

Corporate Parent Committee

Thursday 19th March 2015 at 7:00pm

Horizons Centre, Hanwell

PRESENT: Councillors Bell (Chair), Camadoo, Dhami, Midha, Millican, Rai

ALSO PRESENT: Judith Finlay (Director, Children and Families), Marcella Phelan (Assistant 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), Carolyn Fair (Operations Manager – Children’s Placement Services), Gary Odle (Manager, Horizons Centre), Ian Jenkins (Head of Youth Justice Service), 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 were received from Councillor Aslam, Councillor Gulaid, David Archibald (Executive Director, Children and Adults) and Ivan Yiga (EMPAC Project Officer and HSC Lead).

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 4th December 2014

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 4th December 2014 be agreed as a true and correct record.

6. Update from Junior Council (Verbal Update)

M, a Junior Council member in Year 6, introduced a presentation by the Junior Council. The Junior Council had recently focussed on the issue of friends visiting foster homes and sleepovers. The Council thought it was important to introduce their friends and their friends’ parents to carers in order to build confidence and trust. The Junior Council had produced a leaflet on the subject which was circulated to the Committee. M told the Committee that she was able to stay on sleepovers with friends, but having friends stay with them was more difficult to organise. Carolyn Fair, Operations Manager – Children’s Placement Services, said that officers wanted to help carers be more confident on this issue. Some carers did allow visits and sleepovers but

were wary of it. The leaflet produced by the Junior Council would be circulated to carers, and could be used for IFAs. The Committee thanked M for her excellent presentation and commended her for performing it on her own.

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

Gary Odle, Manager, Horizons Centre, introduced this update on behalf of Ivan Yiga. The HSC was recruiting new members and putting together a new manifesto. They had met with Carol Yates twice in the last quarter, and were still acting on the 4 parts of their previous manifesto; Savings and Allowances, Support for Apprentices, Staying Put legislation, and Housing.

On Savings and Allowances, the subject had been discussed at length. The Authority had a working party working on the matter, which included members of the Finance and Business Services departments. Information had been gathered on the subject from in-house. It was found most young people had accounts set up so it may not be necessary to save at source, although relevant training for social workers was necessary. The issue would be kept on the agenda. Savings accounts had been included on the latest IRO Report. Some agencies were saving £5 a week, some were saving £10. It was preferable to have everybody on the same level. Carol Yates praised the Horizons ShoutOut Forum for pressing the issue and keeping it on the agenda.

On Support for Apprentices, Gary Odle told the Committee that the main issue was financial support. The HSC had found that the majority of apprentices struggled with the cost of living. A 'sliding scale' to assess the needs of individuals had been developed. It was important to provide the right amount of support, as too much support could cause larger struggles later on through overreliance. Carol Yates told the Committee that there had been very good discussions on this issue. The 'sliding scale' had been agreed upon and would be used for all apprentices from 1st April. There had previously been big differences in the experiences of different young people. Certain expenses such as clothing and travel would always have allowances. The biggest issue had been Council Tax. More support was needed because there needed to be incentives for young people to take up apprenticeships. The extra financial support would not cost a big amount unless there was a big surge in the number of apprenticeships.

On Staying Put legislation, the Horizons ShoutOut Forum reported a recent grant of £90m to local authorities to assist with Staying Put legislation. The HSC hoped any extra funding could be used to support those Staying Put, or to help carers prepare young people for independence. The Authority currently did not ask any young people who move on who did not want to, and were working on getting more tenancy agreements. It was not a straightforward issue, and the Authority was hoping to provide more training for carers on the subject. Moving on could be a sensitive issue for young people.

On Housing, Gary Odle told the Committee that some young people had gained accommodation since the last meeting and were happy with it. There was some concern about the future, as the London area was in danger of becoming unaffordable. There was to be a Quota allocation of 30 for 2015/16, made up of a mixture of private, Social Housing and Housing Association properties. The only way forward was to set eligibility for Social Housing, for instance giving priority to young people with Special Educational Needs (SEN). Some young people had shown a real interest in entering house shares, and some were comfortable with the idea of moving away from London. There were still some waiting for accommodation for this year, which the Authority was working on, but progress had been made in this area. Gary Odle added that the process had been made easier and a lot of the anxiety had been removed. The Council side understood what was needed and it was good to keep discussions on the subject ongoing.

