

# MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CORPORATE PARENTING ADVISORY COMMITTEE HELD ON MONDAY, 3RD OCTOBER, 2016, 19:30

## PRESENT:

**Councillors: Patrick Berryman, Bob Hare, Jennifer Mann, Felicia Opoku, Anne Stennett and Elin Weston (Chair)**

### 430. FILMING AT MEETINGS

The Chair referred those present to agenda Item 1 as shown on the agenda in respect of filming at this meeting and asked that those present reviewed and noted the information contained therein.

### 431. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (IF ANY)

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Morris.

Apologies were also received from Jon Abbey, Lesley Kettles and Annie Walker.

### 432. URGENT BUSINESS

None

### 433. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

### 434. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 4 July 2016 were AGREED.

The Corporate Performance Manger agreed to circulate the list of statistical neighbouring boroughs to the Committee.

**Action: Margaret Gallagher.**

### 435. MATTERS ARISING

The Committee NOTED the Corporate Parenting Agenda Plan 2016/17

### 436. PERFORMANCE

The Chair advised that she recently attended a London Councils meeting with other Lead Members for Children's Services from across London. Colleagues advised that

during recent inspection visits Ofsted were keen to speak to members of corporate parenting committees to ensure that the arrangements around corporate parenting were robust and that members were engaged. The Chair emphasised that she wanted the Committee to be able to demonstrate its engagement if asked by Ofsted and so would be maintaining performance as a standing item on future agendas.

RECEIVED the report on Performance for the Year to the end of August 2016. Report included in the agenda pack (pages 13 to 18).

NOTED in response to discussion:

- An overall improving trajectory in relation to the majority of performance indicators.
- 430 children were in care on the last day of August 2016 or 72 per 10,000 population including 32 unaccompanied asylum seeker children. There had been a gradual increase in the level of children in care in comparison to the position at the end of March 2016 - 23 more children in care. However reduction in Haringey's rate of looked after children in 2015/16 placed LBH within the inter-quartile range of our statistical neighbours (a rate of 69 per 10,000 population), although the current rate remained above the London (52) and national average (60) rates.
- At the end of August, 91% of looked after children had an up to date Care Plan. Performance in this area consistently remained above target since February 2016 as a result of activity tracking in weekly meetings held by the Head of Service for Children in Care.
- At the end of August, 82% of looked after children aged 16-17 had up to date Pathway Plans. Performance in this area dipped slightly since June 2016 where 96% of pathway plans were up to date however completion of pathway plans was much higher than that reported at the same period last year. Although performance remained short of the 90% target, it was hoped that with further effort from the 16+ children in care team, the 90% target would be achieved.
- Performance of PEPs was slightly short of the target (87% up to date at the end of August). This area continued to be a priority of performance tracking.
- 40% of LAC achieved 5 A\*-C grades at GSCE including English Literature and Maths. The Committee was informed that no local authority had ever achieved over 38% in previous years. The Committee passed on their congratulations to the Virtual Schools and all of the others involved.
- Indicators around stability of placements for looked after children remained in line with statistical neighbours and targets. In the year to August 2016, 9% of children had three or more placement moves, below the statistical neighbour average (10%). 76% of children under 16 who had been in care for at least 2.5 years had been in the same placement for at least 2 years, slightly above our statistical neighbour average (67%).

