

Minutes

EDUCATION & CHILDREN'S SERVICES POLICY OVERVIEW COMMITTEE

10 October 2012

Meeting held at Committee Room 5 - Civic Centre,
High Street, Uxbridge UB8 1UW



HILLINGDON
LONDON

Committee Members Present:

Councillors Catherine Dann (Chairman)
Judith Cooper (Vice-Chairman)
David Benson
Lindsay Bliss
Jazz Dhillon
John Hensley
Susan O'Brien
John Riley

Witnesses Present:

Detective Inspector Graham Hamilton (Borough Police), Marie Fleming (Youth Worker and Manager of Fountains Mill), and Stephen White (Registered Manager of Hillingdon Children' Resource Centre (aka Mulberry Parade)).

LBH Officers Present:

Linda Sanders (Corporate Director of Social Care, Health & Housing), Paul Hewitt (Service Manager for Safeguarding Children and Reviewing Service), Julien Kramer (Interim Chief Education Officer), Khalid Ahmed (Democratic Services Manager) and Steven Maiden (Democratic Services Officer)

23. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor David Benson declared a general non-pecuniary interest as he was a Governor of Uxbridge High School. He remained in the room during the meeting and took part in the discussions.

Councillor Lindsay Bliss declared a general non-pecuniary interest as she was a Governor of Brookside Primary School. She remained in the room during the meeting and took part in the discussions.

Councillor Judith Cooper declared a general non-pecuniary interest as she was a Governor of Charville, St Andrews and St Mary's Schools. She remained in the room during the meeting and took part in the discussions.

Councillor Catherine Dann declared a general non-pecuniary interest as she was a Governor of Newham Junior School and Bishop Ramsay C of E School. She remained in the room during the meeting and took part in the discussions.

Tony Little declared a general non-pecuniary interest as he was a Governor at Pinkwell Primary School. He remained in the room during the meeting and took part in the discussions.

	<p>Councillor Susan O'Brien declared a general non-pecuniary interest as she was a Governor at Sacred Heart Roman Catholic School and was working at Ruislip High School. She remained in the room during the meeting and took part in the discussions.</p> <p>Councillor John Riley declared a general non-pecuniary interest as he was a Governor at Field End Infants School. He remained in the room during the meeting and took part in the discussions.</p>	
24.	<p>TO CONFIRM THAT ALL ITEMS MARKED PART 1 WILL BE CONSIDERED IN PUBLIC AND ALL PART 2 ITEMS WILL BE CONSIDERED IN PRIVATE (<i>Agenda Item 3</i>)</p> <p>It was confirmed that all items would be heard in Part 1.</p>	Action by
25.	<p>MATTERS THAT HAVE BEEN NOTIFIED IN ADVANCE OR URGENT (<i>Agenda Item 4</i>)</p> <p>Reference was made to the Children in Care Award's which were recently held and the Committee wished to place on record its admiration for the children who had been honoured in the awards.</p>	
26.	<p>TO RECEIVE THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING. (<i>Agenda Item 5</i>)</p> <p>The Minutes of the meeting held on 12 September 2012 were agreed as a correct record and were signed by the Chairman.</p>	Action by
27.	<p>MAJOR REVIEW - SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN WHO ARE REPORTED MISSING (<i>Agenda Item 6</i>)</p> <p>Members were provided with the scoping report on Safeguarding Children who are reported missing which contained information on the key issues surrounding missing children in the local and national context.</p> <p>The purpose of the report was to enable the Committee to gather evidence as part of their major review into Safeguarding Children who are reported missing.</p> <p>In addition, Members were also provided with the report of the all Parliamentary Group on the Joint Inquiry into Children who go Missing from Care, which provided details of the national picture in relation to children missing from care.</p> <p>Witnesses</p> <p>To assist Members with this review Detective Inspector Graham Hamilton, Borough Police; Marie Fleming, Youth Worker and Manager of Fountains Mill; and Stephen White, Registered Manager of Hillingdon Children' Resource Centre aka Mulberry Parade were</p>	Action by

present to provide information to the Committee.

Issues raised included:

Police

- DI Hamilton presented comparisons between the periods 1 September 2010 – 31 August 2011 and 1 September 2011 – 31 August 2012 which showed an increase from 18% to 20% in the proportion of missing children in the Borough being made up of children in care. These figures were made up from children at 6 residential care homes in the Borough.
- An additional 5% of missing children were made up from residential care homes in the Borough which housed children from outside of the area.
- In the first period there had been 286 reported missing children compared to 327 in the latter period. However, it was noted that these figures were largely made up of children who were repeatedly reported missing. One child had been recorded as missing 33 times in a single year.
- The search for missing children could have a significant impact upon Police resources with substantial financial implications.
- Hillingdon had seen 22 high risk cases over the last 12 month period with 8 of these being made up of children from residential care homes.
- Concern was expressed at the lack of information the Police had on those neighbouring local authority Looked after Children who were placed within the Borough's children's homes, together with the unaccompanied children who arrived at Heathrow.

Youth Worker

- The Manager of Fountains Mills and Youth Worker informed Members that she worked with children and young people from the age of 11 to 21, but her primary focus was on 13-19 age group.
- Many of the children and young people she worked with had complex needs and she often signposted them to other services.
- In her experience, the majority of children who run away from home have done so because of conflict in the home. Part of her role was providing mediation with the children and their families.
- Feedback from children was that they needed practical support; they needed something to do and somewhere to go.
- Many children who have run away from home have required practical assistance such as guidance on how to open a bank account. These children also often require mentoring.
- Much of the support and services offered by voluntary sector organisations could not be accessed by children in care homes because they were often unable or unwilling to use public

transport.

