

Corporate Parent Committee

20 March 2014

Present: Councillors Bell (Chair), Anand, Bagha, Gulaid, Eileen Harris, Kapoor, Midha and Millican.

Also Present: Fostering and Adoption Representatives, Care Leaver Representatives, Looked After Children Representatives, Cheryl Campbell (Team Manager, Horizons Centre), Nina Doma (Horizons Centre), Carolyn Fair (Operations Manager, Children's Placement Services), Judith Finlay (Director Children and Families), Jude Fraser (Horizon centre staff), Gary Odle (Horizons Centre), Bridie McDonagh (Head of Behaviour Strategy and Inclusion & Virtual Head LAC), Marcella Phelan (Assistant Director, Planning Commissioning and Partnerships) and Carol Yates (Operations Manager Looked After Children and Leaving Care Team)

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

1. Apologies for Absence

David Archibald (Executive Director Children and Adults)

2. Urgent Matters

The Committee congratulated officers on achieving the LGC Award for the Best Children's Service 2014 in relation to the Pathways programme. Particular thanks went to Cheryl Campbell, Jude Fraser and Gary Odle for their work on this project.

3. Matters to be Considered in Private

There were none.

4. Declarations of Interest

There were none.

5. Minutes of the Meeting held on 28 November 2013

Resolved:

- i. That the minutes of the meeting held on 28 November 2013 be agreed as a true and correct record.
- ii. To note Boris Johnson, Mayor of London, had responded to a letter about the leaving care conference and Marcella Phelan had met with his senior advisers at City Hall regarding leaving care issues on behalf of the Corporate Parent Group.

6. Update from Junior Council (Verbal Update)

D (Junior Council representative) gave a presentation to the Committee on activities undertaken by the Junior Council. The Junior Council had looked at the role of the social worker and had invited a social worker to a session to answer questions from the group. Questions included what it was like being a social worker and why some social workers

don't say goodbye. There had been 21 responses to the consultation sheet, senior officers would consider the results and report back to Junior Council and to the next meeting of the Corporate Parent Committee

The issue of sleepovers for Looked After Children was raised and it was clarified that Ealing has a clear policy and that police checks were not required.

The Committee thanked D for her presentation which was delivered in an impressive way.

7. Feedback from the Horizons ShoutOut Forum (Verbal Update)

Councillor Bell and Judith Finaly (Director, Children and Families) had attended a session of the Shoutout Forum where the following topics were discussed:

(i) Holidays for Looked After Children

A number of care leavers and Looked After Children had not been on holiday with their foster carers and the suggestion was made that any unused allowance given to foster cares for holidays could be used for a group holiday for Looked After Children.

It was noted that some foster carers use the holiday allowance for outings or activities. The possibility of further group holidays for Looked After Children would be considered.

(ii) Allowances for Apprentices

The Forum asked for apprentices to be given the same allowances as those going to university. Carol Yates, Operations Manager Looked After Children and Leaving Care Team, noted that the wages paid to apprentices varied as did their expenses such as rent. This issue would be considered further with the Shoutout Council and the Finance Manager.

(iii) Lost Voices

A video had been made of some Looked After young people who live out of borough or could not attend the Horizons Centre, in order that their voices could also be heard and views considered.

A video clip was played to the Committee of one young person expressing her views about care leavers being placed on estates with particularly high levels of social and drug related problems. This particular instance was discussed with the Community Safety Team and a decision had been taken not to place Ealing care leavers in areas where there is a high level of substance abuse.

(iv) Savings

The Forum suggested saving 10% of young people's allowances and asked senior management to consider this for Ealing. It was noted that Bexley, Solihul and Richmond were among Councils who had a scheme for saving at source. Carol Yates would look in to this matter further and report back to the Shoutout Council.

(v) Staying Put

Carol Yates explained that the Staying Put legislation allowed children to remain with their foster cares up to the age of 21. This was the right approach for some young people but not for all and semi independence can be helpful.

Councillor Bell thanked the Shoutout Forum for their presentation and was impressed with the quality of questions raised.

8. My Education Mentors Project Update (Verbal Update)

Royanne Johnson (Lead Mentor), mentors and mentee provided feedback on the mentoring sessions.

The aim of the mentoring project was to raise aspirations and inform young people of the services available to them. It was run by care leavers and aimed at young people between the ages of 13 and 18. Mentors had been involved in designing packs for young people coming into care. Sessions had included a cooking session, one to one sessions, a careers session including how to write CVs and mock interviews, a health and personal safety session and a session on substance misuse.

Sessions planned for next term included a university trip, homework sessions, one to one sessions, life as a local MP, sports at Haven Green, Money Twist (an award winning programme teaching young people how to manage money) and an end of year celebration theatre trip.

