

**MINUTES OF THE CORPORATE PARENTING ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
MONDAY, 22 SEPTEMBER 2014**

Councillors Berryman, Hare, Morris, Stennett and Waters (Chair)

Apologies Councillor Gunes and Weston

Also Present: Lisa Redfern, Tracey Hutchings, Paul McCarthy, Shanti Jacob, Cath Hogan, Neelam Bhardwaja, Richard Hutton and Lynn Carrington.

<b>MINUTE NO.</b>	<b>SUBJECT/DECISION</b>	<b>ACTON BY</b>
<b>CPAC 15</b>	<b>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (IF ANY)</b>  Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Gunes and Cllr Weston.	<b>Clerk</b>
<b>CPAC 16</b>	<b>URGENT BUSINESS</b>  No items of urgent business were received.	
<b>CPAC 17</b>	<b>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</b>  No declarations of interest were put forward.	
<b>CPAC 18</b>	<b>MINUTES</b>  The minutes of the meeting held on the 31 <sup>st</sup> July were agreed as an accurate record.	<b>Clerk</b>
<b>CPAC 19</b>	<b>MATTERS ARISING</b>  CPAC agreed for officers to find a term that was understood by children and young people in care and best described how to put forward a complaint/concern about their care. Currently Barnados were commissioned to provide an advocacy service but it was unlikely that children and young people fully understood the term 'advocacy'.  The Ofsted Action plan was due to be submitted to Ofsted on the 18 <sup>th</sup> October. There had been 17 recommendations put forward and the council would set out how they were going to meet them. Once the plan was submitted to Ofsted, there would be a few days to clarify or make any changes .Then, following Ofsted agreement to the action plan, it could be published on the council's website and distributed to CPAC Members.	<b>Cath Hogan/ Shanti Jacob</b>  <b>Neelam Bhardwaja/ Clerk</b>
<b>CPAC 20</b>	<b>PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT : CHILDREN AND FAMILIES</b>	

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The Performance report was a helpful tool to help the Committee identify issues that required focus in the care for looked after children and care leavers.

The borough still had a high number of children in care and was still considered an outlier but the service were working hard to improve this position. The Director for the Children's Service highlighted the number of areas where performance improvements had been made. This was through a focused approach of monthly call over meetings and the embedding of a quality assurance function.

Members were assured by the specific monthly focus on LAC placements. There were monthly planning meetings to ensure that all options for placements are being explored by social workers and that there is consistent rigor being applied to this process.

The Permanency strategy had made significant improvements to providing more permanent stable placements for children and young people in care. There had been an increase in the special guardianship orders, kinship carers, and adoption timescales. However, there was still room for improvement with adoption timescales, so the service would be re-launching the permanency strategy and considering all aspects of permanency planning. The council would also be speaking with a specialist organisation about working together on adoption.

The re -launched strategy will set out the key values on long term placement options and the service will also look at supporting and providing the judiciary with the confidence that LAC, on section 20's notices, are able to stay at home.

There was still concern about the cohort of children aged between 5 to 13 coming into care and there would be further monitoring and scrutiny of the process of their care.

In response to a question about the number of older children in care, it was noted that there are 118 aged between 14 -17 coming into care via section 20 notices. The Committee further asked how this number compared to statistical neighbours and noted that the borough did have higher numbers of older children in care. Officers felt that older children in the borough were more likely to become looked after due to a historical risk adverse culture in the service. Also there were undeveloped diversionary activities in the borough to engage the young person in and better enable the behaviour of the young person to be tackled. Members were advised that this does requires a multi disciplinary approach as there would need to be joint work with schools, Youth Services, YOS, Police and judiciary on this. Members noted that all partners working together can make a difference and this involves getting involved with the young person at the right time and using the expertise and skills at an early stage. The Committee were pleased to note that there was additional external funding was being sought to support early diversionary activity and were interested in getting a report back, at their March meeting, about this work and any initial

