

Corporate Parent Committee

Thursday 10th December 2020 at 6:00pm

PRESENT: Councillors: Bell (Chair), Johnson (Vice-Chair), Midha, Sharma, Driscoll 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), Gary Odle (Horizons Project Care Leavers Manager), Jude Fraser (Children and Families, Senior Management Team (SMT), Horizons Centre), Hannah Foxcroft (Head of Fostering and Connect, Safeguarding and Support), Sian Hender (Early Years Teacher, Behaviour and Social Inclusion), Gary Jones (Assistant Director, Children's Social Care), Jeevan Matharu (Participation Project Worker, Horizons), Andrea Edwards (Designated Nurse CCG, Children and Families), Misha Jalil (Democratic Services Officer) and Young Persons Representatives.

1 Apologies for Absence and Substitutions

Councillor Bell provided apologies as he explained that he must leave the meeting early to attend a Budget webinar.

Councillor Rooney provided apologies for lateness.

2 Urgent Matters

There were none.

3 Matters to be Considered in Private

The meeting was held in private, although the reports are available to the public.

4 Declarations of Interest

There were none.

5 Minutes

Resolved that: the minutes of the meeting on 15 October 2020 be agreed as a true and correct record and signed by the Chair.

6 Update from Junior Council

Sian Hender, Early Years Teacher informed the committee that there were 7 children in the Junior Council this year. The Junior Council will focus on health and happiness. She stated that a member of the Junior Council, Angel, will update the Committee on the healthy meal that she recently cooked.

Angel explained that she made chicken, rice and salad because it is a healthy and balanced meal.

In response to questions by the committee, Angel stated that:

- she was also able to make tuna and pasta which is another healthy meal;
- there were red, yellow and green peppers; cucumbers; lettuce; and tomatoes in the salad she prepared; and
- she had assistance with cooking the rice.

Sian Hender thanked Angel for her contribution to the meeting and Angel exited the meeting at this point.

7 Feedback from the Horizons ShoutOut Forum

Gary Odle, Horizons Project Care Leavers Manager provided a verbal update.

The Officer reported that:

- They continued to deliver online support, providing 1-to-1 support and group consultations on a weekly basis. They increased face-to-face visits at the end of the lockdown and attended placements to ensure care leavers were aware of the available support. He stated that they visited care leavers who are parents and distributed presents secured by the Leaving Care Team.
- The Arts Council England were impressed with the Summers Arts College programme and extended funding to deliver the programme from January 2021 to March 2021. More young people, including those living out of the borough, will be able to participate and gain a qualification as the programme will be delivered online. The participants will receive a tablet computer. The Officer stated that they endeavour to enter one of the young people, Malika, for the gold award. He explained that this gold award has not yet been achieved by any participant in this national programme.
- Ealing Housing agreed to deliver the pre-tenancy training programme to care leavers using a webinar format.

Jude Fraser, Children and Families, Senior Management Team (SMT) provided an update on the Civil Service Internship Programme. He reported that 2 care leavers

successful attained places in the programme and are due to start next year. He also informed the committee that following the success of the webinar to promote this internship, they have scheduled a meeting with Ealing Web West to replicate the same webinar format to take place in early 2021 for the Council's Kickstarter Scheme.

Jeevan Matharu, Participation Project Worker, Horizons informed the committee that:

- They were in the process of finalising the holiday newsletter. The focus of the newsletter will be on the support services available to young people over the Christmas period. She added that the helpline will also be advertised in the newsletter.
- The centre will be closed over the Christmas period due to the current restrictions. However, online activities will be provided to young people, such as quizzes, movies and a virtual drop in on dedicated days.

Jeevan Matharu introduced the two Young Person Representatives at this meeting: Yassin and Clarissa.

Yassin reported that throughout the year the forum members held discussions about racism and how they were affected by this personally and professionally. She felt that racism was embedded in services and institutions. Yassin further explained that the Forum held a poetry competition for young people to share their experiences. She read a poem written by Catherine, Young Person which shared her experience with motherhood.

Clarissa, Young Person Representative read a poem written by Hassan, Young Person which was about equality and ignorance. She also read out her own poetry which was about racism.

Gary Odle played a recording of Malika, Young Person reciting her poem about strength.

The Committee commented that all the poems they heard were high quality and passionate.

Resolved that: the Committee noted the feedback.

