

Corporate Parent Committee

Tuesday 23rd June 2015 at 7:00pm

Horizons Centre, Hanwell

PRESENT: Councillors Bell (Chair), Camadoo, Dhama, Kelly, Midha, Millican, Sharma

ALSO PRESENT: Judith Finlay (Director, Children and Families), Bridie McDonagh (Head of Behaviour Strategy and Inclusion & Virtual School Head LAC), Carol Yates (Operations Manager, Looked After Children and Leaving Care Team), Gary Odle (Manager, Horizons Centre), Ivan Yiga (EMPAC Project Officer and HSC Lead), Cheryl Campbell (Deputy Project Manager, Horizons Centre), Joseph Anstee (Democratic Services Officer), and Young Peoples Representatives

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

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for lateness were received from Councillor Camadoo.

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 of the Meeting held on 19th March 2015

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 19th March 2015 be agreed as a true and correct record.

6. Update from Junior Council (Verbal Update)

M, a Junior Council member in Year 6, introduced this item. The Junior Council had recently had a visit from a leading foster carer. They had discussed photos and souvenirs from foster homes and youth workers. The Junior Council had also continued to discuss friends visiting and sleepovers. The Junior Council had organised a tea party for the 7th July and had invited foster carers and social workers. The Committee was invited to join the tea party.

S, a Junior Council member told the Committee about the recent half-term activities. They had done lots of activities including a Film Club and days out. There was a trip to the Regents Park open-air theatre to see a production of Peter Pan. Some children from outside Ealing had joined them and everybody

had enjoyed the day. There had also been a day trip to the Bunny Park for a picnic and a visit to the animal centre. The day was attended by around a hundred people including foster carers and social workers.

M told the Committee that they had continued to discuss sleepovers. Carolyn Fair (Operations Manager, Children's Placement Services) had attended Junior Council and supported the idea of sleepovers. Advice had been given to carers over Easter about play dates with a view to sleepovers. The matter was still at the discretion of foster carers. Carol Yates (Operations Manager, Looked After Children and Leaving Care Team) told the Committee that sleepovers were happening, and that children often slept at friends' houses. Progress had been made on the matter and it would be brought up again at the next Review. Sometimes carers were still anxious about the matter but now they were aware that Officers supported the idea.

The Committee thanked M and S for their great presentation.

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

Ivan Yiga (EMPAC Project Officer and HSC Lead) introduced this item. Recently, the ShoutOut Forum had been focussing on their next manifesto. Many issues from the previous manifesto were now being addressed. There was now an established policy on Savings, and IRO officers had guidance and things to raise at reviews. It had been agreed to provide funding for young people in apprenticeships to get funding for their Council tax and their travel, and a nominal amount to cover their phone costs. Apprentices would receive a minimum of £57.90 per week. It was hoped that this would improve the number of young people deciding to take up apprenticeships. Ivan Yiga told the Committee that the group was happy with and appreciated the work being done.

Horizons were still running the money management course from MyBank, which was a HSC initiative. The HSC had also reviewed the Foster Carers Charter and looked for things to improve. The group was happy with the draft and raised several points that needed clarification or amendment. It was important to review the Charter as young people needed to understand it as much as anyone. Carol Yates said that there had been good sessions with the team on this subject, and feedback from the LAC psychologist had been received. There was still work to be done, and guidance for workers on leaving care and transitions was needed. A, a young person representing the Horizons ShoutOut Forum said that young people should be able to check up on what their foster carers were doing, and that the right processes were always being followed. Ivan Yiga added that dialogues should involve young people and their social workers as well as foster carers and officers. Young people should be notified of any ways that they could make their voices heard, and contacts that they could speak to if they were having any problems at any time.

The focus points of the new manifesto for the Horizons ShoutOut Forum were CSE awareness, semi-independent accommodation, working with 11-14 year olds, and consultation with in and out of borough young people. Pauline

Bennett (Policy and Procedures Officer, Children and Families) had led work on producing 'Guide to Being Looked After' packs containing various resources and information for young people. The packs had gotten good reviews and copies were handed out for the Committee to look at. The pack was meant for young people between 12 and 25 years old, and was an improvement on previous booklets and guides. There had been big input on from young people themselves in producing it. The pack covered many issues such as finance, safe sex and useful contacts, and officers were looking forward to receiving feedback on the product. Every young person would receive a copy of the pack, which contained a 2 year planner/diary. The pack came in a folder to enable young people to add to it. The pack contained details of complaints procedures for information. The packs would be distributed via social workers, given to young people and then signed off.