The HSC had a big emphasis on rights and responsibilities and as part of this young people had recently done courses on money management. The course lasted 8 hours over 4 sessions and was linked to MyBnk. Twelve young people had completed the accredited course, which covered all financial issues. The course was good preparation for moving into housing and for staying away from debt. The course could be spread outwards for young people placed away from London, and could be useful for carers and social workers as well. It was obligatory to do the course to get onto the waiting list for Housing.

Gary Odle offered a vote of thanks to Jude Fraser who had recently moved on from his position at Horizons Centre. The Committee gave thanks to Jude for all his excellent work with Ealing and the Horizons Centre.

8. My Education Mentors Project Update (Verbal Update)

L, a mentor, introduced this report, along with D, a mentee. The Mentors Project had recently focussed on relationships, and the media. L told the Committee that she had mentored as part of the project since September 2014, to help young people and foster good relationships and communication. D told the Committee that the project was great fun and the activities were very enjoyable. Recent sessions had included a quiz and a session on e-safety. The group had also done a workshop with and received a talk from performing artist Ben Francis. The Committee was shown a short video from the workshop. L read some feedback on the project from both mentors and mentees to the Committee. The feedback was positive and encouraging and praised the active and educational nature of the project.

Coming up on the project there was a media-themed trip to Ealing, Hammersmith & West London College, and there were acting and film workshops planned for next term.

9. Report on the Education of Looked After Children

Bridie McDonagh, Head of Behaviour Strategy and Inclusion & Virtual School Head LAC, introduced this report, informing Members of the overall education programme for Looked After Children in Year 11 to ensure improved outcomes, updating Members on the progress and general position of EY Foundation Stage, Key Stage 1, 2 and 3 and Post-16, and outlining to Members progress on the John Lyon's Charity funded activities and other activities in the Looked After Children calendar of events.

The cohort of Year 11s was large this year, with 45 young people in Year 11. Eleven were being educated in the Borough, with six of these in mainstream schools, one in special and four in alternative provision. There were 34 being educated out of the Borough, thirteen in mainstream schools, 7 in special schools and fourteen in alternative provision. This year's cohort of Year 11 was different in terms of needs compared to previous years, and would need more support for a longer time. The target for GCSEs this year was for 16% of the cohort to achieve 5 A*-C grades including English and Maths, which was above average.

In Early Years, there were fewer children this year, with 37 compared to 57 last year. Most were on track for good development. Ten of 17 children in the 3-5 year old group were either in adoptive placements or processes were in place to find adopters. The Early Years Pupil Premium Grant (EY PPG) was available from April 2015, giving providers of government-funded early education up to £302 per child for each eligible child to support disadvantaged 3 or 4 year olds.

In Key Stage 1 and 2, the SAT exams were coming up, and the cohort expected to be entered for the exams were on track to make the right level of progress, if not national targets as well. The focus was on making progress. Targets for year 2s were the same as last year at 46%. In Key Stage 3 there were currently 59 young people, 78% of whom were in mainstream education. All were making expected levels of progress and it was expected that the cohort would eventually achieve a number of A and B grades at GCSE level. Any new young people between now and the summer of 2016 would join the cohort and this could affect the expected results. In the Post-16 group, there were currently 37 students at University, with 8 expected to graduate this year. There were 60 students currently in Year 13, and 85% of the Post-16 group were currently in education, employment or training.

Ealing was still working with the John Lyon's Charity, and recently began the Connected Project, a cross-Borough activity with Ealing joining with Richmond and Hounslow and focusing on the Arts. The recent February half-term programme included trips to Richmond, Cambridge and the Unicorn Theatre. The programme was engaging and interactive and had proved very popular with 50 attendees. The Easter programme was currently being formed.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

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

Marcella Phelan, Assistant Director, Children and Families, introduced this report, highlighting key aspects of the Brighter Futures programme which would be implemented between January 2015 and April 2016. The bid made to the Department of Education Innovation Programme was reported at the last meeting. This bid was successful and £3.5m of funding had been secured. The Committee would be updated regularly on the progress of the programme, which was set out in paragraph 3.11 of the report. Plans included a new multi-disciplinary Edge of Care team, researching training programmes for carers and social workers and piloting a new model to extend use of people with relevant skills, trying to enable more out-of-hours support. A more detailed update on progress would be provided for the June meeting. The focus of the programmes was building on what the teams had learnt from young people themselves. The Horizons Centre was expected to play a crucial role in the processes to come. The Committee congratulated officers on securing the funding.

