

# **UPDATE ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS FROM PAST REVIEWS OF THE COMMITTEE**

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## **REASON FOR ITEM**

The attached paper provides a brief summary of progress with regard to the review recommendations on the:

- Adoption & Permanency of Looked After Children review
- Elective Home Education review
- Children Leaving Care Procedure and Grant review

## **OPTIONS OPEN TO THE COMMITTEE**

To note the progress provided in the report.

## **INFORMATION**

The Committee may wish to consider the progress to date and developments since the last report to POC.

## **SUGGESTED COMMITTEE ACTIVITY**

- To note the information provided within the report.
- Consider whether there are comments the Committee wishes to make.

	Recommendations	Updates
Adoption & Permanency of Looked After Children review	<p><b>RECOMMENDATION 1 –</b> The criteria for recruiting adopters should reflect only statutory requirements and that Hillingdon applicants should be welcomed and approved on the basis only of their suitability to offer a permanent home to a child. Local processes to improve the efficiency of the approval process will continue to be strengthened to take advantage of changes in regulatory framework as soon as they are available and any improvements possible ahead of statutory change will be made.</p>	<p>Recruitment criteria have been reviewed. The process of recruitment and assessment will be updated in Children Bill. Proposals for adapting Hillingdon's process to meet new regulatory requirements is in hand. The final regulations are scheduled for publication in Summer 2013.</p>
	<p><b>RECOMMENDATION 2 -</b> That Hillingdon approved adopters should be routinely offered for exchange where there are no matched local children within 2 months of approval. Funds gained from Interagency fees should be used to purchase adopters who offer matches for any child waiting who is not matched with Hillingdon adopters within one month of Hillingdon's Agency Decision Maker approving adoption as their plan. That where children are not matched with Adopters within 3 months their names will be placed on the Adoption register.</p>	<p>Hillingdon children and adopters are put forward to National Adoption register as soon as it is clear that no local match exists and within the 3 months timescale. This is also a matter covered under Children Bill where new regulations and guidance will be published.</p>
	<p><b>RECOMMENDATION 3 -</b> The viability assessment of prospective Special Guardians be completed by the child's social worker before the Final Hearing of Care Proceedings unless directed otherwise by a court. The criteria for Special Guardians should be no less than that for Adopters.</p>	<p>Plans are in place to ensure that early parallel planning for all looked after children including the identification of family and friends who can offer permanence. The new Family Group Conference work is helping to establish this practice.</p>
	<p><b>RECOMMENDATION 4 -</b> Taking account of the Norgrove Family Justice Review, processes are reviewed to ensure that robust care plans minimising the need for expert witnesses and the assessment of Connected Persons delaying Care Proceedings are devised.</p>	<p>Local Family Justice Boards have been created and we are participating locally to work with the courts to reduce timescales. Within the service and in conjunction with the Children's Pathway Programme work is ongoing to embed pod working and to ensure early, robust parallel care planning takes place which will support the reduction of delays in proceedings.</p>
	<p><b>RECOMMENDATION 5 -</b> That the local arrangements for concurrent fostering and adoption approvals are strengthened taking advantage of statutory changes as soon as they are available</p>	<p>All prospective adopters are being asked to consider being approved as foster carers to support the foster to adopt process. We have had several successful concurrent placements where babies were placed from birth with families who are now adopting (or have adopted) them. Children Bill will introduce a statutory requirement to consider foster to adopt for any child who may need a permanence plan.</p>
	<p><b>RECOMMENDATION 6- </b> The recruitment and attraction campaign for prospective adopters is improved by developing a range of approaches targeted at finding adopters who will meet the needs of harder to place children. This will include developing a recruitment website which is attractive to prospective adopters and gives good quality information to encourage them to offer a loving home to children who are waiting.</p>	<p>The recruitment of adopter process is being completely overhauled in preparation for the changed regulations to be announced Summer 2013. We have already upgraded the information that prospective adopters receive. We are also taking part in the pilot project in London developing Adoption Activity days moving towards a more adopter led matching process particularly for children who have traditionally waited longer to be adopted.</p>

