

MINUTES OF THE CORPORATE PARENTING ADVISORY COMMITTEE HELD ON MONDAY, 2ND OCTOBER, 2023, 7:30PM – 10:00PM

PRESENT: Councillors Zena Brabazon (Chair), Elin Weston, Cressida Johnson, Lotte Collett, Ibrahim Ali, Marsha Isilar-Gosling.

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor Lucia das Neves

1. FILMING AT MEETINGS

The Chair referred to the filming of meetings and this information was noted.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (IF ANY)

No apologies had been received.

At 7:31pm, the meeting adjourned to meet with ASPIRE and then reconvened at 8:00pm.

3. URGENT BUSINESS

There were none.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

5. MINUTES

Councillor Dana Carlin's name on the attendance record would be changed to read Councillor Lotte Collett.

RESOLVED: That subject to the above change, the minutes of the meeting of 12 July 2023 be agreed as a correct record.

6. PERFORMANCE REPORT

Mr Richard Hutton, Senior Performance Officer, introduced the report.

The meeting heard that:

- Suitable accommodation was defined through regulations for Children in Care, OFSTED and Housing. Specific to this discussion staying with one's own foster carers rather than

staying in a multiple occupancy home was the context for defining suitability and this was achieved largely through Staying Put arrangements.

- At a previous meeting of the Committee, a report was submitted which discussed what constituted suitable accommodation. Under the new changes with OFSTED, the Committee took a decision not to use accommodation such as the YMCA, to move away from any model around HMOs for children and young people in care and that the Council would work to identify suitable accommodation to ensure that the standard would be good enough for one's own child. It would be helpful if a short note could be re issued to the Committee regarding how "suitable accommodation" would be defined with all the newly attained changes.
- Some young people may be allocated suitable accommodation who then decided they would prefer to stay with family after their eighteenth birthday. This was a challenging situation as there was little in law that could be done to change the situation. Although the numbers for situations such as these were low. An update could be provided to the Committee regarding the issue.
- Much work had gone into placement stability. The Council in the past six months had placement stability meetings with partner agencies to ensure that the needs were being identified to prevent children having to move placements. Providers were being held to account for the work they were doing with the key work support. OFSTED had commented that the borough was on the right trajectory in terms of placement stability. The meetings were reviewed regularly and the Council continued to examine the children being brought into Haringey and track those placements to ensure that they remained where they were.
- The Council had recently launched a video along with another local authorities trying to attract foster carers. Councillors were encouraged, whilst engaging in Champions work, to have conversations with people on how they could become foster carers. Haringey was working in collaboration with Islington. The video would be sent to members of the Committee.
- Information would be provided to the Committee regarding orthodontic care for young people.
- Data reports regarding those in the system up to age 25 could be provided to the Committee, including at the next meeting.
- There had been a number of factors that had impacted on the three or more moves for the same child over different periods. One of them related to the way the court processes work. Whilst the courts had completed significant work to clear the backlog created by the coronavirus lock down, the borough was still experiencing some of the effects of delayed proceedings. There were still children who had waited two years for their proceedings to end and, during that time, it was difficult to contain them in one placement separately. There was also volatility around the residential mother and baby units. Sometimes the quality of the assessments meant that reassessments had to be made at the Court's request at another setting. This counted as another placement move and sometimes the prematurity of the direction to test in the community meant that they came back into care and would be separated. This would appear as instability in the data. In relation to adolescents, in a market that was volatile, it was challenging to offer stability in the semi-independent and residential arena so investment was being made in the borough's LAC Sufficiency Strategy.

