

MINUTES OF MEETING Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee HELD ON Thursday, 15th July, 2021, 7.00 - 9.00 pm

PRESENT:

**Councillors: Zena Brabazon, Sakina Chenot, Tammy Palmer and
Elin Weston**

ALSO ATTENDING:

1. 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.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (IF ANY)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor James.

3. URGENT BUSINESS

None.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

5. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 14 January 2021 were agreed as an accurate record.

6. MATTERS ARISING

It was confirmed that the actions detailed in the minutes of the previous meeting had now been completed.

Two university students, Tabitha Musa and Leah Glenday, were invited to the meeting to discuss their experiences of attending university during a pandemic. It was noted that there were 48 young people within the cared for service who had now started university and the team were very proud of their achievements. Beverley Hendricks, Assistant Director for Safeguarding and Social Care, felt that it was important for members to meet some of the young people who were attending university during a

particularly difficult time, who had maintained their education despite these challenges.

The two young students gave an overview of their first year at university and applauded everything that their personal advisor had done for them, who had maintained contact throughout that time.

The Committee were interested to hear the challenges the students had faced during their time remote learning. In response, Tabitha stated that the start of the first year had been in person, until November 2020. This had enabled her to form some initial relationships before the learning had moved to online. Things were just starting to open up again, although it was acknowledged that January had been a tough time for students.

Leah stated that she was fortunate that her university had smaller groups initially which had allowed them to meet in person. She had continued to stay in her accommodation since the start of the first year, as all students had stayed in their individual colleges.

The Chair recognised the great achievements of the students and questioned whether there was anything that the Council could have done differently to assist them further. In response, Leah stated that she had found some of the membership fees to various societies were very expensive, around £200, which often prevented certain individuals from joining. She had also been asked to sign a declaration that she would not undertake any employment during term time, which prevented her from having a chance to build up funds.

The Committee felt that there was a need to challenge universities. It was acknowledged that steps were being taken towards promoting inclusion for everyone, however those individuals with insufficient funds for societies were being excluded from these opportunities. The Committee would look at how this could be followed up with the universities.

It was acknowledged that not all universities had the same support packages and that it was currently up to the individual to disclose their need for support. The Committee believed that some individuals may not feel comfortable in disclosing this and therefore could be a barrier for them.

The Chair, on behalf of the committee, thanked the students for their attendance and was very proud of all that they had achieved so far.

7. PERFORMANCE FOR 2020/21

Richard Hutton, Senior Performance Officer, introduced the report, as set out in the agenda.

Officers responded to questions from the Committee:

- Councillor Weston challenged the PEPs and questioned whether 84% was good enough given the circumstances. In response, it was stated that they wished they could give healthier data, which was a reflection of a number of factors, however officers were confident that they could get the figures back up to where they should be.
- Beverley Hendricks stated that the target the service had set itself was a minimum of 80% during the pandemic, for a number of factors. It was noted that Covid had placed a significant impact on staffing levels in schools, with some having to open during school holidays to ensure that vulnerable children were still receiving a level of education. It was also stated that there had been some challenges around the 16+ age group being able to secure support from the virtual school, where a virtual school officer had been put in place for this age group. It was suggested that further discussions may take place at a future meeting to address the loss of learning and the programme focused on how to recover. **ACTION.**
- In response to a question from Councillor Palmer regarding resourcing and whether the service felt supported enough, Ann Graham, Director of Children's Services, stated that this was always a challenging question. She stated that the service wasn't adequately resourced for speech and language services, which were clear areas that required additional funding.
- Ann Graham stated that she was not concerned about the decrease in the number of looked after children, from 30 to 23. It was noted that as a result of Covid, the patterns of a large number of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children had now changed. It was noted that there was currently a voluntary transfer mechanism in place from Kent.
- Richard Hutton stated that the service was beginning to see an increase in the numbers of looked after children, with more people contacting the service within the last month than in the last 18 months. The service had prepared for this surge in numbers.
- Beverley Hendricks stated that they were introducing a new system called e-PEPS and that she would come back and report on this system in more detail at a future meeting. **ACTION.** She stated that there were a number of factors that may influence the data received, however she was confident that the service worked hard to ensure that the children's outcomes were strong enough.