- A large proportion of children who go missing have also been seen to have significant anger management problems.
- Reference was made to the mobile youth service bus which was used to engage with young people and get them involved in activities.

Registered Manager from Children's Home

- The Registered Manager from this authority's Mulberry Parade informed Members that many of the children his establishment cared for, were unaccompanied children who had arrived at Heathrow Airport
- He advised that a large proportion of children had runaway from home before becoming Looked after Children so there was sometimes already a problem.
- Many children reported missing were not connected to any wider community such as a church group or scouts etc.
- Children who run away from care usually have a troubled background and have had problems with their families in the past. These children have also usually had a troubled time in the education system. It was noted that these children often find it difficult to make the transition from primary to secondary education.
- Many children who were repeatedly reported missing have made a lifestyle choice and have decided to move towards gaining independence. It was noted that this is especially true for older children in care who were preparing to leave care in the near future.
- The Council only runs 2 of the 6 children's homes in the Borough with the other 4 being run by private and voluntary sector organisations.
- Cases of children going missing from residential care homes, even if they were known to be at a social event and likely to return, were reported to the Police as a matter of course. This process created a significant amount of paperwork which is often unnecessary due to a child's return.
- Regular, multi-agency meetings took place to discuss cases involving missing children which was proving to be an effective way to manage and share information on issues relating to missing children.

Discussion took place on the information which the Committee had received and a number of suggestions were made which could improve the process for dealing with missing children. These included:

- There should be implementation of written guidance for staff in all children's residential homes (local authority, private and voluntary) on what to do if a child goes missing from care to ensure the information was shared with the Police. This could include the possibility of "grab packs" being put together for every child entering a care home. This would be an up-to-date file on the child with their telephone number, information on who

they socialised with, where they socialised and what their history of running away was. This would provide a valuable resource for Police looking for the missing child and could lead to significant time and financial efficiencies.

- To investigate the possibility of requiring Local Authorities which placed out-of-borough children in residential care homes in Hillingdon to provide a “grab pack” as outlined above.
- Multi-agency training could be given on the procedure for dealing with missing children to foster carers and residential staff from both private and voluntary children’s care homes within the Borough.
- To review biennial statistics on missing children from the six children’s care homes in the Borough, and if possible from all foster placements within the Borough, placed by other local authorities. This would include data broken down in detail and qualitative data such as why the child ran away from care.
- To explore the viability of a system of dealing with children who were repeatedly reported missing without involving the Police in the first instance.
- To investigate the use of the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) as a means through which to share intelligence on missing children and, ultimately, to reduce the number of children going missing from care.
- To explore the possibility of using a bus to bring the support and services offered by voluntary sector organisations to children in care homes.
- To consider the possibility of harmonising the terminology used with regards to missing people across all organisations in Hillingdon. This would help to ensure that the reporting of cases and collection of useful data would be improved and made more accurate.
- For the Local Safeguarding Children’s Board (LSCB) to review statistics on children missing from care in the Borough twice annually.
- In relation to education, and particularly secondary education, reference was made to whether there was adequate communication between schools and the relevant agencies with regard to Looked after Children who did not attend school. This could also form part of the MASH network

Reference was made to the small proportion of children who were not in care who went missing. The Committee was informed that this was a very small number, and if reported to the Police, they did get discussed at operational multi-agency meetings.

Members asked that Officers produce a draft final report on the safeguarding children who are reported missing review, with some suggestion recommendations, for consideration at the next meeting of the Committee.

In addition, Members asked that Officers provide a short paper on the implications of the recommendations contained in the Report from the Joint Inquiry into Children Who Go Missing From Care, and their

	<p>relevance to the review and the Borough.</p> <p>RESOLVED –</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That the information from the witness session be noted and the witnesses be thanked for their contribution to the Committee’s review. 2. That a draft final report of the review be submitted to the next meeting of the Committee for consideration of the recommendations of the review. 3. That officers provide a short paper on the implications of the recommendations contained in the Report from the Joint Inquiry into Children Who Go Missing From Care, and their relevance to the review and the Borough. 	<p>Khalid Ahmed</p> <p>Linda Sanders / Paul Hewitt</p>
<p>28.</p>	<p>LEAVING CARE PROCEDURE AND GRANT - CONSIDERATION OF DRAFT FINAL REPORT (<i>Agenda Item 7</i>)</p> <p>Officers noted the following points with regards to the draft final report of the Committee’s review into the Leaving Care Procedure and Grant:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council already had an Officer who dealt with housing for care leavers but the designation of a Housing Officer for care leavers would provide a helpful clarification of the role in taking forward the recommendations of the review. • That Recommendation 7 be removed from the final report as the receipt of the Leaving Care Grant did not have any tax implications for care leavers. • That Recommendation 10 be re-worded so that the designated Housing Officer for care leavers was required to include information on joining a credit union and household insurance in the care leaver’s Leaving Care Plan. • That the reference to the “Community Care Grant” in Recommendation 12 be replaced with the “Local Social Fund” as the Community Care Grant was in the process of being decentralised. <p>It was noted that an implementation plan for the recommendations would be presented at the next meeting.</p> <p>Members noted that the recommendations relating to the designated Housing Officer for care leavers would be submerged into a single recommendation with sub-points for ease of reference.</p> <p>Officers noted that the revised report would be amended as above and circulated to Members via email.</p> <p>RESOLVED –</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That with the amendments suggested, approval be given to the draft final report and its submission to a future Cabinet meeting for consideration. 	<p>Action by</p> <p>Khalid Ahmed</p> <p>Linda Sanders</p> <p>Khalid Ahmed</p>

