

MINUTES OF THE CORPORATE PARENTING ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 11 JULY 2024 AT 7:00PM – 8:31PM

PRESENT: Councillor Zena Brabazon; Councillor Felcia Opoku; Councillor Lotte Collete

Also present: Nazyer Choudhury (Principal Committee Co-Ordinator), Yeside Odumade (Principal Committee Co-Ordinator), Ann Graham (Director of Children's Service) Beverley Hendricks (Assistant Director for Safeguarding and Social Care); Richard Hutton (Senior Performance Officer); Keith Warren (Head of Children in Care and Placement); Andrea Hull (Service Manager) and Eghele Eyituoyo (Headteacher, Virtual Head of School)

1. FILMING AT MEETINGS

The Chair drew attention to the information included on the agenda front sheet and noted that the meeting was being recorded.

2. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Johnson, Councillor Ali, Councillor Isilar- Gosling.

3. URGENT BUSINESS

There were no matters of urgent business.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

5. MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 27 February 2024 be agreed and signed as a correct record.

6. PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Senior Performance Officer introduced the report which included updates on performance of schools, including the virtual school and health and education performance data for looked after children.

It was highlighted that:

- There had been a steady decrease of the number of children that come in to be looked after. It was noted that of the 89 Children Looked After (CLA) with an Education Care Health Plan (ECHP). 63% were being placed in schools outside of Haringey.
- In March 2024, there were 334 children in care, 29 children fewer than reported in March 2023. This was the lowest it had been in many years.
- The number of unaccompanied asylum seekers had fallen by twenty-four children (0.04%), below the national transfer scheme threshold.
- There was a reduction on the rate of children becoming looked after over a six-month period, which was now sixty children. This was below the rate for the year 2022-2023.
- As of May 2024, 77% of children who were looked after children had an up-to-date care plan.
- Completed Personal Educational Plans achieved in the summer of 2023, reached 95%. The focus remained on the quality and the impact of the Plans.
- Under 16s in care for at least 2.5 years and in the same placement for two years was at 51%.
- Dental checks for looked after children had increased to 80%, although it was still a challenging area.
- The pressure on the department was on substance misuse, mental health, and accommodation.

There were 921 care leavers in receipt of, or eligible, for leaving care services which was an increase of 15 children from the previous quarter. The figure included young people who were:

- Eligible: 16–17 year-olds and had been looked after for at least 13 weeks since the age of fourteen or currently looked after.
- Relevant: 16–17-year-olds who had been looked after for at least 13 weeks since the age 14, looked after on or after their 16th birthday and were no longer looked after.
- Former relevant qualifying: and aged 16 to 21, (or 25 if in education) looked after on or after their 16th birthday.
- Children or care leavers not looked after for at least 13 weeks since the age of fourteen, or privately fostered after the age 16, but, before the age of eighteen, or were looked after prior to becoming subject to a Special Guardianship Order (SGO).

Councillors asked questions and the following information was noted.

- That young people in care had reduced. This was owing to the better support for children and young people in care. External factors included the reduction in the number of asylum seekers, developing relationships with partners to provide early intervention. Also, family mediation was undertaken in appropriate circumstances and was a good way for resolving issues between young people and their families.
- There was a pod model, which would enable a child in care to have 9 years with a stable team who all knew about the child. Some of the children who formed the 934 figures were returnees to care.
- That the completion of Education Children Health Plan (ECHP) (63%), was not the service target that was set, and the lower percentage completion rate was owing to a period where the department experienced administrative and staffing challenges.

A report was requested by the committee on the pressures that Children's services were facing to be presented by the meeting on 14 January 2025. **ACTION**

The committee requested whether Tavistock could present an item on the good partnership work with Haringey Council's children and care leavers. **ACTION**

RESOLVED:

To note the report.

7. STABILITY PANEL

The report was introduced by the Head of Children in Care and Placements. The purpose of the report was to update members on the stability of placements for Children in Haringey's care.

The report contained information on what happened to children and young people who were removed from their home and family, who suffered rejection, separation and had a feeling of loss. It was noted that those feelings were deeper if they were placed in multiple placements.

The Committee noted that the Placement Stability Panel was formed in 2020, to improve the experiences of children who were in care and to minimise placement disruptions and breakdowns. The Panel consisted of designated leads from virtual schools, First steps, designated nurse for Children in Care, and Independent Reviewing Officers.

There were five sources of referrals to the placement stability panel. These were: Inhouse Fostering Placements; Residential Provision; In house Fostering Placements; Semi Independent Accommodation and Independent Fostering Agencies (IFA).

It was noted that placement instability in children reduced their opportunity to develop secure attachments.

The Committee noted that the council were corporate parents to all children who were looked after by the Local Authority. The preference for any child would be to place them with a connected person (i.e. a friend or relative). Placements should be close to home and should not disrupt the child's education. It should enable siblings to live with one another, suitable for a child's need if disabled, and within the local authority area, unless further location was the more suitable option.

Short term stability placement was measured by children or young people who have had three or more placement in a year. In the year 2023-2024, 10 children were said to have been in over three placements, which was in line with national average, but slightly below neighbouring boroughs.

