

MINUTES OF THE MEETING Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee HELD ON Tuesday, 2nd September, 2025, 7:00pm – 8:20pm

PRESENT:

Councillors: Felicia Opoku, Zena Brabazon, Lotte Collett and Cressida Johnson

1. FILMING AT MEETINGS

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

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (IF ANY)

Apologies of absence were received by Councillors Ali, Weston, Johnson and Gosling.

3. URGENT BUSINESS

There were none.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

5. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of 7 April 2025 be agreed were agreed as a correct record.

6. SOCIAL CARE ANNUAL PERFORMANCE 2024/25

The 2024/25 report outlined the performance of Haringey's Children's Social Care Services, benchmarking progress against a revised group of statistical neighbours with similar demographic profiles, as determined by the Department for Education. These included Barnet, Brent, Ealing, Enfield, Hounslow, Lambeth, Lewisham, Redbridge, Southwark, and Waltham Forest.

Children's Social Care supported children and young people who were in need, at risk, in care, or care experienced. These individuals often presented complex or acute needs requiring statutory intervention under the Children Acts of 1989 and 2004, the Children and Families Act 2014, and associated guidance such as "Working Together to Safeguard Children" (2023).

Governance and oversight were maintained through several forums:

- Safeguarding Accountability Meetings, chaired quarterly by the Council Leader, scrutinised performance and safety concerns.
- Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee focused on children in care and care leavers.
- Haringey's Safeguarding Children's Partnership (HSCP), involving the Local Authority, Police, and ICB, met regularly to review safeguarding arrangements. The HSCP Executive Board convened six times annually and was chaired by the Director of Children's Services.

HSCP sub-groups monitored areas such as performance, workforce development, training, and exploitation. The annual report set priorities around mental health, early intervention, older children needing protection, and contextual safeguarding.

National Reporting Context

Haringey submitted data to the Department for Education for the Child in Need Census and the 903 Children in Care Return. These covered referrals, assessments, protection activity, care placements, legal status, and outcomes for care leavers. Additional reports were submitted to the North Central London Regional Adoption Board and an annual workforce survey detailed recruitment, retention, and caseloads. Data to Insight (D2I) supported benchmarking through the Local Authority Interactive Tool (CHAT).

Future Challenges and Priorities

Key operational priorities included:

- Implementing the Families First Partnership programme to enhance early support.
 - Preparing for the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill and reforms from the national policy "Keeping Children Safe, Helping Families Thrive" (Nov 2024).
 - Responding to rising demand and complex challenges such as mental health, exploitation, domestic abuse, housing instability, and substance misuse.
 - Managing financial pressures from care placements.
 - Strengthening recruitment and retention of social workers, including internal development strategies.
 - Advancing permanence planning and improving data systems for performance tracking.
 - Establishing local Overnight Short Breaks provision for children with profound disabilities.
 - Continuing professional development through Haringey Children's Academy.
 - Leading innovative Stop and Search initiatives in partnership with the MET police.
- Members had sought insight into the reasons behind the strong performance of young people, including those in the Council's care. It was noted that several factors contributed to this success. Since taking on the role as Head of the Virtual School, Gala had significantly raised the profile of children with a social worker, which included looked-after children. There had been a clear strategic

focus on inclusion and on meeting the individual needs of children. Many of these children were identified as having special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), and the quality of the SEND provision had continued to strengthen over time. These combined efforts were believed to have played a key role in the improved outcomes.