Cheryl Campbell (Deputy Project Manager, Horizons Centre) updated the Committee on the MyBank money management course being run. The course was a success and MyBank had secured funding to continue it. J, a young person representing the Horizons ShoutOut Forum, told the Committee he had recently done the course himself and had learnt a lot. The course covered paying bills, living independently, budgeting, cooking and various discussions and consultation. J said that the cooking sessions were particularly helpful. A lot of people had gotten involved. Gary Odle (Manager, Horizons Centre) told the Committee that young people had been very enthusiastic about the course, and apprentices were coming straight from work to join the sessions. The course was run every other month for up to 10 young people at a time. Gary Odle added that the course was linked to young people moving into independent accommodation, but that they tried to get everyone to do it. In most cases, it was required that a young person complete the course before they moved out. Carol Yates said it might be possible to provide 1:1 sessions for young people living out-of-Borough. The course was accredited and assessed and was highly valued, and as it was a government-funded scheme it was provided for free.

The Committee gave thanks to Ivan Yiga, A and J for their update on the Horizons ShoutOut Forum.

8. My Education Mentors Project Update (Verbal Update)

L, a current mentor and previous mentee, introduced this item. L was starting at Goldsmiths University in September. L told the Committee that the Mentors Project had helped her to realise her own dreams and now she wanted to work with others on theirs. L planned to go into social work in the future. The Mentors Project had recently arranged a visit to Ealing College, where the focus was media and communications. The group had learnt about the different aspects of TV production such as presenting, audio and camera work, producing a mock TV programme together. The Project was in the process of recruiting a Lead Mentor for September 2015. There were plans to review ME training, and planned activities included acting and cooking workshops, and talking about careers.

Bridie McDonagh (Head of Behaviour Strategy and Inclusion & Virtual School Head LAC) told the Committee that a possible 3-day model for the next Lead Mentor, leaving them to study and do other things for the other 2 days of the week.

The Committee thanked L for her excellent presentation and for covering the item on her own.

9. Report on the Education of Looked After Children

Bridie McDonagh introduced this report, informing Members of the progress against targets for attainment in the public exams of summer 2015 for Looked After Children in year 11, and updating Members on the current performance at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2. The Virtual School Headteacher's Annual Report was discussed first. There was a reduction in LAC numbers and snapshot figures reflected this. There were lower numbers in Early Years but a higher amount of 10-15 year-olds. The LAC Education Team remained stable and work had been constant. The team had seen development on various projects and had been successful in doing more direct work with young people, via Horizons for example. The team was focussed on improving data sets so that they could use them more. All young people had had focus meetings in aid of their Personal Education Plans (PEPs) which it was statutory to have. PEPs had to be instigated by the Social Worker, and so Ealing's Social Workers were trained on PEPs. There had been around 90% compliance over the course of the year, and ongoing focus and support was needed.

The Key Stage Two results for the 2013-14 academic year had been excellent and were the Authority's best ever in some places. Ealing ranked second in London for combined totals. However, there was still work to do with regards to narrowing the gap between LAC and non-LAC, and this was always a focus of the team. In Key Stage Four, 32% of Ealing's LAC in the year group achieved 5 A*-C GCSEs. This was much better than the national and London averages and placed Ealing first in London and third nationally. Where young people were studying was significant. Mainstream schools were desirable but not always possible. Around two-thirds of Ealing's LAC were in mainstream schools and fewer were in Specialist Provision. Action points were set out on p.8 of the Virtual School Headteacher's Annual Report. Social Workers had been good at securing good schools for the young people. More attention was being given to placing young people in schools. It was also important to keep as much as possible consistent and ensure there were no gaps in education for the young people. There was a need to focus on the small cohort who needed post-16 provision and continue to work with them. A continued programme of education training was to be offered to Social Workers, carers and related groups. In the Post-16 group there were some good results. The Year 12 group had 73% in education, training or employment (ETE). There were a number of actions being taken to improve the numbers going into Higher Education.