- Efforts needed to be made to ensure that families were assisted with acute stress to prevent them from needing to come into care. It was important to have good recording systems and note the complex ways young people could be affected. For example, the agency afforded to adults to self-determine if they had capacity and this could mean that adults services could not intervene. Children and Social Care had to then ensure that harm did not extend to those adult children. This could happen in cases like substance misuse. It may be possible to examine areas of stress affecting families and report back to the Committee in January 2024. Whether it was acute stress, domestic abuse or housing issues, it was generally the case that families were in stressed situations which were usually also compounded by the cost-of-living and the quality of housing.
- There had been an increase in the unaccompanied asylum-seeking children. As the children were coming in, there were young people ageing out. Whilst the young people turned 18, they still required a service, but this was not visible in the statistics. The overall pressure when numbers only were presented was not always clear. The borough was still about 20 under its threshold. There was a steady intake of around three children a month. The borough had been approached by Kent County Council to take some children from the hotels and other local authorities surrounding Haringey were also seeing an increase. Local authorities were seeking assistance around resources and placements. There was difficulty in finding “matched” placements for the children. A number had gone into IFAs (independent foster carers) and the borough had managed to place some individuals locally. Finding the right therapeutic supporters was also a pressure. Accessing the right ESOL was also a concern because when children arrived in the middle of term, it could be difficult to get them into the right ESOL classes. Work was being done with the virtual school regarding tuition for some of the children. Another issue had been around accessing the right immigration lawyers and there seemed to be some challenges around this. Support was being sought from the London Asylum Consortium. The rota referral meant that the Council had to place young people within 5 working days and this depended on finding the right matched placements within the market. Age assessments, when required had to be within 28 days which was challenging when trying to find the right interpreter. Until recently, the Council had been quite reliant on an independent social worker to assist with some of the age assessments, but the Council had built up the expertise and a pool of trained social workers within the service. Attempts were being made to look at the next steps in terms of the increasing numbers and what that really meant for the service and staffing. The meeting agreed that there would be a more detailed report on this issue at the next meeting. It would also be useful to also have details in the report such as country of origin, languages spoken and other demographic details. The report could list the changes in the incident that happened between the Home Office and Kent County Council at the next meeting.

The Chair felt that the Council could consider finding a way to consult with a wider range of residents in Haringey who wanted to give something back to the community and may wish to become foster carers or be involved in other ways.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

7. CHILDREN IN CARE KNOWN TO THE YOUTH JUSTICE SERVICE

Mr Matthew Knights, Head of Service, Youth At Risk, presented the item.

The meeting heard that:

- In relation to the qualitative research into stop and search, work was being done within the assessment processes in addition to research into the actual experiences of the young people. Further, young people would be provided with knowledge around the stop and search process including their rights. Documenting experience was important but it was also important to build upon this. Interventions were done with Police officers within the service around ensuring that children understood their rights around stop and search. As a result of the work of the Director of Children's Services, the Haringey Stop and Search pilot had been accepted by MOPAC and Sir Mark Rowley. Some of the work for the Haringey Youth Justice would sit under that pilot. This would include analysis across the Police in London and fed through the Youth Justice Service to understanding the experiences of young people and how adjustments could be made to the assessment process.
- In relation to the Disproportionality MOPAC project, this was being externally evaluated. It was part of a wider project involving Islington, Camden and Barnet youth justice services. Within the final stages of the mentoring happening, a last cohort of referrals that had just been submitted. That would then go into phase two, which would be about the evaluation process to then get the impact and understanding around what's worked and what had not worked. Haringey would also feed into that evaluation from a staff perspective.
- In relation to social prescribing, this was a new model that had just been embedded with our public health colleagues and it was flexible depending on the child's needs. There was a North Central London working group to look at the evaluation process. It was on a smaller scale and was done locally. It was important to ensure that children in care had access to the pilot and because the cohort was not always placed in Haringey. A lot of the children were placed outside the borough and they could sometimes miss out on some interventions. This would be funded that as part of our work that was being done for the child that would follow them wherever they went.
- Update reports should be brought to the Committee with the detail and intended impact of social prescription in January 2024.
- In relation to young people in custody, there was regular contact with the children and young people in custody, their caseworkers, with their Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) and with Children and Social Care. It was important to note any concerns regarding the child's inability to participate in engagements within the custodial establishment. There was also an escalation process.

RESOLVED:

That the update be noted.

8. ADOPT LONDON NORTH ANNUAL REPORT

Ms Lydia Samuel, Head of Service, Adopt London North, presented the report.