Long term placement stability was measured by a child under the age of sixteen who had been in placement for 2.5 years or more. In the year 2023, 71 children had experienced long term placement stability which was in line with national statistic, but slightly lower than the national average.

Independent Fostering Agencies (IFA) were taking on more complex children, with higher needs and the average cost of an IFA placement was £1300 per week (it would include foster carers and other infrastructures), this was compared to an in-house placement costing £450 per week. An in-house placement required that Haringey be in charge and have influence over partnerships. However, an Independent Fostering agency was not as easy to influence.

There was a need for collaborative work whilst mobilising the work needed, there may be a need for therapeutic support through Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS). There was a need for open discussions with partners, collaborative thinking would help bringing a solution.

The "berry tool" helped the understanding of Haringey Council to match children and what was next with permanency planning. The information was shared with foster carers which helped the foster carers to understand the science of matching children.

Haringey were not part of the pathfinders yet, there were other local authorities who were going to receive financial grant from the government.

It was requested there be a cost analysis comparison between the Independent Fostering Agencies and the In-house fosters and it be presented to the committee.

ACTION

The committee requested that there be an update on the Josh McAlister report, looking at the private market, private provider and standards which had been part of the recommendation. **ACTION**

It was requested by the committee for there to be an update on broader strategic changes taking place on the Stability Panel for the next meeting. **ACTION**

RESOLVED:

To note report.

8. CORPORATE PARENTING STRATEGY

The report was introduced by the Assistant Director of Safeguarding and Social Care. The report followed on from a previously agreed Corporate Parenting Strategy. The Corporate Strategy stated that all actions should be in the best interest of children.

The Committee noted that corporate parenting was Haringey's responsibility for all children and young people who were in care or had recently left care as adults. The priority of the strategy, and for the organisation, was to protect children and young people from harm and to keep them safe. There was high importance given to striving for the best interest of the child, nurturing their ambitions, and ensuring that the children and young people got the best opportunity in life. Corporate parenting was about asking: "Would this be good enough for my child?"

Haringey's promise was developed by the young people who were in care and was rooted in their lived experience. There were five principles:

1. Support you: To be happy, healthy and achieve goals.
2. Inform you: To know what your background is, why you are in care and to understand all you need to know while you are in Haringey's care.
3. Involve you: To be included in conversations about you, get your voice heard, and help you be in control of your life as much as possible.
4. Respect you: To have your own space, be confident in who you are and be treated fairly.
5. Celebrate you: To make happy memories, know your strengths as an individual and understand what you are capable of achieving.

There was a task set to the Participation and Engagement Worker, to increase the number of children in Aspire (a youth-led group for young people in, or leaving care in Haringey) and to note what was said. This would form the voice of the child annual report which would be brought to the Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee.

There were some outcomes set between the Independent Reviewing Officer, Children in Care team and the service leads. This was attached with the Report of A Child in the appendix, and included some of the outcomes which have been achieved by the department.

The report stressed the important role of corporate parents to work together, work restoratively and put the views and experiences of children and young people at the heart of all that was done.

Corporate parenting was a joint effort by organisations and the policy was agreed and worked on by children, young people, and by partners such as, Haringey Council, the NHS, the police, schools, and the voluntary sector.

The Committee noted that the virtual school aimed to make sure all children in care enjoyed their education, had access to the highest quality learning environments and achieved the best possible outcomes. Although it was a virtual school, the school was very similar to any other physical school, helping every child fulfil their potential and thrive throughout their educational journey.

The Committee were advised that the Annual Voice of The Child report would need to be considered and understood by the children themselves. And also feedback given as to whether, any aspect of the Corporate Parent strategy would need to be changed.

It was noted that the strategy was not due for a review until 2026, and the success of the strategy would be governed by the children's assessment. There was still some work to be done to ensure children and especially Haringey children with complex needs were safe and protected.

RESOLVED:

To note the report.

9. Care leavers to be considered a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010.

This was a verbal update by the Assistant Director of Safeguarding and Social Care.

The Assistant Director for Safeguarding and Social Care highlighted that work had previously started in 2019 to pass a Council motion for care leavers to be considered a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010.

In Josh McAlister's report, recommendations were made to make new legislation to broaden corporate parent responsibility. Furthermore, that cost cutting for Care Leavers could not be considered with a wider set of commitments across a public body. A care leaver should be treated as a 'protected characteristic'. It was noted that

19 local authorities in London had passed motions to have care leavers considered as a 'protected characteristic'. In 2022 the conversation was taken to cabinet on this matter. It was imperative that work was done to ensure that care leavers were considered a 'protected characteristic' under the Equality Act 2010.

The committee agreed that there was further work to be done, and the need to have a motion at Full Council passed, for care leavers to be a 'protected characteristic'.

ACTION

RESOLVED

To note the report.

10. Any Other Business (AOB)

It was noted that this was the Assistant Director of Safeguarding and Social Care, Beverley Hendricks last meeting. The Chair and the committee commended and thanked Beverley for her hard work in this role and to the Council.