

Minutes

CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

25 January 2022



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

	<p>Voting Panel Members Present: Councillors Nick Denys (Chairman), Heena Makwana (Vice-Chairman), and Kerri Prince</p> <p>Kathryn Angelini (Head of Education for Vulnerable Children), Siobhan Appleton (Designated LAC Nurse), and Helen Smith (Corporate Parenting Manager)</p> <p>Non-Voting Members Present Representatives of the Children in Care Council, and Care Leavers</p> <p>LBH Officers Present: Tehseen Kauser (Head of Service for Looked After Children and Leaving Care), Georgia Watson-Polack (Senior Virtual School Practitioner), Neil Fraser (Democratic Services Officer), Beverley O'Dwyer (Senior Virtual School Practitioner), Mia Coombes (Children's LAC Participation Officer) and Kali Slade (Apprentice Social Worker)</p>
47.	<p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (<i>Agenda Item 1</i>)</p> <p>Apologies were received from Alex Coman - Director for Safeguarding, Partnership and Quality Assurance, Children and Young People Services.</p>
48.	<p>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST IN MATTERS COMING BEFORE THIS MEETING (<i>Agenda Item 2</i>)</p> <p>None.</p>
49.	<p>MINUTES OF THE MEETING ON 24 NOVEMBER 2021 (<i>Agenda Item 3</i>)</p> <p>Regarding minute 43, and the reference to the review of Youth Services by representatives of Her Majesty's Inspectorate (HMIP), officers advised that the draft review report had not yet been published and therefore, further detail would follow at a later meeting.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 24 November 2021 be approved as a correct record.</p>
50.	<p>VIRTUAL SCHOOL ANNUAL REPORT (<i>Agenda Item 4</i>)</p> <p>Kathryn Angelini - Head of Education for Vulnerable Children, supported by Georgia Watson-Polack – Senior Virtual School Practitioner, and Bev O'Dwyer – Senior Virtual School Practitioner, introduced the annual report of Hillingdon's Virtual School.</p> <p>The report was summarised, with key points highlighted. The Panel was informed that the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic was broadly similar to that of the previous year,</p>

with disruption due to regular changes to 'at home' versus 'in school' education. However, despite these challenges, the Borough's young people (YP) continued to perform well. Attainment and attendance remained high, with reduced exclusion days.

The service had employed a careers guidance councillor who was supporting YP to understand their options for further academic study or employment. Training for schools and other education settings included the Designated Teacher Forum, and the new Advanced Designated Teacher Programme (ADT). Feedback to training had been overwhelmingly positive, with investment in place to fund a second year of the ADT programme in 2022, as well as providing for 2021's cohort to progress to ADT Level 2.

Blended tuition, incorporating in-person and online sessions, would continue through 2022, based on the needs of the learners. It was highlighted that the Letterbox programme had been omitted from the report, but remained in place.

Support for YP and their mental health was being addressed through various mechanisms, including mentoring, Mental Health Champions, and behavioural consultants.

Additionally, feedback from YP was being captured through PEP meetings, together with the various CiCC's and other YP groups. It had been noted that YP were more likely to provide honest feedback in a more relaxed, informal setting.

Reintegration of YP who had been excluded from school was noted to be more challenging for schools out of Borough. Processes to help reintegration varied by school, but could include Restorative Justice or engagement with specialised professionals.

The Committee heard testimony from several YP in attendance regarding their experiences with education as Looked After Children and Care Leavers. Feedback was positive, with common points including the support provided by Council staff, the learner's increased confidence and self-esteem, and the inclusivity and social impact of learning alongside other young people in similar situations.

Suggestions for further improvements to be considered included a wider advertisement and availability of the resources available to young people regarding careers advice, improvements to the Council's websites and online tools, and the potential for care leavers to work within the Council (e.g. within social media roles).

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

51. **CHILDREN'S SERVICES PERFORMANCE DATA FOR Q3** (*Agenda Item 5*)

Tehseen Kauser – Head of Service, Looked After Children and Leaving Care, updated the Panel on the performance towards the 5 desired outcomes for children during Quarter 3 of 2021/22.

The report was summarised, and it was recognised that some data from Q3 had shown a decline in performance in comparison to previous quarters, such as the number of timely health assessments. This was attributed to the significant increase in Unaccompanied Asylum Seeker Children (UASC), together with the national shortage of health staff, itself compounded by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. However, performance had increased in other areas, such as dental checks, while the vast majority of Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) assessments had been completed on

time.