RESOLVED: That the Corporate Parent Committee:

- i) Note that Ealing's bid to the Department of Education Innovation Fund bid 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) 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. Looked After Children (LAC) and Youth Offending

Ian Jenkins, Head of Youth Justice Service, introduced this report, informing Members of the number of Looked After Children who had committed offences, outlining to Members the number of people remanded and sentenced to custody, and informing Members of the range of support and partner involvement to divert children who are LAC away from offending and re-offending. Responsibility over budgets in this area was now placed on Local Authorities. The figures of grant allocations for young people remanded were set out on page 2 of the report. This figure was cut by 18% for next year, based on recent success. The department had picked up some additional costs and was making a net loss out of grants.

The department did everything to keep young people safe and out of trouble, and had a productive working relationship with the Youth Court and magistrates. There were a lot of LAC in the Youth Justice System. The challenges were significant and numbers were growing from a lower base. LAC had often experienced significant trauma, so it was important to provide appropriate support and try hard to keep them out of custody. The main

offences by LAC included breaching orders, drug-related offences, robberies and violence-related offences. Lots of work had been done with officers on interventions and preventing re-offending. The department was currently working with forty gang members, 11 of which were LAC. There was a 70% chance that an Ealing LAC would go on to re-offend, hence the need for effective early interventions and safeguarding risks to be addressed.

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) was a prominent issue, particularly for girls. More incidents were being reported and more perpetrators were being caught. More coherent work was being done on the issue following recent events such as the Rotherham scandal. It was particularly important for councillors to help in fighting CSE. The police were currently more involved in more active and the system for fighting CSE had become more coherent and proactive.

There were 40 young people in the Borough identified as being at risk of gang activity, including 11 LAC. Approximately 87 young people were thought to be in gangs. However, there was often no perfect way of detecting or defining gangs. The department had seen success in turning young people away from gang activity, and was making good inroads at present, working in schools and on the streets using preventative and enforcing approaches. The department mostly used police intelligence such as details of arrests and stoppages to identify young people at risk. Community groups were given funding for specific help programmes. It was agreed to circulate the Rotherham report to Members for the specific section on governance.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

12. Looked After Children (LAC) and Missing from Care

Carol Yates, Operations Manager, Looked After Children and Leaving Care Team, introduced this report, outlining to Members the number of Looked After Children (LAC) who have had reported missing episodes in 2014/15, the reasons for these missing episodes and the risks associated with children and young people who go missing, informing Members of the range of support and partner involvement to divert children who are LAC away from going missing and are at risk of sexual exploitation, and of the key issues in safeguarding LAC from sexual exploitation.

Many of the issues relevant to the report had been discussed as part of Item 11. Young people that went missing often did so for reasons relating to unhappiness in care, wanting to be with their friends or their biological parents. Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) was a key indicator for both sexes. Ealing was striving to learn as much as possible from the recent inquiries into CSE in Rochdale, Rotherham and the Oxford Serious Case Review. This was set out in paragraph 3.2 of the report. It was felt that Ealing had a good grasp on the issue of CSE, and was good at identifying children at risk in the Borough.

Any LAC in the Borough with a missing incident had precautionary measures for safeguarding taken for them. There was a revised system and process for

missing incidents. There had also been good work done on training social workers to recognise risks, encourage more close liaisons with police and community groups. The measures and services in place for LAC at risk of repeated missing episodes and CSE were set out in paragraph 3.4.4 of the report, and the data regarding missing incidents was set out in paragraph 3.5.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

13. Social Services Complaints Report on Looked After Children (October 2014 to December 2014)

Judith Finlay, Director, Children and Families, introduced this report, providing information on complaints for Looked After Children for the period October 2014 to December 2014. During the period there were two Stage 1 informal complaints made by or in respect of Looked After Children, a very low number. Of the two complaints made, one was not upheld and one was still being progressed through the system. During the period, there were no complaints that proceeded to a Stage Two complaint or a Stage Three Complaint Review, and 100% of the complaints received were responded to within the statutory requirement. The report was very positive, and officers had worked hard with the advocacy service to prevent Social Services Complaints.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

14. Management Information Summary – Looked After Children

Judith Finlay introduced this report, providing a brief analysis on the April 2014 to December 2014 performance indicators (2014/15 YEAR) FOR Looked After Children and care leavers. The report overall was positive. There was a reduction in the numbers of LAC in Ealing, and an expected increase in the number of child protection plans in place. Adoption numbers were down but this was part of a national trend. Overall performance during the period had been good.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

15. Date of the Next Meeting

The date of the next Corporate Parent Committee meeting is Tuesday 23rd June 2015.

Chair..... (Councillor Julian Bell)

The meeting ended at 8:45pm.