

Minutes

CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

27 May 2021

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



HILLINGDON
LONDON

	<p>Voting Panel Members Present: Councillors Nick Denys (Chairman), Heena Makwana (Vice-Chairman), and Tony Eginton</p> <p>Non-Voting Panel Members Present: Children in Care Council Members x3, Helen Smith (Principal Social Worker and Corporate Parenting Manager), Kathryn Angelini (Virtual School Head Teacher),</p> <p>LBH Officers Present: Tehseen Kauser (Head of Service for Looked After Children and Leaving Care), Michelle Thomas (safeguarding Manager), (Neil Fraser (Democratic Services Officer)</p> <p>Councillors Present: Councillors Philip Corthorne and Kerri Prince</p>
27.	<p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (<i>Agenda Item 1</i>)</p> <p>Apologies were received from Alex Coman – Assistant Director, Safeguarding, Partnership and Quality Assurance).</p>
28.	<p>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST IN MATTERS COMING BEFORE THIS MEETING (<i>Agenda Item 2</i>)</p> <p>None.</p>
29.	<p>MINUTES OF THE MEETING ON 22 APRIL 2021 (<i>Agenda Item 3</i>)</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 22 April 2021 be approved as a correct record.</p>
30.	<p>PRESENTATION BY YOUNG PEOPLE - OUR PRIORITIES FOR 2021/2022 (<i>Agenda Item 4</i>)</p> <p>Consideration was given to a presentation detailing the priorities for the Council as Corporate Parent, as identified by the young people (YP) attending the various Children in Care Councils (CiCC) across the Borough. Priorities included:</p> <p>Step Up:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Continue to host events where YP's experiences and views can be shared (i.e. Skills to Foster & Brilliant Parenting events);• Focus on positive handovers when a social worker leaves or a YP moves teams;• The ability to pick your social worker – having all teams use the social worker profiles;• Finding a way for YP to be able to raise issues with social workers that they

might not feel comfortable raising, whether that's because they're unhappy with social worker, or because they don't want to upset or add stress to the social worker;

- Keep YP informed on how to keep themselves safe - what to look out for and signs to avoid, and what to do should they find themselves in a dangerous situation.

Stepping Out:

- Greater support for Mental Health;
- Greater support with education & finding a job post-18;
- Greater support and information regarding housing options;
- Increased contact with Social worker's and PA's (this was greatly appreciated during the pandemic);
- Social events;
- Providing work experience and/or paid work placements/jobs within the Council;
- Review the local offer in respect of wider financial and community support;
- PA's to have a stronger voice in being advocates (especially with housing);
- Focus on preparing YP for independence from a younger age;
- Managing expectations & being honest;
- Greater awareness of corporate parenting across the Council.

General priorities also identified:

- More youth services, places to play and hangout, drop in centres, etc.
- Greater YP involvement in interviews with PAs/social workers, meeting with senior Council officers, etc.

When asked that they felt was the most important of the priorities listed, the YP present at the meeting advised:

- The relationship between YP and their social workers/PA
- Retain the ability for direct contact with support professionals, as seen throughout the pandemic;
- Faster responses to issues highlighted to social Workers/PAs.

Feedback from some YP was that their voice was not always being heard. Officers advised that the views expressed by the YP had been shared with senior managers, and the Council's local offer to its YP was currently under review to better meet the needs of the YP.

Members sought additional detail and asked a number of questions. In response, officers advised that the priorities as outlined had been obtained from a representative subset of the Borough's YP through their CiCC meetings, though additional feedback was obtained from social workers and PA's. All feedback was being incorporated into the revised local offer.

Regarding feedback from Coram Voice (CV), officers confirmed that while YP had a network of professionals to contact in the event of an issue, CV was available as an external provider for the YP, should they feel dissatisfied by the Council's actions to resolve their issue. Officers met with CV quarterly to receive feedback and discuss issues, though there remained regular contact between meetings. YP present at the meeting advised that more could be done to reinforce the availability of CV at CiCC meetings and this was being actioned.

