

## Minutes

### CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

17 September 2020

**PRIVATE - this virtual meeting will be held without a Live Broadcast - VIRTUAL (PART 2)**



HILLINGDON  
LONDON

	<p><b>Voting Panel Members Present:</b> Councillors Nick Denys (Chairman), Heena Makwana (Vice-Chairman) and Tony Eginton</p> <p><b>Non-Voting Panel Members Present:</b> Children in Care Council Members, Helen Smith (Principal Social Worker and Corporate Parenting Manager), Kathryn Angelini (Virtual School Head Teacher), Deborah Price Williams (The Local Authority's Designated LAC Doctor)</p> <p><b>LBH Officers Present:</b> Alex Coman (Head of Service for Safeguarding and Partnership), Ryan Dell (Democratic Services), Tehseen Kauser (Interim Head of Service for Looked After Children and Leaving Care) and Nikki O'Halloran (Democratic Services)</p>
1.	<p><b>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</b> (<i>Agenda Item 1</i>)</p> <p>Apologies for absence had been received from Alan Deville and Lesley Deville.</p>
2.	<p><b>MINUTES OF THE MEETING ON 19 MARCH 2020</b> (<i>Agenda Item 3</i>)</p> <p><b>RESOLVED:</b> That the minutes of the meeting held on 19 March 2020 be agreed as a correct record.</p>
3.	<p><b>IMPACT AND RESPONSE FOR CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE TO COVID-19</b> (<i>Agenda Item 4</i>)</p> <p>Mr Alex Coman, the Council's Head of Safeguarding Partnership and Quality Assurance, thanked the young people as well as all those individuals who had worked through this unprecedented period and found new ways to continue to deliver services. At the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, a three stage response plan had been put in place which had quickly moved to Stage 3. Risk assessments had been undertaken with all children and children with a Child Protection Plan (CPP) in place had continued to be visited face-to-face. 92% of those children had been visited every two weeks. Individual assessments had been undertaken to determine what support was needed for those children without a CPP on an individual basis.</p> <p>Mr Coman noted that daily Senior Management Team meetings had been held as well as daily meetings of the Heads of Service and Team managers to ensure that communication was maintained. Whilst there were some elements of 'business as usual' (such as 121 supervisions), more online conference calls had been held and new starters had been inducted differently. PPE had been provided for the safety of staff and they had also been monitored for symptoms whilst they continued to engage with the children, families and carers in face-to-face settings as well as remotely. Discussions had also been ongoing with the Personal Advisors who had increased their contact with care leavers.</p>

The Panel was advised that 98% of Child Protection Reviews, 97% of LAC reviews and 100% of PEPs had taken place on time. Families, children, partner organisations and staff had adapted quickly to a new way of working and feedback had been largely positive regarding virtual Children in Need meetings, Child Protection Conferences and Looked After Reviews.

Although the move to virtual contact between LAC and families had been accepted, it had been clear that this had worked better for some young people's routines more than others. As such, the children would be offered the option of virtual or face-to-face contact from now on.

Over the last few months, the courts had been closed. This had meant that some cases had been dealt with virtually and this had worked well. However, hearings that had been expected to last longer had not been listed to be heard virtually which had meant that a backlog had emerged. This backlog was now being worked through but it had, for example, delayed the completion of adoptions, etc. Mr Coman advised that a national survey was being undertaken by CAFCASS (Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service) to establish how many cases each local authority had that fell within each of three levels (significant impact, manageable impact or negligible impact). Mr Coman's team was currently working through the cases to identify and submit the numbers to CAFCASS and would forward this anonymised data to the Members once complete.

The Virtual School had provided advice and guidance to young people and foster carers during lockdown and PEPs had been facilitated virtually. This support had included a series of webinars, a newsletter and support packs that had been sent home to carers and young people.

The new way of working had had a positive impact in preventing placement breakdown. With regard to the national indicator for children that had had 3+ placements in twelve months, there had initially been an increase in Hillingdon from 10% at the end of 2019/2020 to 11% in June 2020. However, this had decreased to 9% by the end of July 2020 which was the lowest it had been in two years and better than the national and pan-London figures. Mr Coman suggested that this improvement was as a result of social workers and Heads of Service with delegated decision making authority meeting on a weekly basis to review vulnerable placements. More frequent meetings focussed on fragile placements and the attendance at these meetings was not being introduced as standard practice.

The Panel was advised that, during lockdown, resources had been redeployed to contact those children that had been shielding to ensure that they were able to get food and medication. Mr Coman clarified that this included all shielding children in Hillingdon, irrespective of whether or not they were LAC. Weekly contact had also been maintained with LAC, fostered children and care leavers that had been living outside of the Borough, some of which had also received face-to-face visits.

It was noted that one member of staff had delivered food to care leavers living on their own who had had to isolate or shield. Staff had also identified more than 800 children who had needed a laptop or tablet and / or access to the internet to enable them to study so that they could receive the support offered by the DfE.