Attendance would now be reported on routinely as the department had more data to call upon. The percentage of persistent absentees was higher than the

national average, but fared better in comparisons with other vulnerable groups in Ealing schools and nationally.

It had been the first year of the Pupil Premium Grant (PPG) being devolved to virtual schools. An Ealing policy setting out Ealing's approach for the Pupil Premium Grant for 2014-15 had been published. Ealing had now received its grants for the second financial year of PPG and would learn more as time went on. Ealing's priorities for 2014-15 were set out on pages 16 and 17 of the Virtual School Headteacher's Annual Report. An Educational Psychologist had been bought in and work with this role was being piloted. Attendance at LAC Teacher meetings was up. PPG money was in principle allocated to schools, but the department was able to monitor how it was spent, and set out their suggested spending in the PEPs. The suggested spending was focussed on how to improve attainment for each individual LAC. The Early Years group had been reported on last time and would be again in September. The department was doing the same things in principle. It was particularly important to use PEPs well in Early Years.

Predicted grades were down on last year, but the context of this was important. In Key Stage 1 and 2, the groups were stable and numbers were similar to last year. Attainment was below average but all students were making the expected progress or better. The Year 9 cohort was good and good grades were anticipated. Lots of young people in Key Stage 3 were using Horizons, which was good as Horizons offered study support. The 2013 Year 13 group had been monitored due to a dip in GCSE results in 2011. Of the 61 young people in the age group 88% were in ETE which was good. Four were still NEET and 1 was no longer in care. In the current Year 12 there were 61 young people, and 80% of these were in ETE, with some taking A-Levels.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

10. Department of Education Innovation Programme – Adolescents In and On the Edge of Care

Judith Finlay (Director, Children and Families) introduced this report, highlighting key aspects of the Brighter Futures programme which was being delivered between January 2015 and April 2016. The programme had been discussed at the previous two meetings, and it was confirmed that Ealing's bid to the Department of Education Innovation Fund had been successful and the authority had been allocated £3.5million to improve outcomes for adolescents in care and on the edge of care. The authority was excited by the service model that was planned. Some recruitment had been done and was ongoing. There would be three multi-disciplinary teams that were currently taking on cases. The first results were expected in around six months.

The focus was now on putting the Brighter Futures service model into practice. Mentors would be introduced to teams and could influence them.

The model was one of intensive support, which included consistent training. It

would also be used recruit foster carers. The impact of the new model could be measured in six months, but indicators so far had been positive.

RESOLVED:

- i) That Members note that Ealing's bid to the Department of Education Innovation Fund has now been successful and the authority has been allocated £3.5m to improve outcomes for adolescents in care and on the edge of care from January 2015 to April 2016.
- ii) That Members continue to review progress on this Brighter Futures programme over the coming year, as it has significant implications for the way in which we support adolescents in care and on the edge of care and their families and the role of the authority as Corporate Parent.

11. Social Services Complaints Report on Looked After Children (January 2015 to March 2015)

Judith Finlay introduced this report, providing information on complaints for Looked After Children for the period January 2015 to March 2015. During the period there were 3 Stage 1 complaints made by or in respect of Looked After Children. Of the 3 complaints made, none were upheld, and 66% of the complaints received were responded to within the statutory requirement. There were no complaints that proceeded to a Stage 2 Complaint or Stage 3 Complaint Review during this reporting period.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

12. Management Information Summary – Looked After Children

Judith Finlay introduced this report, providing a brief analysis on the April 2014 to March 2015 performance indicators (2014/15 Year) for Looked After Children and care leavers. The report overall was positive. The number of LAC in Ealing was down from 385 on 31st March 2014 to 355 on 31st April 2015. As at 31st March 2015, 355 children and young people were subject to a child protection plan, increasing from 326 at 31st March 2014. This was an expected increase. Adoption numbers were down but this was part of a national trend. The patterns within Adoption services were changing due to the increased use of Special Guardianship Orders and other alternatives. Overall performance during the period had been good.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

13. Date of the Next Meeting

The next Corporate Parent Committee meeting was scheduled for Tuesday 6th October 2015.

Chair..... (Councillor Julian Bell)

The meeting ended at 8:45pm.