

**MINUTES OF THE SCRUTINY REVIEW - CORPORATE PARENTING
TUESDAY, 5 OCTOBER 2010**

Councillors: Alexander, Ejiofor (Chair), Gibson and Solomon

Co-opted Members: Ms. Y. Denny (church representative) and Ms. S. Marsh (parent governor)

LC6. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

None.

LC7. URGENT BUSINESS

None.

LC8. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

LC9. MINUTES

The Panel noted that some young people had been approached regarding their participation in the review with a view to two of them being co-opted onto the Panel. Whilst they were keen to meet and feed in their views, they were not in a position to commit to regularly attend meeting of the Panel. The young people in question were part of a group of care leavers who met on a monthly basis. Their next meeting was in two weeks time.

There were a number of ways in which the Panel could meet with relevant children and young people in order to obtain their views. There was the Children in Care Council, which would shortly be having its inaugural meeting. In addition, there was the Leaving Care Forum and the Study Club. It was agreed that dates of forthcoming meeting would be circulated to Members of the Panel so arrangements to visit appropriate forums could be made.

AGREED:

That the minutes of the meeting of 14 September 2010 be approved.

LC10. CORPORATE PARENTING - EDUCATIONAL ISSUES

The Panel commented that targets for the education attainment of children in care appeared to be relatively unambitious. It was noted that the targets were nationally set as part of the local set of performance indicators and the Council was therefore unable to set higher ones.

Attracta Craig, the Haringey Virtual School Head, welcomed this view by the Panel. Her service had high expectations for young people and had submitted higher targets but these had been turned down. They believed that young people could perform well. Good grades at GCSE were very important and helped to keep young people out of the NEETs (not in education, employment and training) category. The ages between 16 and 19 could prove challenging if young people had not secured 5 passes at A – C. One of the reasons why young people might not do well was because of the

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frequent changes in their domestic arrangements and there was a close correlation between results and disruption.

69% of care leavers were in employment and training, although this did not necessarily mean that they would go on to do well. A lot was now being done to address the educational performance of LAC and this focussed on the whole period of their education, up to 19 years of age. One of the reasons why the virtual school was set up was to enable an overview to be taken. The service had not previously realised just how important the years between 16 and 19 were. The Panel were of the view that it would be useful for the service to consider what success might look like for each child.

It was noted that moving children during the year of their GCSEs could be particularly detrimental and was avoided wherever possible. Consideration was being given to what could be done to support 'A' level performance. There was currently a mismatch between birth dates relating to placements and the dates for 'A' Level exams which could lead to difficulties. Whilst care ended at 18, exams took place the following June for most young people.

The educational performance of Haringey's LAC was a success story. Performance compared very well with that achieved nationally and in other London boroughs. However, although the borough was doing very well, the aspiration was to do even better. This would allow young people to be more successful and independent and to close the gap with other children. Interventions that had taken place had proven to be effective.

The Panel complimented the service on the excellent results that had been achieved. It was noted that the number of LAC in Haringey was double that of some other boroughs.

A number of tools were used to monitor progress. Data was used and the progress of children was tracked. It could nevertheless be challenging. 40% of LAC had been the subject of fixed term exclusion in the last academic year and schools could find them hard to handle. However, there had only been 1 permanent exclusion. There had been a training programme for designated teachers. Haringey had had a virtual head teacher for some time and had brought this in prior to it being made compulsory for local authorities. Of particular note was the partnership with Tottenham Hotspur who were involved in providing a range of opportunities and events for LAC, including work experience.

The service had been short listed for four Children and Young People Now awards. This included one for corporate parenting for the work to develop a book club. This involved working with the Library Service and the Big Green bookshop to deliver books to children's homes. They had been nominated for the Learning Award for their Study Club. This had existed since 2005 and involved young people between key stages 2 and 4 meeting every week with staff from the Tuition Service. There had also been a nomination for Third Sector Engagement for their South Africa project. This had entailed children and young people who were considered at risk from going into residential care getting the chance to go to South Africa. In addition, BBC's Newsround were using the borough as an example of how children in care could do well academically.

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All LAC were offered after school tuition. There was a drive to encourage more of them to take up the offer. In 2009, although 66 offers were made, only 29 were accepted. The amount of tuition was fixed at 10 hours. 152 young people were based within the borough whilst 192 were outside.

The Council was accountable for how well LAC performed academically. All local authorities now had virtual schools. In addition, there were also designated teachers and school governors for LAC. The Virtual Head worked with the Council's Admissions Service to ensure that all LAC were placed appropriately.

In terms of the GCSE performance for 2010, 31% of LAC got 5 passes between A and C. This comprised of 19 young people. Only 2 of these had been predicted to gain such passes two years ago at KS3. When interventions were made, learning could be accelerated. The interventions were often a range of simple and small things like getting to know the young people, showing an interest and having high expectations.

They were not always successful though. Things could happen to the young people which inhibited their performance. For some young people, getting 1 A-G pass might be a significant achievement. It was important that the achievements of all young people children was celebrated. The service worked closely with headteachers and school governing bodies to ensure that they fulfilled their statutory responsibilities.

The Chair of the Panel commented that he was not aware of the issue of designated school governors for LAC being discussed during his time on a school governing body and requested confirmation that all schools had these.

The Panel also requested information on the following:

- Reg. 33 visits to residential homes
- Feedback obtained from foster carers

The Panel thanked Ms Craig and Ms Haith for their contribution.

**Cllr Joseph Ejiofor
Chair**