

Corporate Parent Committee

Virtual Meeting

Thursday 18th March 2021 at 6:00pm

PRESENT: Councillors: Bell (Chair), Johnson (Vice-Chair), Midha, Sharma, Rooney, Driscoll, Cox and Millican.

ALSO PRESENT: Judith Finlay (Executive Director, Children, Adults and Public Health), Carolyn Fair (Director, Children and Families), Bridie McDonagh (Virtual School Head Teacher), Carol Yates (Operations Manager LAC and LCT), Jude Fraser (Children and Families, Senior Management Team (SMT), Horizons Centre), Hannah Foxcroft (Head of Fostering and Connect, Safeguarding and Support), Gary Jones (Assistant Director, Children's Social Care), Jeevan Matharu (Participation Project Worker, Horizons), Andrea Edwards (Designated Nurse CCG, Children and Families), Ian Jenkins (Head of Integrated Youth Service), Alison O'Connor (Virtual School Teacher/Caseworker), Misha Jalil (Democratic Services Officer) and Young Persons Representatives.

1 Apologies for Absence and Substitutions

Councillor Midha provided apologies for lateness.

2 Urgent Matters

The Committee decided it would be beneficial for a Young Person to Co-Chair at the next meeting. It would help the Young Person develop new skills and provide the Committee with an authentic view and voice.

Resolved that: Carol Yates, Operations Manager LAC and LCT will advertise the opportunity in the newsletter for Young People.

3 Matters to be Considered in Private

There were none.

4 Declarations of Interest

There were none.

5 Minutes

Resolved that: the minutes of the meeting on 10 December 2020 be agreed as a true and correct record and signed by the Chair.

6 Update from Junior Council

Alison O'Connor, Virtual School Teacher provided a verbal update.

The Committee was informed that the Junior Council continued to focus on health and happiness.

The Officer informed the Committee that two members of the Junior Council, Angel and Joshua, were present at the meeting. Angel read out her poem about happiness with the theme being to love yourself and self-confidence. Joshua read his poem about happiness with the theme being BMW cars.

The Committee praised both poems.

In response to questions by the Committee:

- Joshua stated that he wrote poem about BMWs because that was his favourite car and it made him feel free. His second favourite car was Škoda Auto. He further informed the Committee that he would be very happy if he was ever given the opportunity to drive a Formula One car. He showed the Committee a gift he received from his aunt which was an autograph from Lewis Hamilton, Formula One Racing Driver.
- Angel stated that her poem made her happy because it was about self-love. She stated that her favourite treat was going to the cinema.

Alison O'Connor thanked the Committee for hearing Angel and Joshua's poems. The Officer, Angel and Joshua exited the meeting at this point.

Resolved that: the Committee noted the update.

7 Feedback from the Horizons ShoutOut Forum

Jude Fraser, Senior Management Team (SMT), Horizons Centre, reported on the activities over last quarter. The Horizons Centre had delivered key services using webinars, online sessions and door step visits. They delivered an employment session about the Kickstart opportunities within Ealing through a webinar. They had initial discussions about starting a Kickstart opportunity and apprentices within the Horizon's Centre. They also partnered with the Housing Team and delivered their pre-tenancy training workshops to 14 Young People (who would be bidding for their quota housing). The pre-tenancy workshops would be repeated throughout the financial year. The Officer stated that they would be providing after-care support to young people once they moved in.

Jeevan Matharu, Participation Project Worker, Horizons reported that 3 young people completed the Bronze Arts Award. The young people worked with a local artist with links to Hanwell Zoo. They contributed to a mural that was displayed at the zoo by painting various animals. They received tablets provided by Unitask which they also used for further digital engagement with the Horizon Centre and for their education.

Jeevan Matharu reported that 2 young people, including Angel completed the Silver Arts Award.

Jeevan Matharu, explained that one area they were focusing on was pathway planning which involved working with young people across the Leaving care Team to improve processes and making processes more inclusive.

