

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CORPORATE PARENTING ADVISORY COMMITTEE HELD ON TUESDAY, 23RD APRIL, 2019, 6.55 - 8.25 pm

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

49. 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.

50. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (IF ANY)

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Culverwell.

51. URGENT BUSINESS

There were no items of urgent business.

52. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

53. MINUTES

The minutes of the 17th January 2019 were agreed as a correct record.

In addition, the Chair informed that the implementation date for the regionalisation of adoption had been delayed until 1st September 2019. This was to allow for the finalisation of the recruitment process needed.

Regarding member training, the Chair informed that an additional Corporate Parenting training session was due to be held in September 2019, for those unable to attend the previous session.

54. PERFORMANCE FOR THE YEAR TO MARCH 2019

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 Advisory Committee.

Bev Hendricks, Interim Assistant Director for Children's Social Care, took the Committee through the report as set out. In addition, the following was highlighted:

- There was concern nationwide that the National Transfer Scheme (NTS), which aimed to ensure the care responsibilities of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children was shared by local authorities, was not working. Haringey looked after 50 unaccompanied asylum seeker children. This figure was above the nationwide average, which was approximately 42 per local authority. Haringey had agreed to a request from Croydon Council to take on unaccompanied asylum seeker children on their behalf.
- In response to a question from the Committee, Officers informed that unaccompanied asylum seeker children had no on arrival entitlements but by virtue of the fact they were unaccompanied, the local authorities were required to discharge duties to them as corporate parents. If the children sought to apply for citizenship, then they would have to apply for this through the Home Office and the Council supported them throughout that process. However, there was concern by the Committee that this provided the children with only a short period in which they could apply for citizenship before they turned 18 and were then eligible for deportation by the Home Office. Officers encouraged the children to apply for indefinite leave to remain over settled status. However, Officers found the Home Office usually granted temporary leave to remain over settled status, which would then be subject to review every 12 months.
- There were issues around Personal Education Plans (PEPs). These were transitioning to the new e.PEP system which was praised for allowing a more collaborative approach in their production. Guidance was continuing to be provided to the educators and social workers but the figures of completed e.PEPs had been improving, as well as their quality. Officers were confident that the system was beginning to be better understood and that proposed targets would be attainable.
- Homes for Haringey were praised on their work in helping to provide permanent accommodation for care leavers and the training they provided on independent skills.
- The Chair and Director of Children's Services paid a special tribute to Denise Gandy for all the work she had done with the Homes for Haringey Pledge for Care Leavers.

In response to questions from Committee Members, the following information was noted:

- Regarding the '*Reason episode of care ceased*' – '*any other reason*' on page 17, it was clarified that the system social workers used, Mosaic, was restrictive in the options it listed. For example, not all forms of permanency options were listed on Mosaic. Officers would take the 109 cases under '*any other reason*' and list those in a separate grid to demonstrate what those reasons were. (**Post meeting note: A review of Mosaic established that the 109 cases under '*any other reason*', are all children who achieved their 18th birthday.**)

- The two zero recordings for 'CLA placements out of borough' in 2013-14, 2014-15 was an error likely due to information not being available.
- If the young person was unable to find anywhere to live, then he/she may be accommodated by the Local Authority. This was known as Section 20 accommodation (S20 Children Act 1989) and the young person acquired 'looked after' status. Children's Services had a duty to take such steps which were reasonably practicable to accommodate the young person.
- It was explained that Residential accommodation was typically for older children, whilst Children's Homes were typically for younger children who might have significant needs, such as mental health challenges or not being ready to live in a family setting.
- Regarding the chart on page 17 - '*Comparing the primary need of CLA starters*', Officers clarified that the missing details were - '*Parents illness or mental health*', and '*family in acute distress*'. Officers confirmed a footnote would be provided in the future (**Action: Bev Hendricks**).

The Chair thanked Officers and was reassured by the positive trajectory of the performance indicators overall.

55. HARINGEY YOUTH JUSTICE SERVICE - LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN

Bev Hendricks, on behalf of Jennifer Sergeant and Gill Gibson, highlighted that, in light of the report, the following key areas were being addressed:

- Statistics showed looked after children were more likely to receive a custodial sentence than non-looked after children. Jennifer Sergeant was part of an advisory group which was challenging the courts on this matter and sought for there to be a review on the arrangements for sentencing.
- Officers would continue to review the interventions to address offences related to violence and knife carrying.
- Officers would review the arrangements for looked after children in the cohort of children in young people who had special educational needs.

The Chair praised the exit questionnaires but felt more detail needed to be brought to the Committee to highlight what specific action was being taken to help those young people.

The Chair deferred the item until the next meeting on 2nd July 2019 to allow the relevant report authors to attend and answer any Member questions. It was suggested that Cllr Mark Blake, Cabinet Member for Communities, Safety and Engagement, also be invited to attend (**Action: Clerk**).

The Committee wished for the following to be addressed (**Action: Jennifer Sergeant**):

- What strategies the Council had in place to address the disparity between custodial sentences received for looked after children and non-looked after children.

