

# **MINUTES OF MEETING CORPORATE PARENTING ADVISORY COMMITTEE HELD ON TUESDAY, 25TH JANUARY, 2022, 7.00 - 9.05 PM**

**PRESENT:** Councillor Zena Brabazon (Chair), Councillor Sakina Chenot, Councillor Tammy Palmer, and Councillor Elin Weston.

**In attendance:** Faiz Ahmed (Head of Service Children in Care), Sandy Bansil (Service Manager, Safeguarding and Social Care), Lynn Carrington (Whittington Health), Emma Cummergen (Head of Young Adult Service), Jackie Difolco (Assistant Director for Early Help and Prevention), Ann Graham (Director of Children's Services), Beverley Hendricks (Assistant Director for Safeguarding and Social Care), Richard Hutton (Performance and Business Intelligence), Pauline Morris (Head of ESQA, Safeguarding and Social Care), Christa Ncube (Service Manager, Safeguarding and Social Care), Sarah Pike (Principal Social Worker), and Fiona Rae (Acting Committees Manager).

*The meeting took place virtually.*

## **1. FILMING AT MEETINGS**

The Chair informed all present that the meeting would be streamed on the Council's website.

## **2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (IF ANY)**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Sarah James and Felicia Opoku.

## **3. URGENT BUSINESS**

There was no urgent business.

## **4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

## **5. MINUTES**

### **RESOLVED**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 5 October 2021 be agreed as an accurate record.

## **6. PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT: CHILDREN AND FAMILIES**

The Senior Performance Officer introduced the 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.

In response to questions from the Committee, it was noted that:

- 23% of children in care had Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs). The Committee also requested that the next update included the number of children in care who were waiting for an EHCP assessment.
- It was explained that there was no fixed definition for 'suitable accommodation' but that the definitions for statutory returns included some examples could be circulated to the Committee.
- In response to a question about those who ceased to be children looked after as they moved into independent living, the Head of Young Adult Service noted that these 18 young people had moved into their permanent accommodations with Homes for Haringey or Housing Associations. It was explained that there were 61 beds allocated annually for care leavers. It was noted that there were six 2 bed properties per year to accommodate a number of parents and to prevent overcrowding. It was confirmed that this allocation had been reached in this year, and in every year since it had been introduced.
- In response to a question about furnishing homes, it was noted that care leavers were able to access a leaving care grant, called a Setting Up Home Grant, of up to £2,000. The Head of Young Adult Service explained that it was often difficult to fully furnish homes with this grant, particularly given recent and significant increases in flooring costs. It was added that it was possible for people to access the grant early, if it was assessed to be appropriate, in order to provide items that would help with transitioning into independent living.
- The Head of Young Adult Service explained that there was also a programme for young people to prepare for independent living which was delivered from one of the flats, known as 'The Money House'. This was a week-long programme which explained issues such as budgeting, how to check meters, and how to undertake some basic household tasks. There was also a partnership with Metrobank, who offered bank accounts and money management support, a Life Skills Accredited Scheme, where young people got certificates for every section completed, and Mental Health First Aiding with Mind, which helped young people to navigate mental health and identify when to seek support. It was highlighted that the programme was staged as much as possible based on the individual young people. The Committee noted that it would be beneficial to visit The Money House and that this could be organised outside of the meeting.
- It was noted that the current cost of living crisis had significantly affected care leavers, a number of whom had lost their jobs due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The Committee asked for a more detailed update on the costs and changing costs for care leavers to be presented at a future meeting. It was suggested that this report could be supplemented by hearing first-hand experiences from care leavers.
- It was suggested that it would be beneficial to consider whether any local businesses, including flooring providers, would be willing to support care leavers. The Chair noted that it may be useful to include the Cabinet Member for House Building, Place-Making, and Development in these discussions.
- It was acknowledged that independent living could be challenging and it was enquired what would happen for care leavers if they had any issues with their housing. The Director of Children's Services noted that the Assistant Director for Safeguarding and Social Care would be presenting a report in the near future with some suggestions about strengthening the Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee role, possibly including some Sub-Committees for specific topics such as housing, and suggested that it might be appropriate for the Committee to wait for the outcome of that report.

