

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CORPORATE PARENTING ADVISORY COMMITTEE HELD ON THURSDAY, 17TH JANUARY, 2019, 19:00 – 20:30

PRESENT: Councillors Peray Ahmet, Sakina Chenot, Erdal Dogan, Peter Mitchell, Tammy Palmer and Elin Weston (Chair)

39. FILMING AT MEETINGS

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

40. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (IF ANY)

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Culverwell.

41. URGENT BUSINESS

There were no items of urgent business.

42. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

43. MINUTES

The minutes of the 29th October 2018 were agreed as a correct record.

In addition, the Committee noted the work on regionalisation of adoption was ongoing and therefore the report to be presented to Cabinet had been pushed back to March 2019. The Committee was informed a formalised business plan had yet to be agreed but Officers were attending meetings to assist in the formulation of that plan. The implementation date for the regionalisation of adoption was to be 1st July 2019.

44. PERFORMANCE FOR THE YEAR TO DECEMBER 2018

The Committee considered this report which provided an analysis of the performance data and trends for an agreed set of measures relating to looked after children on behalf of the Corporate Parenting and Advisory Committee.

In addition, the Committee:

- Sought clarity on the difference between a permanency plan and long term fostering arrangements. Officers informed there was statutory guidance which stated local authorities should match children to long term foster carers on a permanent basis, where possible, but this required a formal process to be approved by a panel for this to become a permanency plan.
- Queried the number of special guardianship orders, which was lower than the Council's statistical neighbours numbers were. Officers noted this could be for several reasons such as situations where children had complex needs and families were not able to manage looking after that child. Additionally, the level of financial deprivation in Haringey meant it was difficult for certain families to raise their kinship. The Committee noted the sum of money special guardians received was means tested whereas this was not the case for foster carers.
- Noted the proportion of agency social workers in Haringey was relatively high at 30% but its turnover of social workers was low at 8%. Officers confirmed they were actively encouraging their agency social workers to become permanent members of staff but noted a high proportion of agency workers was not a unique problem faced by Haringey; it was a London wide issue. Officers informed there was a memorandum of understanding between the local authorities that they would pay agency social workers within the same band to prevent their costs spiralling. It was also noted there were to be interviews for permanent social worker positions and a number of agency workers had applied.
- Queried when it was expected the use of the new e.PEPs would become fully embedded to improve compliance. Officers noted the current paper form PEP had two parts which required input and signing off by the child's social worker and then the school. These had not always been completed and had been of variable quality. The e.PEPs now allowed the Virtual School to have sight of every PEP and it had found the quality of the PEPs improving since this oversight was introduced. It had also become a requirement that the Virtual School sign off each PEP. The target was for the social worker and school to send the PEPs to the Virtual School within two weeks and then for the Virtual School to sign them off within 5 days. Social workers and Schools were still adjusting to the new system but schools were being emailed to encourage them to complete their PEPs. Officers suggested an escalation policy may need to be created but were optimistic that, over time, the completion of the PEPs in a timely manner by all parties would become routine. The Virtual School had created an informational leaflet to be sent to schools and refresher training to improve the percentage of PEPs completed. It was anticipated the numbers would improve within the next term and Officers were encouraged to create a target.
- Praised Officers for the number of children looked after (for at least 12 months) with an up-to-date health assessment reaching 98%.
- Queried the increase in the number of care leavers aged 17-18 and 19-21 year olds in receipt of leaving care services considered in touch with the local authority. Officers confirmed this was partly because of data being better recorded. They also confirmed that for those not in touch with the leaving care services, all was done to re-establish contact by the Officers, including searching the police system to ascertain whether they were in prison.

45. OFSTED INSPECTION OF HARINGEY CHILDREN'S SERVICES

The Committee considered the report on Ofsted's inspection of Haringey Children's Services. Officers noted that, whilst the services required improvement to be good, the tone of the inspection report was positive and suggested the services were on the right trajectory and had improved on the previous year.

Regarding the inspection process, the Committee was informed that, following a brief presentation to the Ofsted inspectors on the 29th November, the inspectors then observed and questioned members of staff at random in the MASH. At the end of the day, there would be a meeting with the inspectors for Officers to receive feedback. There were instances where Officers did not agree with the inspectors conclusions and this was fed back to Ofsted but there were also occasions where the Officers agreed with the conclusions. Overall, Officers accepted the areas Ofsted had identified for improvement in their inspection report. The children's services had carried out its own self-evaluation and found that it largely concurred with the Ofsted judgements and the services recognised there was a variability in certain areas but it was working hard for these to be eliminated.

Ann Graham, Director of Children's Services, noted the difficult work of social workers and highlighted the praise Ofsted made in relation to the work of the Council's staff and managers - that they were tenacious in their efforts to help and support children and young people.