- 91% of Children in Care had an up to date review at the end of August, above the 90% target.
- At the end of August, 94% of children in care for over a month had an up to date health assessment, which was above target and continued the positive trend.
- Timeliness of children placed for adoption continued to be positive. In the year to August 2016, children waited an average of 298 days from becoming looked after to being placed for adoption. This compares favourably with the national threshold (426 day average for 2013-16). The Chair asked the Committee to note that Haringey had received a letter from Edward Timpson MP acknowledging Haringey's positive performance in this area.
- The 2015/16 trend towards the reduction in the number of care proceeding applications had shifted towards an increasing trend in Q1 2016/17. It was unclear what had led to this increase, however it reflected the national trend. There had also been a significant increase in applications regarding children under 1, from 35% in 2015/16 to 44% in Q1 2016/17. The period April to June 2016 saw an average duration of care proceedings for concluded cases was 37 weeks, slightly higher than that recorded for 2015/16 (34 weeks). Q1 data for 2016-17 shows 10% were concluded under the 26 week statutory timescale.
- 84% of children in care visits were recorded as completed in the relevant timescales in August. Performance in this area has remained below target since October 2014 mainly due to recording issues. This was being tracked at performance meetings held by the Head of Service for Children in Care.
- 20% of looked after children at 31<sup>st</sup> August were placed 20 miles or more from Haringey. Performance was worse than the 16% target however slightly improved since March 2016 end of year position (23%). Although higher than national levels this proportion was only slightly above the average for London and Statistical Neighbours (18%).
- 83% of the current LAC cohort had an up to date dental visit as at August 2016.
- In the year to August 2016, only 7 permanency orders had been achieved (5 adoptions and 2 special guardianship orders– 10 fewer than the same period last year and the lowest recorded for many years. There were a further 10 adoption orders in the pipeline. Special guardianship referrals continued to be low and it was likely that no more than 15 would be achieved by the end of the financial year.
- Performance on care leavers in suitable accommodation and in education, employment and training for 2015-16 data showed that 45% of *all* former relevant care leavers aged 17-21 were in EET (57% of those who were *in touch* with the local authority) 69% of *all* care leavers were in suitable accommodation or 87% of those who were *in touch*.

AGREED to note the report.

The Committee sought clarification on the reasons behind the low number of permanency orders. In response officers clarified that it was due to the judgements handed down in a couple of a recent court cases, which concluded that family members needed to be considered in cases where the child was to be sent outside of the family, and this had significant implications with local authorities increasingly looking to place children within the family. The Head of Service for Children in Care & Placements advised that this had resulted in a sharp increase in Special Guardianship Orders and a dramatic reduction in adoptions. This often led to the child being looked after within the family, often by grandparents, and as a result concerns existed about the ability of older family members to look after the child in the long term. The Committee was advised that Special Guardianship Orders were originally envisaged for babies and young children but were increasingly being used for older children.

#### **437. DISCUSSION AROUND FUTURE MEETING SET UP/AREAS OF FOCUS**

The Committee NOTED the CFPS document entitled “10 questions to ask if you’re scrutinising services for looked after children” which was included in the agenda pack at pages 19-54.

The AD Safeguarding advised the Committee that Members automatically took on responsibility for being corporate parents of looked after children at the point of being elected. It was noted that looked after children included those looked after under voluntary arrangement with carers (Section 20) and those under Care Orders made by the courts (Section 31). Councils’ exercised their corporate parenting responsibilities through the committee but individual members also retained a duty as corporate parents. The Committee was advised that the CFPS document, along with other guidance produced, was developed with the aim of providing relevant information to help members provide the same basic standard for children in care as would be expected for any other child.

The Chair advised there were two more meetings of the Committee in the current municipal year and her intention was that each agenda would include a focused thematic discussion item. The Chair suggested that this could require having an additional informal meeting between meetings. The Chair put forward that one of these discussion items should be around housing.

Dr Holt suggested that one area could be around a discussion of an up to date profile of the children who were coming in care. The Committee requested that the Corporate Performance Manger develop a brief presentation which showed a breakdown of the LAC population and any trends that had developed. The Chair requested that this was sent round to the Committee outside of the meeting and potentially included as an agenda item for the next meeting.

**Action: Margaret Gallagher/Clerk**

The Committee also requested that a report be produced for the next meeting which set out the increasingly challenging cohort of children referred with serious issues, including substance misuse problems or involved in gangs etc. Dr Holt suggested that

from a health perspective a number of these individuals were likely to have significant mental health issues and would be putting themselves at risk repeatedly.

**Action: Dominic Porter-Moore**

The Committee considered what activities were undertaken to celebrate the success of looked after children. Virtual Schools put on a celebration event for Year 11 pupils but the Committee considered that some form of celebratory event should be undertaken at later stages, such as graduation from university. The AD Safeguarding advised that care leavers had recently received impressive university results. The Committee also suggested that the Council could offer mentoring to recent graduates to help their transition into the jobs market. The Chair suggested that there was a wider piece of work required around leaving care support; with one area around what the Council did as the young person was approaching 18, and another around what was done after in terms of longer term support.

Lynn Carrington, Designated Nurse Children in Care advised that there was a national paper being developed around the health of care leavers and agreed to send a copy of the report to the Clerk when it was published to distribute to the Committee.