## **7. HMIP THEMATIC INSPECTION ON "THE EXPERIENCES OF BLACK AND MIXED HERITAGE BOYS IN THE YOUTH JUSTICE SYSTEM"**

The Head of Young Adult Service introduced the report which informed the Committee about the outcome of the HMIP Thematic Inspection into "The experiences of black and mixed heritage boys in the youth justice system" April – June 2021. Haringey was one of 9 local

authorities that were selected to take part in the thematic inspection. The findings and recommendations of the inspection are general and not specific to Haringey. It was noted that the inspection had found that there were significant deficits in experience for Black and mixed heritage boys in the Youth Justice System who were more likely to have multiple adverse childhood experiences, Special Educational Needs and mental health difficulties, high rates of exclusion from school, exploitation, racial discrimination, and economic deprivation.

It was explained that the report had identified Haringey as a case study and that some positive feedback had been received. It was noted that the report had found some good examples of partnership work and projects, such as the Red Snapper project, which helped to tackle mental health stigmas, the music offer, which included a partnership with Sony Music who offered internships and mentoring, and the Ether programme, which aimed to tackle stereotypes, break barriers, and address perceptions of masculinity.

It was highlighted that the HMIP report had offered 18 recommendations. The recommendations for local authorities focused on providing suitable and timely accommodation placements, to ensure that legal entitlements to education were being provided, and that placements were suitable to meet needs. In relation to the Youth Offending Service partnership boards, it was recommended that there was a vision and strategy for improving outcomes which was understood by staff, that board members provided data from service areas to identify areas of disproportionality and actions taken to address these, and to develop targets and monitoring arrangements for the partnership. It was also recommended that Youth Offending Services Managers were asked to establish effective feedback processes, to ensure that staff understood the issues for Black and mixed heritage boys, to improve the quality of management oversight, to address gaps in specialist provision, and to offer suitable support and intervention.

The Head of Young Adult Service provided an update on progress for the recommendations. It was explained that a new Quality Assurance (QA) tool had been introduced to increase management oversight and ensure that diversity and structural barriers were being addressed. A workshop on fathers had been delivered and there was now increased focus on capturing the voice of fathers. In the October half term, a workshop was delivered around the rights and responsibilities in relation to stop and search and the impact of this on young people. It was added that stop and search was now being recorded as a significant event for planning and intervention purposes.

In response to questions from the Committee, it was noted that:

- There were 19 young people in Haringey who were looked after (this included those who automatically because looked after because they are remanded) and were in the Youth Justice System and it was enquired whether the report had recommended any specific support or changes for them. The Head of Young Adult Service noted that there were no specific points raised in the report but that it was known that this was an area for improvement. It was noted that the looked after children in the Youth Justice System cohort were more likely to have been excluded, to have more significant mental health needs, and to have unmet and unseen needs. It was explained that an audit of looked after children and those with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) was currently being undertaken. The Committee asked for further details to be presented at a future meeting.
- In response to a question about disproportionality and unconscious bias against children in care, it was noted that there was a focus on providing unconscious bias training that was being rolled out across the partnership. It was explained that the partnership worked closely with the courts and that all court reports had a 'child first lens' and decisions were challenged in the out of court disposal panels. It was highlighted that the key thing was ensuring that the children's voices were heard. It was also acknowledged that authorities may make assumptions about young people who were looked after and known in the

Youth Justice System and the Director of Children's Services suggested that this would likely be included in some of the work around stop and search.

- The Chair noted that some excellent work had been undertaken by the Haringey Learning Partnership (HLP) and that this could be used as a model for supporting some of the young people in the Youth Justice System, both those in care and others. The Committee commented that a number of the factors identified in the report were already known to be key issues. It was suggested that this highlighted the importance of ensuring that other services in the partnership were provided appropriately and at the right times to ensure that young people were supported. The Assistant Director for Early Help and Prevention noted that the HLP was part of the Alternative Provision (AP) taskforce and that there was funding to use some Youth Justice Service resource to support young people in the HLP.

## **8. VOICE OF THE CHILD GUIDANCE**

The Principal Social Worker introduced the report which presented the Voice of the Child Guidance for practitioners for information so that the Committee could be assured of the focus of this issue for staff. It was noted that the Children Act 1989 stated that the voice of the child should be paramount. It was explained that the Practice Guidance had been written to assist practitioners in capturing the voice of the child in planning, decision making, and service delivery.