**Cath  
Hogan/  
Neelam  
Bhardwaja**

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	<p>improvements.</p> <p>Following further Member questions the following information was provided to the Committee:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The number of children in care can suddenly go up in a month due to a large family of children coming into care or if a young person is put on remand.</li> <li>• Additional focus on section 20's, so all options for the placement of the young person are considered. This requires constant quality analysis by managers of the social workers decision making to ensure that they are constantly looking at the bigger picture for the young person and considering different options</li> <li>• 20 LAC in residential provision, of this number, 16 have special needs.</li> <li>• Each week the Cabinet Member for Children and Families and the Director for Children's Service will review the number of children missing from care and the process to locate them. They will also focus on the quality of the discussion with the young person when they have returned to care to ensure that the issues, causing the absence, are being tackled. There is continual challenge and focus on missing children.</li> <li>• In terms of educational achievement of looked after the children, Members noted that the United Kingdom was one of the strongest countries in Europe. The Looked after Children achievement awards were a good way of meeting young people in care that were exceeding in education.</li> </ul> <p>Agreed that numerical figures for LAC not in employment, education and training should be referred to in performance reports instead of percentages as there was a small number involved in the analysis. The Director of CS spoke about the need to align YOS, education and training providers to improve support for care leavers and Members were assured that this would be discussed at the next call over meeting.</p>	<p><b>Richard Hutton</b></p>
<p><b>CPAC 21</b></p>	<p><b>YOUNG PEOPLE LIVING IN SEMI INDEPENDENT ACCOMMODATION AT 16-17</b></p> <p>At the December 2013 meeting, Committee Members had noted that there were 55 [16-17] year olds [10% of the total number of LAC in the borough] not living with a family, in separate accommodation, and they had asked to consider the support to this group.</p> <p>Committee Members noted that there were now 40 [16-17] year olds living in semi independent accommodation. The support to young people living in this type of accommodation was set out in the report. It was important to note that all these young people have an allocated social worker who will meet with them on a regular basis, they will continue to have LAC reviews and will receive regular monitoring visits from the placement officer. The report provided assurance to Members about the safeguards in place to ensure the properties, that these young people were living in, were to a good standard as there was no external inspection of these units/ properties. Also despite the previous negative assumptions made about the quality of these accommodation units, following a comprehensive review of the quality of accommodation</p>	

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	<p>offered by the council to young people, they were found to be generally good. Members of Aspire were also now accompanying young people to inspect the offered accommodation before moving in. This was a positive development, as the young people were able to better talk about their issues and concerns about the accommodation with the young person from Aspire before moving in.</p> <p>Where units were found to be adequate there would be support from the council to improve the placement [there were no units found to be inadequate by the council]. The council were aiming to work in a positive way with the providers to support improvements and there was felt to be a good response from the landlords about this. An action plan had been compiled following the review of accommodation and this included council training with providers to set out what is expected of the property and service to the tenant.</p> <p>Members were pleased to note the support and focus around 16-17 year olds and the attention being given to the quality of their accommodation. Members requested a report back to the March meeting on the progress with the action plan with some case studies highlighting the improvements / issues.</p>	<p><b>Paul McCarthy</b></p>
<p><b>CPAC 22</b></p>	<p><b>PUPIL PREMIUM GRANT EXPENDITURE ON CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN CARE</b></p> <p>At the previous meeting the Committee had requested some feedback on the how the Looked after Children Pupil Premium Grant is used and the involvement of the young person in deciding how this grant will be spent on them. The Committee noted that the council is responsible for distributing the grant and have decided to do this on a term by term basis [£600 a term over 3 terms]. The schools will then decide and record on the PEP how they will be spending this funding on the child/ young person in care attending their school. Members noted that the school has to spend this grant, otherwise it will be returned back to the DFE. Members further noted that the remaining £100 left over from the yearly £1900, provided by the LACPPG, is spent by the Virtual School on books, materials, and activities to boost LAC attainment.</p> <p>The Committee were provided with some case studies to provide a guide on the types of activities the PPG can be spent on and the impact this has.</p> <p>Members learnt that the Virtual School is highly regarded service with an innovative and creative approach to motivate and support LAC to achieve and do well at school. In terms of monitoring the PEPs and agreement of LACPPG spend, the Head of the Virtual School advised that she would look closely at the PEPs to ensure that there is consistent consultation with the young person, foster carer and social worker when deciding the spending of this funding.</p> <p>The Chair also thought it would be assuring for the Committee to receive a report on how the LAC PPG is spent by schools and how the remainder of the funding, following termly allocation to schools, is spent</p>	<p><b>Tracey Hutchings</b></p>