On the matter of quality assurance, officers confirmed that a robust process was in place that included regular internal meetings to discuss feedback and actions, with an independent auditor then reviewing said actions. In addition, Ofsted provided independent quality assurance through their reviews, and the Council also conducted its own internal auditing. Officers confirmed that, should a YP feel unhappy with the Council as Corporate Parent, a complaints procedure, with escalation to Heads of Service, Assistant Directors and Directors, was available.

Members thanked the YP for their presentation, and noted the points raised.

31. **CPP - IRO ANNUAL REPORT 20-21 (003)** (*Agenda Item 5*)

Michelle Thomas, Safeguarding Manager, Child Protection and Review, introduced the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) annual report for 2020-21. Key highlights from the report included:

- At the time of the report, the Borough looked after 347 children, which was a slight decrease versus the previous year.
- Staffing numbers and IRO caseload remained stable.
- Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers totalled 73, and support continued to improve following the allocation of a named IRO.
- Timeliness of reviews and participation of young people continued to be strong.

The pandemic had resulted in a challenging year for the service, though the service had adapted quickly and effectively to the use of technology to provide virtual reviews and additional contact with young people (YP). Feedback from the YP to the virtual meetings was mixed, with some preferring face to face meetings. Moving forward, use of technology would continue, with the service providing a hybrid contact model, with processes flexibly aligned to the needs of the YP. Bespoke conference rooms had been outfitted with new technology to allow for hybrid in person/virtual meetings. Participation of YP in the process would continue to increase, with YP to co-chair reviews.

Some IROs managed YP with language or learning difficulties. In such instances, engagement with the YP was through the use of technology/tools, or advocates acting on behalf of the YP (i.e. carer, school staff, etc.)

Where possible, siblings were allocated the same IRO, though exceptions were possible (e.g. should a YP come back into care, etc.)

On the matter of 'drift and delay', as referred to within the report, Officers advised on the process by which this was addressed. In the first instance, contact would be made with the social worker. Ongoing reviews and actions would then be instigated to address the issue, escalated where necessary. It was highlighted that there were very good outcomes from escalation to Head of Service level, often precluding the need for further escalation.

Members noted that that the report did not provide a comparison of data for Q3 and Q4 versus the previous year. Officers advised that the report included the data that had been made available by the Council's performance data team, and that further detail would be included in a future report.

Regarding the number of return interviews offered to missing children, officers advised

that the report detailed the number offered within the Council's target timescale (24-48hrs from the YP's return). Officers advised that not all YP were offered an interview within that timescale, as many would go missing again, or would refuse to engage with officers. Members requested that further detail on this subject be provided following the meeting. Members also requested that data on the number of YP on remand be provided.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

32. **WORK PROGRAMME** (*Agenda Item 6*)

Consideration was given to the Panel's Work Programme for the year ahead.

Members highlighted that the themed meetings worked well and agreed that this should continue moving forward.

Suggestions for additional items and actions were agreed as follows:

- That detail on the Care Pledge to the Borough's YP to be brought to a future meeting of the CPP;
- That a verbal update on the EU Settlement Scheme be presented at the next meeting;
- That Member visits to Care Homes be scheduled;
- That representatives from Coram Voice be invited to present to the Panel at a future meeting;
- That training for Panel Members be scheduled;
- That officers provide a glossary of terms relating to CPP.

It was further suggested that an annual report be provided to Council, to raise the profile of Corporate Parenting across the Council. It was agreed that the feasibility of this would be reviewed by the parent Select Committee.

Officers suggested that the number of meetings be reduced to four a year, with quarterly meetings aligned to the end of each quarter and that quarter's data. This was agreed, with authority delegated to the clerk, in consultation with the Chairman and lead officers, to draft a proposal to be ratified at the parent Select Committee.

RESOLVED: That the Work Programme be noted, together with the actions as set out above.

The meeting, which commenced at 5.30 pm, closed at 6.50 pm.

These are the minutes of the above meeting. For more information on any of the resolutions please contact Neil Fraser on 01895 250692. Circulation of these minutes is to Councillors and officers.