8 My Education Mentors Project Update

Bridie McDonagh, Virtual School Head Teacher reported that they were changing their approach to the virtual school mentoring programme. The care leavers were now working closely with a younger aged group of Looked After Children and were taking part in broader projects. The young people were also taking part in a Design

Collective Project with professional artists to encourage them to creatively share their thoughts.

Resolved that: the Committee noted the update.

9 Report on Care Leavers Equalities Survey 2020

Carol Yates, Operations Manager LAC and LCT reported on the Care Leavers Equalities Survey 2020. She explained that the purpose of the report was to provide the Committee with the results and proposed actions resulting from the Care Leavers Equalities Survey Sept/Oct 2020 and to invite any additional views or ideas to improve the Action Planning resulting from the survey.

The Officer reported that:

- The survey was answered by 32 young people between the ages 17 to 22 which was equivalent to 8% of the care leavers population. She commented that, in comparison to the last survey relating to Covid-19 support, the number of responses for this survey was much lower number as this survey focusses on a more emotive subject.
- They offered and arranged counselling support for anyone who wanted this service at the conclusion of the survey and individuals were able to have immediate contact made with them if they had an immediate concern.
- The survey captured a broad spectrum of ages, genders, ethnicities and religious beliefs.
- One of the young people had ticked that they were “20” years old instead of “22”.
- 37.5% of care leavers felt they were discriminated against on a regular basis with: race; sexual orientation; disability; and mental health being the main sources of discrimination, closely followed by: gender; immigration status; mental health; culture; and care status. However, only 44% of young people informed someone about their discrimination. She commented that this highlighted a need to ensure young people had access to someone to discuss these experiences with.
- Discrimination was experienced by the care leavers in a variety of settings including social care, educational and work settings, within placements, in contact with partner agencies and from young people’s peer groups.

The Officer reported on more data from her report which starts at page 19 of the agenda that was published on the Council website.

The Officer also read out some of the comments by young people regarding the discrimination they faced, including a complaint from a young person who stated that he was denied council housing even though he was entitled to it. She explained that they discussed the housing matter with the young person. She also explained that the next survey will be on the types of accommodation provided by the Council and that they are currently working on a Housing protocol.

In response to questions by the Committee:

- Judith Finlay, Executive Director Children Adults Public Health stated that they have a scheme called “No Learner Left Behind” which involved training school staff on unconscious bias.
- Carol Yates reported that the Leaving Care Team were committed to taking part in unconscious bias and microaggression training.

Resolved that: the Committee noted the update and recommended that these issues are communicated to the Council’s Independent Race Equality Commission.

Councillor Bell exited at this point and handed Chair duties for this meeting to Councillor Johnson.

10 Report on the Education of Looked After Children

Bridie McDonagh highlighted information from her report. She stated that the report informed members of the final Post 16 outcomes for the academic year September 2019-July 2020 and sets out the range of education courses being pursued by Ealing’s care leavers, Post 16. The report also covered progress at the end of KS1, KS2 and KS4 2019-2020 cohorts. She emphasised that it must be noted that the progress reports this year were affected by the cancellation of the KS end of year assessments and lack of published data for the summer 2020 cohort.

The Officer reported that:

- They were in the process of gathering data from school. With this information, they will build on the current progress analysis from the last assessment information in March 2020.
- The number of care leaver students at university have been consistent over the last 3 years. In 2019/2020 47 students were at university (48 in 2018/19 and in 2017/2018). As of September 2020, the number of care leavers at university decreased to 45 because there was a large cohort of students (16) that graduated this year. She added that from September 2020, 16 care leavers started university and 1 deferred their entry to 2021.

The Officer provided a breakdown of the results of the LAC which is detailed in her report starting at page 43 of the agenda.

In response to questions by the Committee:

- Bridie McDonagh reported that they were monitoring attendance at school and assisting students with concerns, such as those who have anxiety around going back to school after a long period of home learning.
- Schools were focussed on recovery and catch-up programmes. There will be funds made available from the central government to help schools in assisting pupils to catch up on missed learning. The schools were also focusing on emotional wellbeing and helping children settle in.

Resolved that: the Committee noted the contents of the report.

11 Independent Reviewing Officers Annual Report April 2019 – March 2020

Gary Jones, Assistant Director, Children's Social Care highlighted some of the information contained in his report. He explained the purpose of the report was to provide the Committee with the Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs) Annual Report from April 2019-March 2020.

