

Corporate Parent Committee

Thursday 30th January 2020 at 7:00pm

Horizons Centre, Hanwell

PRESENT: Councillors: Bell (Chair), Johnson (Vice-Chair), Tomlinson (substitute for Cox), Rice (substitute for Driscoll), Midha, Rooney, Sharma 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), Charles Barnard (Assistant Director Integrated Early Years, Preventative and Youth Services), Mark Wiltshire (Director of Safer Communities and Housing), Sian Hender (Early years Teacher/Caseworker), Hannah Foxcroft (Practice Lead, Partners in Practice), Gary Odle (Horizons Project Care Leavers Manager), Jude Fraser (Children and Families, Senior Management Team (SMT), Horizons Centre), Jeevan Matharu (Participation Project Worker, Horizons), Cornelia Harding (Democratic Services Officer) and Young Persons Representatives.

**Please note attendance is based on those that have signed the attendance sheet.

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Councillors Cox and Driscoll.

2. Urgent Matters

There were none.

3. Matters to be Considered in Private

There were none.

4. Declarations of Interest

There were none.

5. Minutes

Minutes of the Meeting held on Thursday 17th October 2019

RESOLVED: That, the minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 17th October 2019 be agreed as a true and correct record and signed by the Chair.

6. Update from Junior Council (Verbal Update)

Three children from Junior Council reported on the activities they and other children had enjoyed over the last Christmas vacation; including receiving gifts and games such as skipping. They had also benefitted from Keeping Healthy workshops where they had learnt about the importance of a healthy diet, good teeth brushing techniques and exercise. The children demonstrated

types of exercise that they enjoyed to the committee. They also gave a demonstration of a song about being healthy.

RESOLVED:

That the Corporate Parent Committee noted the feedback from Junior Council.

**7. Feedback from Horizons Shout-Out Forum/Council (HSC)
(Verbal feedback)**

Jeevan Matharu reported that the young people had completed a number of workshops with giff gaff at the end of last year. The company had offered another six workshops from January 2020. The young people were being offered the opportunity to contribute to the giff gaff website.

A member of the HSC reported on the activities the young people had enjoyed last Christmas, in particular performances at the Kiln Theatre in Kilburn.

A group of care leavers had been surveyed recently, including care leavers in and out of borough.

Workshops and training on housing, health and safeguarding had also been held recently. The young people were trying to raise the profile of the HSC to ensure information could be accessed easily.

Plans were underway to introduce a helpline that out-of-borough care leavers can use to access advice and support. Gary Odle added that he was working with the Council's communications team and it was hoped that the helpline could be run from the Horizons Centre. There were also proposals to introduce a web chat for care leavers on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Measures like safeguarding and firewalls were relevant and were being addressed with the communications team. Officers reported that a web chat had been done before however it needed to be more targeted.

The HSC reported that feedback from the survey would be given at the next Corporate Parent Committee meeting.

RESOLVED:

The Corporate Parent Committee noted the feedback from the Horizons Shout-Out Council, Jeevan Matharu and Gary Odle.

8. My Education Mentors Project Update

Bridie McDonagh reported that there was a young person supporting the Virtual School/Horizons Team on a new project called “We belong” on Saturdays. They were also helping out with a project run jointly with Hounslow.

This young person was giving some thought to coming on board as the My Education Mentors project rep on a part-time basis.

RESOLVED:

The Corporate Parent Committee noted the update.

9. Report on the Range of Accommodation provision for care leavers in Ealing 2019-2020.

(Agenda Item 11)

The young people from the HSC stayed in the room for this item.

Carol Yates spoke to her report. The average age of care leavers leaving home was 17-18; whereas the average age of children (not in care) leaving home was 24 years of age.

Care leavers moving on to independence faced several issues as listed in the report, including loneliness, anxiety and fear of homelessness.

The number of care leavers ‘staying put’ would have increased by 10 to 11 young persons if they had not gone to university.

Three young people in care were housed in Bed and Breakfast (B & B) placements – two out-of-borough and one in borough. The young person housed in-borough was aged twenty and had chosen this option in order that they move higher up on the criteria for council accommodation.

