse but it was unlikely that this would survive the current round of budget savings. This did not mean that no service would be provided though as mainstream services could be accessed instead.

Key Issues:

- Involvement and engagement with Council services and partners
- Enhancing the role of Members in championing the needs of LACYP
- Increasing the uptake of tutoring opportunities
- Assistance for care leavers who wish to attend university outside of London
- Improving accommodation for the Study Centre
- Emotional support and social isolation
- Leisure opportunities
- Work placements
- Support for care leavers in finding and maintaining accommodation
- Monitoring long term outcomes
-