Adoption & Permanency of Looked After Children review	<p><b>RECOMMENDATION 7</b> - That the local arrangements developing the offers made by adopters to children with additional needs are strengthened through the use of such measures as producing DVD films of children to show their more attractive personalities, exploring the use of Adoption Activity Days as ways of improving the chances of such children.</p>	<p>The use of short films to increase attraction has led to matches being secured for 6 children who were waiting. 4 of them have additional needs and would have been expected to wait longer. 1 of these had been waiting for over 1 year prior to the use of the film in advertising.</p>
	<p><b>RECOMMENDATION 8</b> - That the local arrangements for tracking the Permanence planning of all Looked After Children be strengthened and a regular management review of children's progress is implemented.</p>	<p>A monthly meeting of managers is held which tracks the progress of children with permanence plans. This has helped to identify problems and issues earlier and therefore to solving. Part of the Adoption Reform Grant 2012/13 is being used to develop ICS Protocol to support the production of performance data which can be used by managers to support this process.</p>
	<p><b>RECOMMENDATION 9</b> - Arrangements to clarify the role of identity in matching children with prospective adopters are put in place with training provided for all staff involved in this work to ensure that children are matched without unnecessary delay wherever possible.</p>	<p>As part of the above work, the process of Permanency Planning meetings has also been revised to focus on early matching. This is supported by better parallel planning.</p>
	<p><b>RECOMMENDATION 10</b> - That the proposed changes in Panel processes are implemented once regulatory changes are in place.</p>	<p>Fostering &amp; Adoption Panels have been combined so that they meet more frequently and focus on permanence for children. The new panel is working well. The approval of children's permanence plans by the Agency Decision Maker without first going to Panel has also been implemented from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2012 under changes introduced in the Adoption Agencies Regulations 2012</p>
	<p><b>RECOMMENDATION 11</b> - That a Hillingdon Scorecard for Adoption is developed and is used to report to Adoption Panel, Corporate Parenting Board and as a management tool to monitor the progress of these proposals. The Hillingdon scorecard would be amended to meet any new statutory or regulatory changes.</p>	<p>Local measures have been developed as part of the permanence tracker to ensure that all children's permanence plans are scrutinised. Reports are being developed for Panel and Corporate Parenting Board</p>
	<p><b>RECOMMENDATION 12</b> - That a protocol is developed with local health &amp; education partners to improve their offer to adopters offering priority access to support for adopted children in line with recommendations from Action Plan for Adoption</p>	<p>Adoption support is one of the focuses of Children Bill 2013 and will introduce an Adoption Passport, setting out minimum support to be available to adopters. Plans are being drawn up locally and in conjunction with London wide and West London local authorities to look at ways of stimulating good agencies and health colleagues to provide better, tailored support for adopters. The government has made an Adoption Reform Grant available to local authorities to fund these improvements.</p>
Elective Home Education review	<p><b>RECOMMENDATION 1</b> - That an annual Borough network meeting take place between LBH EHE Parents and the local authority to enable networking to take place between different EHE groups.</p>	<p>First Network Meeting took place in December 2012 – took an informal coffee morning format. Feedback from Residents who electively home educated very positive. Much positive networking apparent amongst those in attendance. Three home visits by LA officer to EHE Residents homed subsequently requested.</p>
	<p><b>RECOMMENDATION 2</b> - That officers review the EHE correspondence which is sent to EHE parents to ensure that their tone is empathetic and their contents are not open to misinterpretation.</p>	<p>Completed in full by September 2012 – checked and agreed by Parent Partnership.</p>
	<p><b>RECOMMENDATION 3</b> - That EHE parents be provided with information on London Borough Exam Centres that will accept EHE children.</p>	<p>Despite all secondary schools in Hillingdon being approached, Exam Centre access secured for EHE parents at Hillingdon Tuition Centre only. Details shared at Coffee Morning and when requested.</p>
	<p><b>RECOMMENDATION 4</b> - Cabinet be recommended to approve the policy on Elective Home Education and that the policy be reviewed on an annual basis.</p>	<p>Revised policy presented to and approved by summer Cabinet 2012.</p>

Children Leaving Care Procedure and Grant review	<p><b>RECOMMENDATION 1</b> - That to assist care leavers making the transition to independent living, that a Housing Officer for care leavers be designated to them, to enable a smooth transition and to take forward the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) To work with care leavers and their social care officers to discuss in detail their move into their tenancy. This discussion to provide details and advice on the condition and standard of the tenancy they are moving into and advice and guidance on entitlements in relation to decorating and general repairs.</li> <li>(ii) To provide advice in relation to the logistics and costs of removals into the new tenancy.</li> <li>(iii) To work with care leavers and their social care officers to enable the necessary preparations to be made to enable them to move into their new tenancy within acceptable time-scales.</li> <li>(iv) To investigate whether businesses and partners have schemes which could help care leavers with decorating their new tenancies.</li> <li>(vi) To provide guidance to care leavers in their Leaving Care Plan on the benefits of joining a credit union or other savings schemes. In addition to include information on the importance</li> </ul>	Awaiting the nomination of a designated housing officer to implement the above recommendations.
	<p><b>RECOMMENDATION 2</b> - That support be given to a campaign to ask residents to donate household goods to charities such as the Trinity Homeless Project and that care leavers be advised that they could purchase essential items this way.</p>	Will be working with Corporate Communications to run the campaign.
	<p><b>RECOMMENDATION 3</b> - That consideration be given to a process being set up whereby care leavers who had made the transition to independent living, acted as mentors for new care leavers.</p>	Research on various mentoring schemes have been completed. Agreed at Corporate parenting sub group that a pilot scheme be implemented. Training of prospective mentors will take place in May/June.
	<p><b>RECOMMENDATION 4</b> - That information on the entitlement of the Leaving Care Grant be given to all Looked after Children, including unaccompanied asylum seeking children and young people. This could be promoted through the existing Kids in Care web pages and recorded in the pathway plan of all care leavers who meet the criteria for a grant.</p>	Step Up members will be working with the Participation Worker to draft the information. Independent Reviewing Officers and Personal Advisors/Social workers will ensure that information on the entitlement to the grant is included in the Pathway Plans for care leavers.
	<p><b>RECOMMENDATION 5</b> - That Officers be asked to investigate the feasibility of changing the current purchasing arrangements of essential items for care leavers to enable them to purchase the items for themselves.</p>	The Council is in the process of negotiating with the current provider of the pre payment cards system to give the council better terms. Once a new contract has been negotiated this system of payment will be implemented and will enable care leavers to purchase items directly themselves with the usual financial safeguards in place.
	<p><b>RECOMMENDATION 6</b> - That further work takes place on helping care leavers access the local social fund if required.</p>	This is the current practice and will continue when plans are made for moving care leavers into independent living.
	<p><b>RECOMMENDATION 7</b> - That the Leaving Care grant be increased to a maximum of £1500 (or £1800 for those in exceptional circumstances) and considered as part of the budget planning process for 2013/14 onwards.</p>	The new grant will be implemented from the 1st April 2013