Carol reported that anyone in B & B accommodation was visited weekly and assessments updated regularly. This type of accommodation was only used in the most extreme circumstances. In future, the granting of this type of accommodation for young people in care would have to be signed off by a director.

Carol briefly summarised the type of accommodation that was available for Ealing’s Care Leaver population. She elaborated that the intention with young people leaving custody was to get them re-habilitated and to try and prevent re-offending.

With respect to young people not in touch, which amounted to 6 persons, four of them had withdrawn from services once their immigration status had been refused and all appeals had failed.

Carol said that most housing provision was within the borough of Ealing or in neighbouring boroughs, however, semi-independent provision elsewhere in London might be used if young people were at risk of gang involvement, in order that the young people might build resilience and establish boundaries.

Carol went on to speak about the quota for social housing, saying the housing department had provided 20 social care quota placement nominations this year, targeted at several vulnerable cohorts. She said using the private rented sector for care leavers was often viewed negatively, however it was covered by the grant whereas the grant would not cover other housing provision.

The Leaving Care team would put in a bid for some funding.

Furthermore, some group and individual work would be done with care leavers, this work is likely to be based in the Horizons Centre. Additional psychology support would also be provided.

The Committee were informed that the recent OFSTED inspection had raised concerns about the use of YMCA accommodation. Officers stated that this provider was able to take young people in on an emergency basis and did not necessarily request an interview beforehand. It was mentioned that this type of accommodation should ideally be used to assess young people and then move them on.

There were cost implications for all the various accommodation options. The Leaving Care team would continue to work on private rented accommodation to make it safer, now that most of the landlords were known to the services. The team were looking at the Leaving Care services overall, including staffing to cover Pathway Plans. A manager would visit accommodation for young people twice a year to oversee the Pathway Plans.

Mark Wiltshire (Director of Safer Communities and Housing), spoke to the Committee about the current housing stock and how it was allocated.

Currently, around 600 housing units were for sheltered accommodation. 180 placements of new housing tenancies were for polarised cohorts; within that 20 were for leaving care and other cohorts such as mental health. If the quota for other housing groups was reduced, it would mean reducing the flow for those housing cohorts. The Council had an obligation to house residents living in schemes that were being regenerated.

The reduction from 60 to 20 housing units earmarked for the social care cohort, was partly due to this recycling (from re-gen schemes). It was hoped that from 2023 there would be more genuinely affordable homes. The Council also had to consider other vulnerable groups living in B&Bs, such as families with young children.

The Committee noted that the 600 allocations had been in existence for a long time and suggested the possibility of exploring young people in care living with

slightly older people who were in work. This arrangement would be similar to them living with host families.

A young person from the HSC said there would be some concerns about this for example, the gender of the young people involved, the type of accommodation and the facilities that were involved.

With respect to how housing options could be improved, Carol suggested that young people could be offered more support with private rented accommodation and Judith Finlay suggested bench-marking with other authorities.

Mark Wiltshire said the council did not want to set young people on a trajectory where they come back into the system at age 25 without support. The objective was to aim for a successful long-term tenancy. Judith added that young people should be housed with support.

Carol said the team were working with the West London Alliance (WLA) to try and set up an accreditation scheme along with other boroughs to try and bring up the standards of private accommodation. Providers could not be forced [to raise standards] however, the council could say these are our “preferred” providers.

In addition, a steering group is to be set up with representatives from the Children in Care Council. The group would be a sounding board for what young people want in their accommodation.

Judith Finlay said a policy would be put together after consultation with the young people and the policy would be brought back to the Corporate Parent Committee for approval.

RESOLVED:

- That Councillors Bell, Johnson and Driscoll are to have regular meetings with Mark Wiltshire, Director of Safer Communities and Housing.
- That a policy on accommodation for care leavers be drawn up and agreed by the committee.
- That the committee noted the OFSTED recommendations in relation to accommodation and
- Noted the current position in relation to care leavers’ accommodation.

The young people from the HSC left the meeting.

10. Ealing Children’s Services Ofsted Inspection of Children’s social care services 4th - 8th Jan 2020
(Agenda Item 10)

Carolyn Fair, Director, Children and Families, spoke to this report.