- It was stated there had been a decline of the children coming into this service and wanted reason for the reduction in the numbers. There had been a noticeable decline in the number of children entering the service. Initially, the service managed around 400 children, with fluctuations of about 20. The first significant reduction occurred when unaccompanied asylum-seeking children stopped arriving via the Channel Tunnel, instead using alternative routes. This shift led to a drop of approximately 30–35 children within a year, and the numbers remained at that lower level.
- While this decline initially eased budget pressures and allowed for better caseload management and increased system capacity, efforts to restore previous numbers of asylum-seeking children were unsuccessful. Another contributing factor to the reduction was the growing stability within the service. Consistent leadership and staffing helped improve the quality of practice, enabling the team to build stronger relationships with families and make more confident decisions about managing risk. This stability allowed the service to support more children outside of statutory systems. Staff were able to review all cases within the original cohort of 400, ensuring that children received appropriate support without remaining unnecessarily within the formal care system.
- Members had asked for clarification regarding a safeguarding chart under section 8, specifically about contact sources. They noted that police referrals to the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) had decreased slightly, while health referrals had increased. They queried whether this represented a typical fluctuation or indicated a more unusual trend. It was explained that The team had reviewed the matter locally and found no specific systemic changes that explained the fluctuation. Regular discussions took place with colleagues from both police and health services across various forums. Although the shift in referral sources had been noted collectively, it was not attributed to any development. Police and health professionals had consistently been the primary sources of contact throughout the year, and it was common for them to alternate in terms of which service generated the most referrals.

RESOLVED:

Recommendations:

3.1. That Members noted the performance data as set out in appendix i.

3.2. Committee was asked to note the report and, in particular: The service improvement and challenges contained within the report as well as the actions taken during 2023/24 in response to local demand and the financial pressures experienced

by the service in relation to placements and the areas identified as priorities for 2024/25 following analysis and review of the year's performance

Reasons for decision

4.1. This report is for information only

Alternative options considered

N/A

7. PERMANENCY PLANNING

Permanency planning had focused on securing long-term, stable living arrangements for children, aiming to reduce disruptions and promote emotional security. The process considered each child's social, emotional, educational, health, cultural, and identity needs.

Three key dimensions of permanence were addressed:

- Legal permanence through arrangements such as reunification with birth parents, adoption, or legal orders like Special Guardianship.
- Physical permanence by ensuring stability in home and community environments.
- Psychological permanence through secure attachments and a sense of belonging.

Haringey had prioritised early permanency planning, engaging practitioners and managers in continuous discussions about suitable long-term options for children entering care. This approach aligned with best practice and legal expectations under the Children and Social Work Act 2017 and the Children Act 1989. Courts were required to assess the impact of harm, current and future needs, and the adequacy of long-term care plans. Social workers applied principles from the *Re B-S* judgment, ensuring thorough analysis and evidence in care recommendations.

During the 2023 Ofsted inspection, Haringey was praised for its creative and committed social workers and improved adoption matching for younger children. The borough moved from "Requires Improvement" to "Good" overall, though permanency planning was identified as an area needing further embedding.

Following the inspection, Haringey strengthened its permanency processes through:

- Monthly Permanency Panels, chaired by senior managers, to monitor progress.
- Eight-weekly Permanency Planning Meetings within teams, focusing on children yet to achieve permanency.

These meetings evaluated long-term stability and explored all viable options, including parallel planning—where rehabilitation with birth parents was pursued alongside preparation for alternatives like kinship care or adoption.

The main routes to permanency included:

- Return to parents
 - Special Guardianship
 - Placement with connected carers
 - Long-term foster care
 - Adoption
-
- A member had expressed interest in learning more about the role of the Court Progression Officer, describing it as a particularly engaging topic. It was explained that Haringey had benefited from appointing a Service Manager for Court Service Assurance and Progression, especially given recent developments within the court system. A former court manager, who had spent time working as a principal social worker in another local authority, had returned to Haringey in this enhanced role. Their experience and leadership had helped strengthen relationships with the courts and with Cafcass, ensuring that the quality of work remained consistently high. The team had also recently met with their legal colleagues and the link judge to reinforce these collaborative efforts
 - Stakeholder involvement was actively encouraged. Birth parents, Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs), and Adopt London North (ALN) all contributed to planning and tracking progress. Leadership and oversight were reinforced by appointing a Service Manager for Court Service Assurance and Progression, who tracked cases from the Public Law Outline stage to permanency. Team Managers led regular planning meetings, while Service Managers reported progress at the monthly panel, co-chaired by the Director of Children's Safeguarding and Social Care and the Head of Service for Children in Care.
 - A question had been raised about the age range of children adopted in Haringey, specifically whether adoptions involved mostly babies or included older children as well. It was confirmed that both age groups had been represented. Over recent months, the borough had successfully secured adoption orders for several older children, including those with additional needs. While approximately two-thirds of adoptions involved younger children, older children had also been adopted successfully. One notable case involved a child aged eight who had been in care for five years prior to their adoption.
 - A question had been raised about the additional support provided to adoptive parents of older children, acknowledging that such adoptions could be more challenging from a parental perspective. It was explained that Haringey had a range of support offers in place, including access to the Adoption Support Fund. Locally, the service had placed strong emphasis on addressing the therapeutic needs of children in care, particularly those awaiting adoption, to ensure smooth transitions into adoptive families. The preparation work undertaken with children—especially older ones—had been described as of a very high standard, aimed at giving adoptive families the best possible chance of success