**Action Lynn Carrington**

In response to a question from the Committee, Aspire acknowledged that they had regular interaction with the Who Cares Trust and that one of the Aspire leaders worked for the organisation. The Young People's Involvement Officer acknowledged that Aspire group also supported each other and had means of communication with the wider group, through a number of fora, such as Whats App.

The Young People's Involvement Officer provided SOG with an overview of a meeting with Natasha from a youth engagement company called Silver Lined Horizons. Natasha had significant experience in the field and had established a number of Children in Care Councils across the country, and recently met up with Aspire to undertake a consultation exercise to explore some of the problems faced by those young people. The Committee was advised that 6 sessions would be undertaken in the run up to the end of the year and that Aspire would be encouraged to lead on participation and what those sessions would involve. The Chair commented that there were some clear overlaps between the responses provided by Aspire, around say addiction and lack of guidance, and health outcomes and how to ensure continuing support into adulthood.

In response to a question from the Committee, the Young People's Involvement Officer commented that in her experience some of the most common issues facing LAC were around housing, their future careers including apprenticeship placements, and the stigma involved with being in care. The AD Safeguarding cautioned that the LAC tended to be a very diverse group and the only thing that united them was the fact that they were looked after, some were happy to be engaged with and to be identified as looked after, while some did not. The Committee was advised that the key issue was ensuring that mechanisms existed to ensure that they were being looked after properly and in way that reflected their wishes and individual circumstances. Every looked after young person underwent a statutory review at which point the independent review officer should be assuring themselves about the Care Plan, their health, their placement and any other concerns that they may have.

The Committee requested sight of the Independent Reviewing Officers reports as per one of the recommendations in the CPFS document. The Chair agreed that these should be brought to a future meeting.

**Action: Dominic Porter-Moore**

The Committee commented that there had been a previous request for a social worker and/or a foster carer to attend a meeting and discuss their experiences with the committee. The Chair expressed caution that the Committee needed to be mindful that it did not assume the role of Overview and Scrutiny Committee and as such it might be more appropriate to invite social work professionals, for instance, to one of the proposed informal discussion sessions on a related topic. The AD Safeguarding advised that meeting and interacting with social workers might be best suited to inviting both them and the Committee Members to a specific event. The Young People's Involvement Officer suggested that the Foster Carer's Forum might be a suitable event for Committee Members to attend and that they met twice a month. The Head of Service to send the details to the Chair who would circulate dates to the Committee and agree to arrange a visit.

**Action: Dominic Porter-Moore/Chair**

The Chair requested that that annual report of The IROs be brought to a future meeting of the Committee. The AD Safeguarding agreed to ascertain when the annual report was published and to liaise with the Clerk to include it on the relevant upcoming agenda.

**Action: Neelam Bhardwaja**

The Committee AGREED the substantive discussion items for upcoming meetings. The Chair suggested that clearly setting this out would help the Committee make recommendations to the Cabinet Member and to Cabinet as per the Committee's terms of reference.

- January 2017 – Housing Support
- April 2017 – Voice of the Child including placements and what IRO's do.
- June 2017 – Leaving care support (and the transition to independent living)

#### **438. LAC NUMBERS & DEMAND LEVELS**

NOTED the presentation by the AD Safeguarding on LAC numbers and demand levels which was included in the agenda pack at pages 55-69. The Committee was advised that Children's Services had seen a 30% increase in the number of proceedings, which comprised of two main groups of babies and young children, and troublesome teenagers whose parents were unable to look after them. The AD Safeguarding elaborated that a judgement in a case brought by Southwark Council had resulted in local authorities being responsible for taking into care older teenagers who did not want to live in the family home.

The Committee was also advised that there were around 520 LAC around two years ago and there were currently 430 LAC which was about on trend with statistical neighbours. Haringey continued to receive its quota of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children as per the arrangements for London boroughs, with placements allocated by Croydon via a rota. The AD Safeguarding advised that Haringey's allocation was likely to total 40 UASC.

The Chair requested that a Member training even be set up to go through some of the key background information in relation to current performance in Children's Services and the additional pressures that the service had experienced.

**Action: Neelam Bhardwaja/Jon Abbey**

#### **439. FOSTER CARE RECRUITMENT UPDATE**

NOTED the verbal update given by the Head of Service, Children in Care and Placements on progress around the recruitment of a provider to undertake training and recruitment of in-house foster carers.