The Committee stated that they were very supportive of the service and didn't want them to become complacent and continue to improve each year. It was recognised that it had not been an easy year for our children, or the service as a whole.

8. DISPROPORTIONALITY - VERBAL UPDATE

Sheri Jiwany-Burnett, Service Manager - Operational Delivery, gave a verbal update on disproportionality at the meeting and gave a presentation at the meeting.

It was noted that a thematic inspection took place in May 2021 over a period of 4 days, as one of 9 boroughs selected, specifically to understand mixed heritage and black boys. The results of the inspection of all 9 boroughs would be combined into one report which was due to be released in September/October 2021. The key lines of

enquiry looked at were governance and leadership. The format of the inspection had been kept within the youth justice service, management and focus groups. Overall, the feedback from the inspection had been positive and it was recognised that leadership supported a culture of change within the youth justice service regarding disproportionality, which had happened over a number of years.

Officers responded to questions from the Committee:

- It was confirmed that the parenting support was for the parents of young people that offend. There was now a virtual space for parents to get support.
- In response to a question regarding school exclusions, particularly at secondary school level, it was stated that there had been a new steering group set up which focused on exclusions of young people and how these could be prevented, with a partnered approach. Ann Graham added that the exclusions group was a sub-group of the Black and Asian Minority Attainment Group. The group was working on a model of change, looking at an alternative provision strategy. The overall vision was to get to a position of zero exclusions.
- The Committee were supportive of changing the language used to 'disparity'.
- If resources were not an issue, Sheri Jiwany-Burnett stated that she would like to have the opportunity to work closely with the Metropolitan Police at Hendon to look at how they understand adolescents, as there was a need for a wholesale approach across agencies to address the issue of disproportionality.

It was noted that there was a pilot for knife crime prevention orders, aligned to anti-social behaviour orders, which focused on knife crime. Concern was raised that these orders could be placed on a child based on police intelligence, not on criminal offence. Concern was also raised that this could have an impact on racial disparity, specifically against young men, with the maximum penalty being two years in prison. Sheri Jiwany-Burnett stated that she would be challenging this and providing comments to the Home Office.

The Chair requested that a report on stop and search come to a future meeting.
ACTION.

Discussion took place regarding early interventions and whether offenders could be identified at an early age, as part of the early years review. In response, Ann Graham referred to the 20 most prolific offenders work that had previously been undertaken. It was felt that providing speech and language support at an early age was essential and that the service was working with the CCG and the Borough Plan to get additional resources for this vital support. This would allow young people to express themselves at an early age.

9. WORK UNDERTAKEN TO SUPPORT CHILDREN IN CARE DURING COVID - PRESENTATION

Sarah Pike, Principal Social Worker, gave a presentation on the work undertaken to support children in care during Covid.

The Committee stressed the importance of ensuring that the voices of children were heard, which had often been lost during covid. It was noted that the leisure

interventions and holiday activity fund were vitally important for young people and the summer programme was available on the website now.

The Chair referred to the Model of Change Alternative Provision Strategy and it was requested whether some of the data on children in care could be extracted and reported back to committee in the future. **ACTION.**

Beverley Hendricks referred to the issue of social workers in schools, given some of the successes of the programme. The service would therefore be making strong representations to the DfE to continue with this service until we come out of the pandemic. It was stressed that early intervention was key and that the service would like to see additional funding for this service to be rolled out to all secondary schools, with links into primary, which had been critical to vulnerable children and their families during the pandemic. In response, the Chair believed that a letter should be sent to the DfE to this effect, on behalf of Councillors.

10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Ann Graham noted that the SEND inspection had ended the previous week and that further information would be given at the next meeting. **ACTION.**

CHAIR: COUNCILLOR ZENA BRABAZON

Signed by Chair

Date