The inspection found that overall, services in Ealing were requiring improvement to be good.

Carolyn said that a change of computer software (from Frameworki to Mosaic) had been the reason certain areas had been identified as requiring further improvement by the inspectors. Another OFSTED finding of note was the Council's response to children on the edge of care.

Following the outcome of the OFSTED inspection, the Children and Families board were to start meeting every two weeks, a report was to be prepared for the strategic leadership team and the Cabinet thereafter. The same report would also go to a scrutiny panel on how the action plan is to be implemented.

Officers said the OFSTED Improvement plan that had been produced would be simplified in order to make the link between the plan and the OFSTED findings clearer.

RESOLVED:

That the Corporate Parent Committee:

- a) noted the outcome of the recent Ofsted Inspection of children's social care services (ILACS) Inspection of the local authority's services to children who need help and protection, children looked after and care leavers.
- b) noted the inspection action plan prepared in response to the Ofsted findings and which has been submitted to the Secretary of State and HM Chief Inspector.

11. Report on the Education of Looked After Children
(Agenda Item 9)

Bridie McDonagh (Virtual School Head Teacher) presented this report.

She briefly reported on the young people's educational performance at the following stages: Key Stages 1, 2 and 4 as well as university performance.

There were 7 children in the current Key Stage 1 (Year 2) cohort. Bridie explained that it was currently a weak cohort.

Whereas in Key Stage 2, Year 6 (current Year 7 pupils), they were a strong cohort. A comparison with national data was not yet available as the official DfE figures were not yet available from the Nexus database.

Bridie said OFSTED measures progress between KS2 and KS4.

There were 12 pupils in the Key Stage 4 Year 11 (current Year 12) cohort.

Only five young people are NEET. There were several young people on Level 1 and 2 courses in Year 12.

In 2018/19 there were 48 young people at university, including one at Claremont College in the USA. This continued the upward trend from 35 in 2013/14 and 2014/15.

Gary Odle and Jude Fraser informed the Committee that there were two young people currently employed with Ealing Council as apprentices. A further two young people were successful in the government's apprenticeship program for young care leavers, one had a place in the Department for Education and another in finance.

Bridie informed the Committee that some other London boroughs did have higher numbers going to university however Ealing Council did have good post 16 support for all care leavers. In addition, the 'enrichment' programs were very well supported by the young people in care in the Ealing borough. Bridie mentioned that other boroughs were looking to extend the pupil premium grant.

Carol Yates informed the Committee that other children in the borough were receiving trauma support, social worker input, etc, and that some of these young people were coming in later to do college courses.

The Committee commended the LAC education team on the numbers going to university and on the STEM program. The Committee agreed that it was best to start preparing children for a science education much earlier than age 16 and that more work could be done to empower foster carers to encourage the children. Bridie informed that a residential group would soon start work with foster carers to promote learning at home.

RESOLVED:

The Corporate Parent Committee noted the report on the Education of Looked After Children - January 2020.

**12. Social Services Complaints Report on Looked After Children
July – Sept 2019
(Agenda Item 12)**

Judith Finlay spoke to Heather Dickie's report.

Two informal (stage 1) complaints had been received in the three month period July 2019 to Sept 2019. Both complaints related to accommodation and had not been upheld.

RESOLVED:

That the Corporate Parent Committee noted the report.

13. Management Information Summary – Children Looked After
(Agenda Item 13)

Carolyn Fair spoke to this report.

She drew the Committee's attention to the timing of Children and Family Assessments (CFAs), which had been looked at by the recent OFSTED inspection.

There had been a 45% increase in the volume of assessments in 2019 as compared with 2018. This had impacted on the timeliness completion rate of 82.7% in 2018 compared with 69.5% in 2019. The average monthly CFAs completed in 2018 was 289 vs 419 in 2019. Thus, current performance was below the national average of 83.1% and the London average of 84.1%

RESOLVED:

That the Corporate Parent Committee noted the report.

14. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday 19th March 2020.

Chair..... (Councillor Julian Bell)

The meeting ended at 8:33pm