9. Looked After Children Education Update

Bridie McDonagh, Head of Behaviour Strategy and Inclusion & Virtual Head LAC, introduced this report informing members of the overall education programme for Looked After Children in year 11, updating members on the general position at the end of key stages 1 and 2 to post 16 and outlining the progress on the John Lyon's Charity funded activities and other planned events.

The Committee asked how aspirational targets were set; it was explained that the predicted targets and aspirational grades were set by schools. The Committee asked what support was given to young people with special needs. It was explained that the Children with Disabilities team considered the Personal Education Plans and it was expected that children would have a good level of support through their statement of special educational needs. The Committee asked about the 6 children who were not currently in education. It was explained that 2 of these young people were in the process of applying for educational places and the other 4 were being supported on an individual basis where possible as detailed in the report.

Resolved:

That the Corporate Parent Committee notes the contents of the report.

10. Looked After Children Strategy

Marcella Phelan, Assistant Director, Planning Commissioning and Partnerships, introduced this report setting out the draft strategy for Ealing's Looked After Children and Care Leavers for 2014-2017. This strategy would be considered by Cabinet on 29 April and the Committee were asked to provide comments for inclusion in the final version before this time.

Resolved:

That the Corporate Parent Committee:

- i. notes the draft Looked After Children and Care Leavers Strategy.
- ii. notes that members were asked to submit any comments for inclusion in the final version of the strategy by 27 March 2014.
- iii. thanks Marcella Phelan and Judith Finlay for their work on this strategy.

11. Looked After Children and Care Leavers Feedback Survey

Marcella Phelan introduced the report informing the Committee of the findings of the views of 110 Looked After Children and Care Leavers who had responded to the recent confidential survey giving their feedback on a wide range of issues relating to their care experience.

Resolved:

That the Corporate Parent Committee:

- i. notes the contents of the report.
- ii. notes that an action plan will be presented in response to the issues raised to the next Committee meeting in June 2014.

12. NEETs (Young People not in education, employment or training) Update

Carol Yates informed members that the Leaving Care Services was undertaking an in-depth review of the vulnerability of the care leaver population. Issues being looked at included domestic violence, substance misuse, mental health, self-harm, immigration, housing and NEETs.

Gary Odle and Jude Fraser, Horizons Centre, gave a presentation on working with care leavers.

The Horizons Connexions Team worked in partnership with young people in order to develop the social and practical skills necessary to realise their full potential. The team provided an individually tailored education and employment outreach service for young people in care and in particular those not in education, employment or training.

The Semi-independence Outreach Team (SOT 20+) was established as part of Ealing Social Services Leaving Care Programme and supported young people in their preparation for independent living. The team consisted of experienced outreach workers who worked directly with young people through this period of transition, supporting care leavers to a point where they had acquired the necessary life skills to live independently.

The performance indicator to date identified that 63% of care leavers were engaged in education, employment and training.

Issues preventing engagement were related to offending, young parents and emotional wellbeing.

Initiatives to promote engagement included:

- V - inspired - Pathways - Ealing Apprenticeship Scheme
- Barclays Bank Initiative
- Connexions Personal Advisers: ETE Support - Pastoral Support (Voice)
- Parenting Prospects Programme - Incredible Early Years Programme
- Enterprise Programme: Opportunities to volunteer and work at Horizons
- HSC: Horizons Shout Council - Advocacy
- Employment Opportunity events

Future developments included:

- Leaving Care Action Plan to promote engagement with support services & raise outcomes
- More Pathway opportunities in diverse departments throughout the council
- Establish service level agreements with external contractors to employ care leavers
- Recruit external mentors working in professional fields for care leavers
- Establish education sessions for NEETS - Functional skills
- Develop financial support package for apprentices which guarantees a living wage
- Parenting Prospects Programme - Incredible Early Years Programme
- Enterprise Programme: Opportunities to volunteer and work at Horizons
- HSC: Horizons Shout Council - Advocacy - Children's Rights Service
- Employment Opportunity events

Resolved

That the Corporate Parent Committee records its thanks to Gary Odle and Jude Fraser for their informative presentation.

13. Social Services Complaints Report on Looked After Children

Resolved

That the Corporate Parent Committee notes the contents of the report.

14. Management Information Summary – Looked After Children

Judith Finlay introduced this report.

Resolved

That the Corporate Parent Committee notes the contents of the report.

15. Date of next meeting

The provisional date for the next meeting of the Corporate Parent Committee is Thursday 19 June 2014 at 7pm at the Horizons Centre. This will be confirmed in the meetings programme for the next municipal year.

16. Vote of Thanks

The Committee recorded a vote of thanks to Councillor Bell for his excellent chairing throughout this municipal year.

Chair (Councillor Julian Bell)

The meeting ended at 9 pm