- What support was offered to foster carers to help prevent young people from being drawn into the type of behaviour that might lead them to being involved with the Youth Justice Service.
- Regarding page 30 and “*range of interventions*” offered to young people, what specifically was offered to looked after children to support them.

56. OFSTED INSPECTION OF CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE SERVICES

Ann Graham, Director of Children's Services, introduced this report. The Committee noted that the Action Plan prepared for Ofsted had been discussed at Cabinet and the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee. It was noted that the Action Plan at pages 55 to 64 was a summarised version of the plan.

The Action Plan covered the nine areas where services needed to improve, as found by Ofsted at its most recent inspection. There had been detailed discussions across the service about what measures could be put in place to improve those nine areas. The Heads of Services would regularly attend the Department Management Team meetings to provide the Director of Children Service's reports on what measures and strategies were being put into action to improve not only the nine areas recognised as needing improvement but the service in general.

The Director of Children's services gave a commitment to provide an annual update on the Action Plan to the Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee and Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee. The Action Plan was seen as an ongoing and evolving plan. If there were other areas that the Services considered needed improvement then those would be added to the Action Plan so they could be monitored. Officers were committed to maintaining the Action Plan, including where improvements were made, to ensure the services did not become complacent.

Regarding the amber RAG ratings (5.1 and 5.2 on page 62), Officers noted the service needed to be clearer and consistent about decision-making. The Service also needed to ensure there was a sufficient number of placements for children and young people at the higher end who might have, for example, complex mental health issues, behavioural issues or disabilities.

The Chair noted there was due to be an Ofsted 'Keeping in touch' meeting in July 2019. It was requested that a verbal update be provided at the CPAC meeting on 15th October 2019 regarding this (**Action: Ann Graham**).

57. LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN AND CARE LEAVERS STRATEGY 2018-2021

Colette Elliott-Cooper introduced this report regarding the draft Looked after Children and Care Leavers Strategy 2018-21 for the Members to ratify.

The following was highlighted to the Committee:

- There were attempts being made to increase the number of apprenticeships provided by the Council for care leavers.

- There was an emphasis on ensuring children in care and care leavers who had particular needs were safeguarded with the appropriate mental health support provided.
- The aim was to help children remain at home with their parents. Where this was not possible, the strategy sought to provide those children with the best possible care the Council was able to provide.

In response to questions from Committee Members, the following information was noted:

- Officers noted that unaccompanied minors were monitored and discussed at management meetings to ascertain challenges they faced and what the Council could do to assist them further. Legislation had been introduced which clarified unaccompanied asylum seeker children were children in care and so efforts were made to ensure that they were not singled out as being separate from children in care.
- Officers agreed that the wording of the first sentence in paragraph 4 (page 69) could be better clarified to ensure inclusivity, such as including reference to disabled and transgender children. The Chair suggested including an introductory sentence that stated a commitment to hearing from as many different groups and their experiences as possible.
- Officers confirmed all efforts were made to ensure that children in care were returned to their parents, where it was safe to do so. There was a number of children in care who remained at home but were legally looked after by the local authority. The Council continued to monitor and review the situation at the 6 month review to see if it was safe to return the care of the children back to the parents, at which point the care order would be discharged.
- The Chair suggested the Youth Justice Plan be referenced under the '*Reference to local strategies*'.

RESOLVED

That the Looked after Children and Care Leavers Strategy 2018-21 be ratified.

58. EUROPEAN UNION AND LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN

Bev Hendricks and Ann Graham informed they were in the process of creating a report that examined the impact of Brexit on EU nationals who were not able to exercise treaty rights and, consequently, what that meant for the Councils looked after children and care leavers.

There were 27 looked after children and 11 care leavers who held EU national status. Haringey had taken part in a pilot scheme to look at following the proposed Home Office guidance on settling children who are EU nationals. After intensive consultation and policy driven advice from the Home Office, Haringey left feedback for it to consider revising its proposed plans. The Home Office guidance was too theoretical and, when applied, Haringey was only able to secure 1 of those 38 looked after children and care leavers settled status. Officers considered that the reason this

number was so low was that the Home Office wanted a chipped passport and documentation that the children did not have.

Officers noted that settled status was not akin to citizenship with the latter providing legal rights the former did not. Haringey would continue to advocate to ensure EU national children were not deprived of any rights through not being able to secure citizenship. The pilot had been helpful in highlighting the challenges involved in children securing British citizenship.

In response to a question from the Committee, Officers noted there was difficulty in securing citizenship for EU children where the parents did not have the relevant documentation, which they had found was the case for most.

The Chair invited Officers to present a written update on the progress of this report at its next meeting, to include an outline of the situation and what the challenges might be (**Action: Bev Hendricks/ Ann Graham**).

59. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Chair paid a special tribute to Fiona Smith, the Head of the Virtual School, who was leaving Haringey Council. The Chair praised all of the work she had done in helping the Virtual School achieve its positive results and wished her all the best for the future.

Dates of the next meeting

2nd July 2019

15th October 2019

16th January 2020

CHAIR:

Signed by Chair

Date