Jeevan Matharu introduced Raheel, a young person in the Leaving Care Team that was present at the meeting. Raheel informed the Committee he had excellent experience with pathway planning and he clearly understood what it was. Raheel explained that he saw pathway planning as a to-do list and many young people did not understand what it was. Therefore, social workers should go over pathway planning, explaining it more carefully and ensure young people understood it.

Carol Yates, Operations Manager LAC and LCT explained that she was in workshops to review pathway planning. The aim was to simplify what pathway plans looked like and to frame it in a way that the young person guided their social worker on what should be in their plan. Carol Yates further explained that, according to other feedback from young people, the pathway plan document should be designed to help young people understand better how to become independent and to move into their own property, get job or go to university. The existing document was too long and full of jargon.

In response to questions by the Committee:

- Carol Yates explained that the existing pathway plan was long and complicated. The new form would be simpler and focus of the young person leading the conversation and explaining what they want and the social worker and young person will work together to create a plan to reach the young person's goal.
- Jude Fraser reported that the Kickstart was an initiative with the DWP. The scheme was ring fenced for jobseekers between 18 to 24. The Horizon Centre were planning to run Kickstart opportunities for 2 cohorts per year, with the first being in spring and the second later in the year.

Councillor Millican stated that he chaired for a charity, Cultivate London. Cultivate London was working with the Council and they planned to offer opportunities to jobseekers as part of the Kickstart Scheme.

Resolved that: the Committee noted the feedback.

8 My Education Mentors Project Update

Bridie McDonagh, Virtual School Head Teacher provided a brief update. It was explained that there was a new approach to the project which had three strands to it.

1. Two students in year 13 were a part of the First Start Academy at St Mary's University. They had been a part of the programme since they were in year 9. They were working as ambassadors, mentors and board members for the First Start Academy.
2. Mentoring Scheme at Brunel University. Two 18-year olds were a part of this new 10-week programme. The aim was to recruit new, younger students.
3. Debate Mate was aimed at students from year 9 and above.

Bridie McDonagh asked the Committee if some representatives from the schemes mentioned above could attend a Corporate Parent Meeting to talk about their experiences. The Committee stated it would warmly welcome any representatives from the mentoring schemes.

Resolved that: the Committee noted the update.

9 Report on the Education of Looked After Children

Bridie McDonagh mentioned that there was a mistake on the report at page 16. She clarified that there were no young people in secure units.

The Officer stated that this year there will be centre assessed grades, instead of examinations for GCSEs. The current cohort (Year 11s being entered for centre assessed grades) were predicted to achieve the highest attainment that the Council had ever seen. The factors that may have contributed to this were: stability of placements; stability of school place; long term care; longstanding relationship with the Virtual School Team and their social workers; low incident of SEN; participation overtime with the enrichment opportunity; and their sustained effort over two successive lockdown periods.

The Committee stated that it would be useful if the report had a glossary of all the acronyms (such as SEN) to help Members that were not teachers or school governors better understand the report.

In response to questions by the Committee, Bridie McDonagh explained that:

- The Key Stage 2 cohort had a high number of students with SEN. They will not sit SATs and instead focus on emotional wellbeing when they were in school. The Virtual School offered several catchup programmes, such as Reading, Maths and Philosophy programmes.

- She carried out an on-site attendance check until 21 February 2021. She found that there was an average attendance of 64% for primary school students and 41% for secondary school students. There was also an average of 55% on site attendance for children with EHC Plans.
- There were a lot of Year 10s and Year 11s learning from home. The schools were prepared for virtual learning during the second lockdown. The students had the necessary equipment for home learning.
- The young people took part in a variety of activities as part of the Virtual Enrichment Programme. For example, some students felt they required assistance with Maths and English and so they received lessons in those subjects. There was a wide group of staff with backgrounds in Languages, Music, Chemistry and more to assist young people in a variety of areas. Other independent schools were now involved in the Virtual Enrichment Programme.