The meeting heard that:

- There was no current level of concern about the level of referrals from Haringey. When considering the number of family finding referrals, the percentage of referrals that resulted in a match provided an indication of how many of those children were likely to end up going on to have a care plan for adoption.
- The purpose of Adopt London beginning to provide the training for social workers was because it became apparent that, across the boroughs, the adoption expertise had largely come into the regional adoption agency. Therefore, some of the expertise to provide training and guidance had largely been lost from the local authority. This was why it would be beneficial to coordinate the training centrally. The training would be provided regularly enough so that all of the social workers that needed attend it could do so. Monitoring was done with quality assurance in relation to how often it needed to run. It would be interesting to look over time at whether the quality of the work improved. It would be possible to observe this easily because reports would be submitted to the Adoption Panel and Quality Assurance.
- In relation to the Black Adoption Programme, one of the things examined was the proportion of Black children within the adoption system and the project was aimed at Black and Mixed Black ethnicity children rather than the global majority children. It was well-known that within adoption, Asian children could particularly be placed for adoption very quickly. There was a surplus of Asian adopters and very few Asian children that place for adoption. In the past, when research was done into global majority children as a whole, it had been the case that, in many ways, the extent of the disparities for Black children had been masked. The figures in the report showed that over the five-year period of the analysis that was done, 35% of children within the Adopt London North boroughs were Black or Mixed Black ethnicity children. This compared to an average of 26% across Adopt London, which was significant.
- In relation to children in care, Black children were over represented in the care system. There was a report detailing all the research on Black Adoption projects. This could be presented to the Committee.
- It was rare for adoptive families to receive an adoption allowance. There was provision for adoption allowances where those were needed and they were similar to special guardianship allowances. In most cases, they were attached to the needs of the child. For example, if somebody adopted a sibling group or a disabled child, it was up to the local authority to approve adoption allowance for those families. Families were also able to re-approach Adopt London later on if their situation changed and they came under financial hardship and had to be supported with an allowance. However, the vast majority of families did not have an allowance and did not need one.
- Social media had been helpful. Some of the recruitment methods had changed significantly since the organisation had become a regional agency as there was little competition and most people who were interested in adoption do an internet search or look on social media to find Adopt London very quickly. Work was also being done with local authority media teams to specifically look at campaigns at the specific parts of the year to local residents. This helped residents to understand that Adopt London was Haringey's adoption agency. In relation to Black adopters, the work that had been done in the project showed methods that were successful with other prospective adopters were not successful with Black adopters to the same degree. One of the pilots that Adopt London had applied for funding was to have a community led arrangement where the organisation would have people who had relationships in local community groups to learn about the needs of adoption and Black children and be given tools and resources

to go back into their community space and promote adoption. Work was also being done to make sure that if there was an increase of black adopters, the organisation was ready to deal with the demand.

- In relation to governance arrangements, the Governance Board had been very strong and there had been a benefit from the continuity in that group. There had been governance challenges in the last year, including renegotiated funding arrangements and which meant that the DCSS became involved across the boroughs and successful resolutions had been reached. The relationships generally across this area and the other areas of work that was done jointly across had been beneficial. The Assurance Board looked at the operational work. Having different layers of governance had been useful.
- Discussions had been held with the London Improvement Innovation Alliance, who coordinated the need members meeting regarding how a presentation could be made to all of the lead members in London together about the project. A briefing had been offered for all the directors across London to attend all at once and ask questions.

RESOLVED:

That the presentation be noted.

9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Update on the Champions Model

The meeting heard that discussion would be held with Champions on having a Corporate Parenting Week. The meeting agreed that this would go ahead in the new year.

LAC Sufficiency Strategy

An update on this would be provided by the C&YPS Commissioner in January 2024

Educational Results of Children in care

The meeting heard that in relation to key stage two data, regarding reading writing and maths, the borough attained 42.9% accepted standards. A comparison to last year showed a significant improvement. Reading was recorded at 57.1%, maths was at 71.4%. The strongest areas performance was maths and Grammar, Punctuation and Spelling. The Council had invested in Letterbox, a service which helped improve reading.

For GCSEs, there were 51-year 11s who were eligible for exams. For maths there were seven young people, Grade 7 and above. English Literature had twelve young people Grade 4 and above. English Language had seven young people Grade 4 and above. Science had eight young people Grade 4 Four and above. There needed to be a closer monitoring of young people at Key Stage 4.

For university destination, there were 46 heading to university. There were 11 currently in their first year, 14 in their second year and 16 in their second year. The Committee welcomed this news.

IRO Annual Report and First Quarter Update

Mr Nazim Hussain, IRO Service Manager, introduced a presentation on the item. He provided an overview of the annual report. The meeting heard an update of progress from the last annual report, child participation in reviews, feedback received from participants, the post OFSTED action plan, the use of the dispute resolution policy and the IRO priorities for 2023/24.

CHAIR:

Signed by Chair

Date