It was highlighted that Aspire was involved in the recruitment of senior managers in Children's Services, the training of newly qualified social workers, consultations, policy developments, new periodic surveys in Children's Services, the child centred review process, and the Fostering Panel's recent work on creating a 'what makes a good foster carer' crib sheet.

In terms of the next steps, it was noted that the recruitment was underway for a practitioner who would be setting up a Shadow Children's Board, where each partnership would have a young person working alongside them to provide views and develop processes. An apprentice Children's Engagement and Participation Officer was also being recruited and this role would be ringfenced for someone who was care experienced. It was also aimed to include Aspire in the recruitment of other, less senior posts and a training package with input from Aspire was being developed to inform new staff about how it feels to be a child in care. It was added that the HALO code, which clearly stated respect for the right to embrace Afro-hairstyles, was being implemented in foster homes. In addition, work was underway with the Children With Disabilities Service to form a group for children and young people with Learning Disabilities.

In response to questions from the Committee, it was noted that:

- The Committee commented that significant work had been done to ensure that the voices of young people were heard. The Committee was particularly impressed with the introduction of a ringfenced apprenticeship for an individual with care experience and it was hoped that actions like this could be rolled out to other services as it would actively combat workplace discrimination. The Director of Children's Services noted that this comment sought to ensure that all considerations were taken into account but it was agreed that this wording should be amended to be clear that the voice of the child was paramount. The Principal Social Worker added that there would be training sessions on the Practice Guidance for the entire workforce to ensure that it was fully embedded and correctly used.
- In relation to ensuring that the voice of the child was heard, the Head of ESQA (Safeguarding and Social Care) noted that Children's Services was also involved in a pilot scheme called Kit Bag which distributed toolkits to practitioners to encourage more creative methods of communication with children. It was also noted that virtual working had meant that practitioners were thinking of more creative methods to ensure that the voice of the child was heard and that any warning signs were identified. It was added that

there had been some recent training with the Disabled Children's Team to learn some Makaton which assisted in extending the communication ability of staff.

- Some members of the Committee suggested that it would be useful to hear more about the advocacy service at a future meeting.
- The Chair also suggested that, in future, it could be useful to include an addendum to the Practice Guidance from children and young people which set out their thoughts on how their voices should be heard.

## **9. ANNUAL REPORT OF FOSTERING SERVICE APRIL 2020 TO MARCH 2021**

The Head of Service for Children in Care introduced the report which presented the Annual Report of the Fostering Service from April 2020 to March 2021 and evaluated the service provisions, key objectives and priorities for future developments.

In response to questions from the Committee, it was noted that:

- It was confirmed that detailed ethnicity and cultural data was collected for looked after children and this was stored in the Council's system, Mosaic. It was noted that care experience and mental health were often not collected as part of wider Council and partnership data and it was suggested that it might be useful to suggest this to Public Health colleagues for future Joint Strategic Needs Assessments (JSNAs).
- It was noted that there had been significant increases to the cost of living and it was enquired whether foster carers in Haringey should be paid more. The Head of Service for Children in Care noted that foster carers in Haringey were paid less than neighbouring boroughs and that the Council was in the process of trying to bring the remuneration level in line with neighbouring boroughs.
- It was noted that the service had launched the Mockingbird Project in February 2021 which consisted of one hub carer supporting eight satellite carers and allowed carers to support each other. It was explained that the project would run for at least 12 months before a formal report was brought to the Committee but that it was considered to be a success and there had been no placement breakdowns.
- In relation to a question about the ethnicity and backgrounds of foster carers, it was noted that the service was mindful and sensitive to issues of diversity in their recruitment processes for foster carers. Part of the recruitment strategy involved reaching out to underrepresented groups to encourage wider participation. This strategy had proven successful as enquiry rates from these communities had increased.
- The data suggested that more older children and young people were being fostered. It was explained that this included children who were growing up and new children who were entering care in Haringey. It was noted that it could be challenging to sustain stability in older age ranges and that the recruitment and training of foster carers took this into account. It was explained that the service was investigating more innovative approaches, such as the Mockingbird project and recruitment work with Tottenham Hotspur Football Club.
- It was acknowledged that it would be important for the Committee to consider the cohorts and ages of children coming into the care service to ensure that the services provided were supporting them appropriately.

## **10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

There was no other business.

## **11. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

17 March 2022

CHAIR:

Signed by Chair .....

Date .....