Councillor Midha joined the meeting at this point and she provided apologies for lateness.

Resolved that: the Committee noted the update, including the correction on page 16 of the report regarding the number of young people in secure units.

10 Report on Looked After Children (LAC) and Youth Offending

Ian Jenkins, Head of Integrated Youth Service explained that fewer LAC were coming through the justice system. There were 3 that were remanded for over a 13-week period in last 12 months and they had become eligible for leaving care status. It was further explained that 7 young people had been remanded into custody over the year, with 1 young person being remanded 4 times. The 7 young people had become eligible for Looked After Care whilst on remand.

The Officer drew the Committee's attention to paragraph 3.2 and explained the table showed the financial pressures on remand. He stated that paragraph 3.3 showed the steady decline in the amount of time that young people were on remand since 2015-16.

The Officer explained that the table on page 30 showed that in 2010-11 there were over 2,500 bed nights per year and it was presently at 400 bed nights per year.

The Officer informed the Committee that there had been increases to the cost of remand. The daily night rate had been increasing steadily over the last 4-5 years and it was predicted to continue to increase this year.

The Officer referred to the table on page 31 which showed that there was a steady decline of the number of LAC arrested.

The Officer explained that Covid-19 had an affect on results because there were less cases going to court. Consequently, at one point there was a backlog of cases. He stated that his Team worked hard to keep all children out of court because of the delays and therefore the Out of Court process picked up a lot of the cases.

The Officer stated that there were no LAC that were arrested and remanded. There was 1 LAC that had been sentenced to custody and he was still in custody and he was still a LAC. There was also 1 LAC on remand but they were out of remand now.

In response to questions by the Committee, Ian Jenkins responded that:

- During Covid, they organised virtual engagement programmes through Google classrooms to engage with those at risk of offending and young offenders. There were 30 children involved with the Summer Arts College. They had organised face-to-face activities when they came out of lockdown around June-July 2020. They were planning programmes to promote cultural awareness for black boys in particular as they were overrepresented in the criminal justice system. They were also planning programmes to reduce knife crime and violence.

The Committee requested data with a breakdown of race. The Committee also asked that the data is sent to the Race Equality Commission.

Resolved that:

1. The Committee noted the update
2. The data with a breakdown of race is to be distributed to Committee Members prior to the next meeting
3. The data with a breakdown of race is to be distributed to the Council's Race Equality Commission.

11 Management Information Summary – Children Looked After

Carolyn Fair, Director, Children and Families provided a summary of the Q3 performance.

The Officer reported that, at the end of Q3.:

- There were 311 LAC so there was a continuing downward trend.
- There were 232 CP. The numbers increased as she expected.
- Just under 75% of Children and Family Assessments were completed.
- There were 8 adoptions. The timeliness of the adoptions different due to different factors such as the complexity of the children and due to Covid-19.
- The placement stability was strong at 6.11%.
- 99.7% of LAC reviews were completed in time and 96% of CP reviews were completed in time.
- There were 69% of 16-17 year olds and 66% of 19-20 year olds in Employment, Education or Training.

In response to a question by the Committee, Carolyn Fair stated that they engaged with some independent oversight over the course of December 2020 and in March 2021 to receive an independent view on their progress.

Resolved that: the Committee noted the update.

12 Social Services Complaints Report on Looked After Children (October 2020 to December 2020)

Carolyn Fair provided an update. She informed the Committee that there were only two stage 1 complaints at the end of Q3.

One complaint was by a young person through an advocate for delayed care assess directly due to Covid. The complaint was partially upheld, an apology was provided and the Care Act Assessment was completed.

The other complaint was by the adoptive parents who were concerned as they were not notified that their children's birth parents were moving to an area that they went on holiday in. This complaint was upheld, an apology was provided and they made sure to improve their communications in these circumstances.

Resolved that: the Committee noted the update.

13 Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on 17 June 2021.

This meeting concluded at 19:15 hours.