The increased numbers of UASC was recognised to be a result of the Home Office hotels located within the Borough, to manage this influx the council were working with the Home Office to support with dispersal as the National Transfer Scheme had now been mandated. The team had reviewed internal processes, including increased weekend working with health to provide LAC surgeries on weekends in Feb 2022, in an effort to meet the increased demand and was continuing to monitor the influx of Young People. A slight decline in new cases had been noted during January 2022, though numbers overall remained high.

Case numbers per social worker had increased overall, though the average number of cases remained fewer than that of statistical neighbours.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

52. **SUPPORT AVAILABLE TO CARE LEAVERS (EDUCATION, TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT)** (*Agenda Item 6*)

Helen Smith – Corporate Parenting Manager, introduced a report detailing the support available to Care Leavers, with specific reference to their education, training, and employment.

The report was summarised, with key points highlighted. The Panel was informed that Hillingdon Council was a Corporate Parent to 515 over 18s, all of whom had been allocated a Personal Advisor (PA) or a Social Worker to ensure their access to educational support and career planning. This included pathway plan meetings held every six months, as per the statutory guidance. The report detailed partnerships and programmes including Job Centre Plus, Catch 22, Drive Forward, the Brunel Partnership, Rise Futures, and Project Search, as well as the financial support available to Care Leavers (including direct financial aid from the Council, and scholarships).

Challenges were set out, including the inability for some Young People (YP) aged 18+ to access employment or student finance due to their immigration status. The impact on mental health as a result of trauma or stress, was noted a significant barrier to overcome, including stress resulting from waiting for a decision on Home Office status. It was confirmed that delays in Home Office decisions had been exacerbated by the current COVID-10 pandemic.

Suggested improvements and further action included potential increased work experience days or mentoring from Councillors and the wider Hillingdon staff. It was agreed that the Chairman would approach the Chairman of the Families, Education and Wellbeing Select Committee to obtain a list of Councillor professions to help aid identifying potential work experience opportunities.

Additionally, it was suggested that officers review the potential for closer working with schools regarding support to YP on careers, funding, and Universal Credit.

The Panel requested that officers provide additional information regarding feedback from Young People on the Catch 22 and Drive Forward programmes.

RESOLVED:

1. That the report be noted;
2. That the Chairman approach the Chairman of the Families, Education and Wellbeing Select Committee to obtain a list of Councillor professions to help aid identifying potential work experience opportunities;
3. That officers review the potential for closer working with schools regarding support to Young People on careers, funding, and Universal Credit; and
4. That officers provide additional information regarding feedback from Young People on the Catch 22 and Drive Forward programmes.

53. **DISCUSSION: ROLE OF COUNCILLORS AS CORPORATE PARENTS** (*Agenda Item 7*)

The Panel discussed the role of Councillors as Corporate Parents and suggested potential actions for improvements.

It was noted that a programme of Member Development was being planned, though officers required additional information on attendees, dates, and topics in order to plan the most effective training. It was suggested that Young People (YP) should be actively involved in the delivery of this training, including detail of their experience pre-care, and its resultant effect on them.

Regarding counselling for YP, it was noted that detail on the newly commissioned REES counselling service could be provided at a future meeting.

It was agreed that officers would discuss potential changes to the Corporate Parenting Panel meetings with the YP attending. Some suggested changes included attendance and the sharing of experience from a wider variety of Council staff.

Additionally, it was suggested that officers could attend the Conservative and Labour Group meetings to further engage with Councillors on the subject of Corporate Parenting. However, it was recognised that this would need to be reviewed internally and, if approved, should be implemented after the forthcoming elections.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Chairman discuss the forthcoming Member Development programme and potential officer attendance at Group meetings with the Chairman of the Families, Education and Wellbeing Select Committee;
2. That detail on the newly commissioned REES counselling service be provided at a future meeting;
3. That officers discuss potential changes to the Corporate Parenting Panel meetings with the YP.

54. **WORK PROGRAMME** (*Agenda Item 8*)

Consideration was given to the Panel's Work Programme.

It was agreed that the themed, quarterly meetings would continue for the next municipal year, and authority was delegated to the clerk to arrange suitable dates and draft the new Work Programme, in consultation with officers and the Chairman.

RESOLVED:

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| | <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. That the Work Programme be noted; and2. That the clerk arrange the future meeting dates and draft the new Work Programme, in consultation with officers and the Chairman. |
| | The meeting, which commenced at 5.30 pm, closed at 7.20 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.