The Committee noted that an interim contract was being developed with NRS for the continued provision of foster care recruitment until March 2017. The Committee was also advised that a full procurement exercise was being undertaken alongside the NRS interim contract to go out to tender to the market. Some initial work undertaken by the Commissioning service suggested that there were 3 or 4 agencies that were interested in the contract. The procurement timetable was that a preferred bidder would be selected by February and the contract would be in place by March 2017. The Head of Service, Children in Care and Placements advised that the new contractor would focus on marketing, assessment and recruitment of foster carers.

The Committee was advised that the interim contract was still being finalised but that NRS had begun assessments for new foster carers. The Chair acknowledged that nobody was happy with the previous arrangements around the NRS contract and that going forward she would like the Committee to look at a range of options around what should be done around foster carer recruitment in the medium to long term.

In response to a question around the alternative options available, the Committee was advised that the going out to tender was considered the most effective option in the short term and there were significant risks involved in rebuilding and recruiting an in-house service. The Chair commented that the case for bringing the service back in-house would be examined further as part of the medium to long term options.

#### **440. PAN-LONDON ADOPTION BID**

NOTED the verbal update given by the AD Safeguarding on the Pan-London Adoption bid. The Committee was advised that the original rationale for regionalising adoption services was set out in a Department for Education (DfE) paper and the government's aims were; to speed up matching, improve adopter recruitment and adoption support, reduce cost and improve the life chances of vulnerable children. The AD Safeguarding advised that the government was including provision of regionalised adoption services in its Education and Adoption Bill. The DfE had stated that its aim was for all local authorities to be part of a regionalised adoption service by 2020; the Committee was advised that the Secretary of State had powers to force local authorities to join a regionalised body, and therefore it was better for authorities to come together voluntarily.

AD Safeguarding reiterated that the preferred option for the Pan-London adoption was a local authority trading company delivery model with a strategic VAA partnership

operating in a hub and spoke model. Further development of the preferred option was being undertaken to better understand what the arrangements would mean in practice. The AD Safeguarding advised that further literature on the proposals had just been released and that this would be considered in detail. The likely next step was for each of the 33 London local authorities to progress an agreement in principle through their respective cabinets.

In response to a question, the AD Safeguarding advised that there would be one single hub for the whole of London but that there were existing sub-regional consortia arrangements; however it was not clear if these would be maintained. The Chair commented that it was likely if there was a particular child with particular needs then they could be adopted out of the geographic spoke area.

**441. UPDATE ON THE SITUATION AND FUNDING OF UNACCOMPANIED ASYLUM SEEKING CHILDREN (UASC)**

RECEIVED a report by exception which updated the Committee on recent government developments in caring for and supporting unaccompanied and refugee children and their families. The report also set out the assessment pathway for LAC with and uncertain immigration status. The report was included in the agenda pack (pages 65 to 70).

**442. UPCOMING SCRUTINY REVIEW ON CORPORATE PARENTING**

RECEIVED and NOTED a report which set out the proposed work planned by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, in relation to Haringey's corporate parenting responsibilities across the Council. The report was included in the agenda pack (pages 71 to 73).

The Chair advised that she had begun discussing suitable topics/areas to review with the Chair of Overview and Scrutiny but also advised that it would be looking into areas that CPAC did not have the capacity to. The Chair also cautioned that scrutiny would not be supplanting the work of this Committee or altering its remit. Part of the reason behind the review was that following the report from Rotherham, the scrutiny functions were found to be non-existent in questioning how the council carried out its corporate parenting arrangements.

**443. TERMS OF REFERENCE AND MINUTES FROM THE HARINGEY CHILDREN IN CARE OPERATIONAL GROUP**

RECEIVED and NOTED the draft terms of reference, the minutes from the Haringey Children in Care Operational Group meeting of 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2016 and the 2015/2016 Annual Report of Haringey's Children In Care Services.

**444. NEW ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS**

None

**445. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**



N/A

**446. MINUTES**

N/A

**447. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

NOTED the following upcoming report dates:

12<sup>th</sup> January 2017

3<sup>rd</sup> April 2017

Meetings are scheduled to start at 6.30pm.

CHAIR: Councillor Elin Weston

Signed by Chair .....

Date .....