Mr Coman noted that the number of unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC) coming into the Borough had decreased significantly following a reduction in capacity at Heathrow Airport. Appropriate accommodation had been found at Charville Lane for

those UASC that had arrived during lockdown as LAC to enable them to isolate for two weeks. This arrangement was still in place for new arrivals as it was anticipated that the number of UASC entering Hillingdon would increase from September 2020. Numbers had started to rise but this was still not yet at pre-COVID-19 levels.

Although it was noted that there had been a 5% increase in the number of referrals to the Youth Justice Service, there had been fewer children entering or exiting care. It was thought that this was likely to be partly as a result of the Secretary of State's request that young people did not leave care during the pandemic until it was safe to do so. This had resulted in a number of young people over the age of 18 still being accommodated in placements provided by the local authority. Action was now being taken to help these young people to move to independence in a safe and planned way.

A recovery plan was in place and officers had been working to prepare for a surge in contacts and referrals once the schools returned in September and services regained some normality. Attendance at school had been in the high 80% and contact referrals had started to increase but not at the speed that had been anticipated. The demand was well managed and the service was prepared for further increase. The pandemic had been a huge leadership challenge and preparations were now underway to deal with the forecasted increase in demand from families where children lived with substance abuse, domestic abuse, isolation, poverty, etc.

It was recognised that the service had had to adapt quickly to unprecedented circumstances. Whilst the use of virtual meetings had proved useful for focussed meetings, its use made it harder to pick up on things like body language. Although there had been online access and contact with the families and children, if there had been safeguarding concerns raised about a child, face-to-face visits were undertaken and the police and other partners would have been involved. There had been a need to utilise Police powers of Protection (PP), attend court cases and deal with missing children. Safeguarding had not ceased during lockdown and neither had contact with the young people, some of whom had been visited 2-3 times each week.

Every child now had face-to-face visits but was also offered online options as some young people liked to have weekly conversations. Officers' time had been freed up to be able to do more as they had not been spending so much time travelling. This had resulted in a more blended model of engagement for moving forward.

Dr Deborah Price Williams advised that all Initial and Review Health Assessments (IHAs and RHAs) had been completed within the required timescales even though a number of staff from the CNWL provider services LAC team had had to be redeployed elsewhere within the health sector.

The use of Zoom had generally been successful in addition to health assessment nurses calling vulnerable young people if that was what they had wanted. They had found that the young people had been more forthcoming with the information that they had offered during these meetings than they would have if the meetings had been face-to-face. A blended offer was likely to be maintained in line with the CNWL recovery plan. Older young people would be offered the opportunity to do more video and telephone consultations for health assessments where appropriate but there would still be a need for face-to-face meetings where physical examinations were required. Dr Price Williams did not know how the winter surge would impact on the demand for services.

The Corporate Parenting Manager was commended for the fortnightly Shout Out newsletters that had been circulated to care leavers and LAC. It was noted that these

would be produced on a monthly basis in future and would be circulated to the Panel.

The Children in Care Council Members thanked Mr Coman and the social workers for all of their hard work during the pandemic. It was confirmed that care leavers had weekly contact with their Personal Advisors, there had been extra help with laptops and that their health had been monitored.

It was agreed that a report be presented at a future Panel meeting to set out the new ways of working that had been used during the pandemic. Further information could be included to identify which new ways of working had been adopted for the longer term and how these had improved the offer to the young people.

**RESOLVED: That:**

- 1. a report be scheduled for a future meeting identifying the newly adopted ways of working and how these had improved the offer; and**
- 2. the report be noted.**

4. **WORK PROGRAMME** (*Agenda Item 5*)

Consideration was given to the Panel's Work Programme. It was agreed that the Cabinet Member for Education, Children and Youth Services and the Chairman of the Social Care, Housing and Public Health Policy Overview Committee (SCHPH POC) be invited to attend the meeting scheduled for 22 April 2021. The Panel would use the opportunity to showcase the work that had been undertaken and to establish whether there was any support that they could provide the Panel.

As had been suggested in the previous meeting, it was agreed that future meetings would be themed. The themes and items for inclusion at future meetings would be as follows:

- 12 November 2020 – Theme: Safeguarding;
- 11 February 2021 – Themes: Health and Education. Additional report on how the KICA event had been celebrated; and
- 22 April 2021 – Cabinet Member and SCHPH POC Chairman.

It was noted that the data available with regard to each of the themes was likely to be different to usual given the impact of COVID-19 on the delivery of services. The Chairman asked that the associated reports included on the agenda include information on what had already happened but also a vision for the future.

The Panel was advised that training led by young people had been put on hold. However, once it had restarted, Panel members would be invited to attend.

**RESOLVED: That the Work Programme be noted with the suggested changes.**

The meeting, which commenced at 5.30 pm, closed at 6.34 pm.

These are the minutes of the above meeting. For more information on any of the resolutions please contact Nikki O'Halloran on 01895 277655. Circulation of these minutes is to Councillors and officers.