- The report had been praised for its clarity and concise presentation. Members felt it effectively captured the progress and efforts made, describing it as a well-drafted and engaging account of the work undertaken. Appreciation was expressed to everyone involved, noting the discussion had been particularly interesting.

RESOLVED:

Recommendations

3.1. That Members noted contents of this report.

Reasons for decision

4.1. This report was for information only.

Alternative options considered

N/A

8. COLLABORATIVE COMMISSIONING

This report delivered a strategic overview of collaborative commissioning efforts across North Central London (NCL) and Pan-London, with a particular emphasis on market management and placement sufficiency.

It highlighted key developments, emerging opportunities, and Haringey's active role in regional initiatives aimed at improving outcomes for children in care and those with complex needs. Local authorities across London had faced mounting challenges due to rising demand, limited-service provision, and increasing costs. In response, both the NCL sub-region and the Pan-London network, coordinated through the London Innovation and Improvement Alliance (LIIA), led joint commissioning efforts to enhance placement availability, quality, and cost-effectiveness. Haringey had played a significant part in shaping and implementing these initiatives.

- Concerns had been raised about the sudden surge in interest from individuals wanting to open children's homes in Haringay. It was stated that while there was enough residential capacity for children in need, the units were located in the wrong areas—primarily in the North, where property was cheaper—while most children requiring care were based in the South. This mismatch meant children had to be transported long distances. It was suggested that planning approvals should be restricted in the North and encouraged in the South to better align supply with demand. There was also a risk of oversaturating certain areas with residential units, potentially attracting the wrong individuals and creating unsafe environments. Efforts were being made to build early relationships with providers, ensure quality care, and negotiate placements for local children. Small, well-managed homes were seen as beneficial. The team emphasised the importance of supporting registered managers to deliver high-quality, non-exploitative services.

- Questions had been raised about the rationale behind opening multiple four-bedded children's homes. Some wondered whether this approach was cost-effective or aligned with best practice, especially given the operational demands—each home required senior staff, strategic oversight, and substantial social work input. It was acknowledged that this was an important issue when placing young people in care, many of whom had experienced trauma. Matching residents carefully was essential to avoid overcrowding and conflicting needs. Smaller homes were considered a sensible strategy to better meet individual needs and prevent those needs from being overlooked in larger settings.
- Concerns were raised about whether current initiatives—particularly those outlined in section 6.1.3—were sufficient to meet the needs of highly vulnerable children, especially those with complex mental health issues. It was acknowledged that these efforts were likely just a starting point, with only a small number of placements available, such as two beds for young people ready for hospital discharge. While this marked progress, it was clear that further development and collaboration across boroughs were needed. Health services had been actively involved, particularly in discussions around joint funding packages. Variations in contributions from different local authorities highlighted the need for a consistent protocol to ensure equitable funding. Ongoing meetings with health partners, including those related to ICB mergers and the North London Foundation Trust, were seen as a positive step toward integrated support.

RESOLVED:

Recommendations

3.1. That Members noted the contents of the report.

Reasons for decision

4.1 This report was for information only.

Alternative options considered

N/A

9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There were none.

CHAIR:

Signed by Chair

Date