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	by the Virtual School.	
<p><b>CPAC 23</b></p>	<p><b>FOSTERING UPDATE</b></p> <p>After several years of poor performance in recruiting in-house foster carers and the imminent turnover of foster carers due to retirement, it had been agreed, earlier in the year, to outsource the recruitment and training of foster carers to NRS who had worked successfully with other boroughs in the recruitment and assessment of foster carers. To meet the current need for in house foster carers [this cost was £480 per week in comparison to an agency foster carer who will cost £700 per week], there would need to a recruitment of 40-45 foster carers.</p> <p>The Committee noted that there were 14 new in-house foster carer’s applications and they were planned for consideration by the Fostering Panel before the Christmas period. The Panel meetings would increase to two a month to ensure the target of 45 new carers was met. With more choice of foster carers, there were also better chances of getting good matches for children /young people in care.</p> <p>The Committee accepted that the cost of procuring this service from NRS was value for money as it would enable for in -house carers to be recruited and allow the social worker more time to support foster carers.</p> <p>The Committee were pleased to note the improved stance in valuing and supporting Foster carers and were also happy with the chosen attitude of fostering as a career choice. The Children’s Service had taken on board the concerns expressed by Foster carers about: late finance payments, the changes in the social workers supporting foster carers and need for a sense of recognition. Improvements included, Finance sorting the late payments, a focused Foster Carers conference on the 12<sup>th</sup> November, annual end of year party, a monthly fostering service newsletter and dedicated social workers working to support and develop Foster carers.</p> <p>The contract with NRS was subject to yearly renewal and a Committee Member asked about the work to transfer the skills and experience from NRS to social workers so they can continue with recruiting in – house foster carers in the future. The Interim Head of Placements spoke about continuing with NRS until enough in- house foster carers have been recruited and there is stability with the number of in-house foster carers. After this period, independent social workers can be recruited to undertake foster carer assessments and there could be an officer trained to undertake a customer service type role of responding to enquiries and leading potential foster carers to the assessment process.</p> <p>The Committee further recommended undertaking a mystery shopper exercise to provide assurance about the quality of customer contact by NRS. It was suggested that iMPower could complete this task.</p>	<p><b>Paul McCarthy</b></p>

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<p><b>CPAC 24</b></p>	<p><b>NEW ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS</b></p> <p>No new items of urgent business.</p>	
<p><b>CPAC 25</b></p>	<p><b>EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC</b></p> <p>Not required</p>	
<p><b>CPAC 26</b></p>	<p><b>NEW ITEMS OF URGENT EXEMPT BUSINESS</b></p> <p>None</p>	
<p><b>CPAC 27</b></p>	<p><b>ANY OTHER BUSINESS</b></p> <p>Agreed a report on the diversionary activities to be taken forward to reduce the number of 14-17 year olds becoming looked after is considered at the March meeting.</p> <p>Agreed that the Annual report from the Virtual school on LAC attainment is considered at the March meeting.</p> <p>Agreed the Ofsted Action Plan is considered at the December meeting. Committee Members will also be sent a copy of this, once it is published in November.</p>	<p><b>Cath Hogan/ Neelam Bhardwaja Tracey Hutchings</b></p> <p><b>Neelam Bhardwaja/ Clerk</b></p>

Councillor Ann Waters

Chair