The Officer reported that:

- At the time of writing the report, there were 332 looked after children (LAC) and 43 unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people. In 2019-2020 the highest number of LAC were children and young people within the 10-15 age group (149 children, 45%). The second highest number of LAC were within the 16-17 age group (106, 32%). The smallest LAC cohort were babies under a year old.
- The LAC population is down by 32 or 9.3% this year, compared to last year. The 10-15 and 16-17 cohort represented 62% of the LAC population this year.
- Over the past year there was a reduction in the percentage of black children in care. In 2019-2020 black children represented 26% of the LAC population and in 2018-2019 black children represented 29% of the LAC population. Children of dual heritage represented 21% of the LAC population. At the moment, children of white heritage make up the highest proportion of the LAC population at 29%.
- At the time of the report, 125 LAC or 38% were placed within the Ealing borough and within 20 miles of the young person's home address. 134 LAC or 40% were placed outside of Ealing, but within greater-London. 65 LAC or 19% were placed 20+ miles away from their home address and reside outside the local authority area.
- 99.7% of the LAC reviews were completed within the required timescales.

- There was a new escalation episode on MOSAIC to track disputes and increased auditing and quality assurance.

Resolved that: the Committee noted the contents of the report.

12 Fostering Service Update

Hannah Foxcroft explained that the purpose of the report was to provide a summary of the activity the Ealing Fostering Service.

The Officer reported that:

- The strategy in terms of recruitment was changed due to Covid-19. The service was utilising digital strategies such as: Google AdWords, Facebook and Twitter. The service still saw increased recruitment from word-of-mouth and they aimed to deliver more recruitment events in 2021.
- Despite Covid-19, this year there was a sudden increase in enquiries from people wanting to be foster carers. There were 13 sets of foster carers who will start the assessment process which will take approximately 6 months.
- 7 fostering families were approved this year which was higher than last year, demonstrating that Covid did not have a significant impact.
- There were currently 86 foster carers and 18 kinship from diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds.
- Of the 86 carers approved, 68% were being used, 22% were on hold and 9% were available to foster.
- There was a significant reduction in placement moves and until September 2020 there were only 2.2% LAC that had 3 or more moves.
- Foster carers were being provided support through weekly newsletters, virtual visits, face-to-face visits and provided access to relevant online courses and clinical psychologists.
- Foster carers and young people completed a survey in July 2020 to give insight into their feelings during lockdown. The results showed that many young people built stronger relationships with their foster carers during lockdown.

In response to questions by the committee:

- Hannah Foxcroft reported that stability had been increasing year on year. They expected to see changes this year due to the pandemic but stability was not affected by Covid. The Officer commented that the reason for increased stability may be due to the service's use of the Brighter Futures Model which supported carers, social workers and young people.

Resolved that: the Committee noted the contents of the report.

13 Management Information Summary – Children Looked After

Carolyn Fair, Director, Children and Families stated that the purpose of the report was to provide a brief analysis on the 6 months to September 2020/21 performance for LAC, child protection (CP) and care leavers.

- The number of LAC continued to reduce and there were 318 LAC at the end of September 2020, down 6% in the same period last year.
- The number of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) at end of September 2020 was 33, down 37% in the same period last year.
- 36% of LAC are aged 16 – 17 and 26% are aged 13 – 15.
- There were 222 children with Child Protection Plans at the end of September 2020, which was a rise of 16% since April 2020. 60% of this cohort was aged between 5 – 15.
- The timeliness of Children and Family Assessments continued to improve and was at 74.4% at the end of September 2020.
- There were 5 adoptions by the end of September 2020.
- Provisional performance at end of September 2020 showed all 305 eligible children in care have had their reviews completed on time during the year.
- Latest performance in the 6 months to September 2020 showed 94% of all reviews of child protection cases were completed to timescales.
- Provisional performance for 6 months to end of September 2020 showed 75%.

Resolved that: the Committee noted the contents of the report.

14 Social Services Complaints Report on Looked After Children (July 2020 to September 2020)

Carolyn Fair stated that this report provided information on complaints for LAC for the period 1st July to 30th September 2019.

The Officer reported that at the end of September 2019:

- There were 4 stage 1 and no stage 2 or 3 complaints.
- Two of the stage 1 complaints were made by young people through their advocates and the other two were made by parents.
- Two complaints were partially upheld and the other two were not upheld.
- Of the two that were upheld, one was in connection with a delay in receiving subsistence for a young person due to a clerical error and the other was in relation to a delay in getting a contact scheduled to a parent.

Resolved that: the Committee noted the contents of the report.

15 Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on 18 March 2021.

This meeting concluded at 7:45pm.