Following discussion, the Committee:

- Concurred with Ofsted's praise of staff and managers. The Committee thanked the Officers for their work in helping to improve the lives of Haringey's children and young people.
- Recognised the areas of improvement needed but noted the progress made by the services in recent years and felt they was moving in the right direction.
- Queried the Ofsted comment on page 21 of the report pack that health and other relevant agencies were not always in attendance at strategy discussions following the risk in a case having been escalated. It was noted this was due to the lack of CCG funding to enable consistent health agency representation on the MASH.
- Sought clarity on the comment that the engagement of fathers was too variable. Officers noted there were occasions where only the mother had been consulted and better engagement with fathers, where possible, was needed.
- Queried how confident Officers were that the children's services would be classed as 'good' at its next major Ofsted inspection. Officers responded they were optimistic and that strategies had already been put in place to meet the deficiencies identified in the Ofsted inspection report.
- Noted an Action Plan was being submitted to Ofsted in March 2019 and that would then be taken to Cabinet for it to note. Regarding that Action Plan, Officers were asked how they would monitor the actions to ensure they were being completed and how the committee could be reassured that progress had been made on those actions. Officers responded that a report would be presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and, from then onwards, regular updates would be provided to that committee for monitoring. A draft Action Plan had been created with nine overall key actions and then additional

actions supporting those for individual teams to meet in order to support the overall delivery of the Action Plan. It was noted children and young people could provide valuable audit insight into the services to ensure that their voices were heard and that the services worked for them as much as it did the Council.

An update on the Action Plan for Ofsted was requested to be reported to CPAC
(Action: Ann Graham)

46. UNEMPLOYMENT AND LAC

The Committee next considered the report on unemployment and how looked after young people and care leavers were supported into employment, education and training. Additionally, Officers noted 59% of care leavers did not reside within the borough, which created difficulties when most of the resources available were within the borough.

Following discussion, the Committee:

- Praised the comprehensive report.
- Queried how the authority worked with unaccompanied minors when language was a barrier. Where necessary, Officers attempt to place unaccompanied minors in English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes. However, it was noted there had been difficulty with referring certain minors to ESOL classes as admission was only available at certain times throughout the year. The Council had explored working with partners to address this and had worked with UK Unsigned which was able to source additional money to have ESOL classes at their organisation throughout the year. The Young Men's Christian Association had also been able to hold a number of ESOL classes on site. Additionally, Officers informed the Committee that unaccompanied minors were placed within the borough where possible. The authority deliberately placed unaccompanied minors as close as possible to the Council as it recognised the difficulty they faced in arriving in a new country and therefore worked quickly to ensure they settled in.
- Queried what additional support was provided to unaccompanied minors in the Council's care. Officers informed the Committee that unaccompanied minors were allocated a social worker upon arrival. The authority had a dedicated, well-trained team working with unaccompanied minors. Initially, age assessments may be required and Officers recognised this could be a stressful process for the minors, particularly if they were subsequently found not to be minors. The team ran various workshops to help integrate unaccompanied minors (who might not have previously received formal education on, for example - sexual health). Officers noted there was a financial and resource pressure of looking after unaccompanied minors with no additional funding having been provided. Officers informed there was a national transfer scheme to place unaccompanied minors within other authorities that had greater capacity available. However, Officers acknowledged the scheme had not been operating as it should be and, as of yet, no child had been transferred under that scheme.

- Noted the number of care leavers was 520, in comparison to 414 a year prior, which Officers confirmed put an additional strain on the resources of the services.
- Noted it was not entirely clear to young people the options available to them with regard to funding up until the age of 25. Officers confirmed they had contacted all care leavers to inform them of the Council's obligation to support them up until the age of 25. This had also been discussed in one of the authority's newsletter. As the young person transitioned, their social worker remind them of the Council's continued responsibility for them until they reached the age of 25. Officers assured the Committee that social workers routinely engaged with young people regarding their aspirations and the options available to them in their one to ones, as well as informing them of the support that could be provided by the Council.

(Action: Clerk to re-circulate relevant report – Officers to provide an update on this at a later meeting.)

47. MEMBER TRAINING

The Chair informed the Committee of the recent Corporate Parenting Training. As it coincided with the Ofsted inspection, this would be re-run in the summer for those that were not able to attend.

There was also a jointly organised safeguarding training session between adults, children and housing. This had been well received with positive feedback. As there was also a clash on that evening, the option to re-run the session was being explored.

The Chair and Ann Graham were looking to hold an all member training session to give members an opportunity to further discuss the Ofsted report. There would also be training provided to inform members of the exploitation panel.

48. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Date of next meeting noted –

- 21st March 2019.

CHAIR:

Signed by Chair

Date