

Minutes

CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

24 May 2023

Meeting held at Committee Room 6 - Civic Centre,
High Street, Uxbridge



	<p>Voting Panel Members Present: Councillors Nick Denys (Chairman), Heena Makwana (Vice-Chairman), and Jan Sweeting</p> <p>Non-Voting Panel Members Present: Helen Smith, Principal Social Worker, Emma Kavanagh, Head of Corporate Parenting (attended virtually), Kathryn Angelini, Head of Education for Vulnerable Children, Bridget Owen, Designated Nurse for Children Looked After in Hillingdon (attended virtually), Dr Kate Head, Named Doctor for Children Looked After in Hillingdon, and Representatives of the Children in Care Council, and Care Leavers</p> <p>Officers Present: Aisling Knight, Children's Rights Co-Ordinator, Ryan Dell, Democratic Services Officer, and Rebecca Reid, Democratic Services Apprentice</p> <p>Also Present: Councillor Becky Haggar</p>
80.	<p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (<i>Agenda Item 1</i>)</p> <p>Apologies were received from Councillor Gursharan Mand with Councillor Jan Sweeting substituting.</p>
81.	<p>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST IN MATTERS COMING BEFORE THIS MEETING (<i>Agenda Item 2</i>)</p> <p>None.</p>
82.	<p>MINUTES OF THE MEETING ON 24 JANUARY 2023 (<i>Agenda Item 3</i>)</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 24 January 2023 be agreed as a correct record.</p>
83.	<p>YOUNG PEOPLE PRESENTATION: SUMMARY OF THE LAST YEAR (<i>Agenda Item 4</i>)</p> <p>Officers and young people presented a summary quiz of the last year. It was highlighted that the young people took part in interviewing for new posts within the service. The young people noted that by taking part in the interview process, this helped to identify candidates that would be a good fit for the young people themselves.</p>

Brentford FC had partnered with the Borough to coach Tuesday football sessions with the young people, and there had been interest in increasing their offer to include, for example, first aid and refereeing. Every four weeks, a football match between young people and staff took place.

525 young people had been nominated for a Kids in Care Award (KICA) in 2022 – this was the highest ever.

Audits of the service had taken place and 85% of audits were graded good or outstanding for the Corporate Parenting Service. 57 cases had been reviewed by internal auditors.

48% of Looked After Children were placed inside the Borough, partly due to need and family circumstances. Under 16's required regulated provision, and there was a shortage of foster carers available, which was a national issue. Officers added that the 'Stepping In' virtual Children in Care Council had been launched to enable children out of Borough to have their voices heard.

One of Hillingdon's Children's Rights and Participation Officers, who is care experienced, was nominated for a Children and Young People's Champion and Newcomer Award. Nominations and awards took place last year in Birmingham and London. Experiences had also been shared via 'Walking in Our Shoes' training. The officer was commended by the young people. There were role and capacity considerations for jobs for the young people. Through discussions at team meetings, a question had been added to the recruitment process to ask if the applicant was or had been a Looked After Child. This assisted with screening applications.

'Talkers' sessions were noted for young people aged 6-11. Two of the young people in attendance volunteered at these sessions on Friday evenings.

There had been a new personal advisor recruited into the Corporate Parenting team who was formerly a Children in Care Council member. HR Recruitment had recently employed a care experienced young person to an apprentice role within their team. Meetings had taken place with officers, and managers of departments who had taken on young people were very supportive. Hillingdon was commended for having a Corporate Parenting Panel, and it was noted that the Corporate Parenting Panel gave the young people a feeling of recognition.

A number of feedback comments were shared with the Panel, from care experienced young people and from officers. Members commended hearing this feedback and raised the possibility of it being shared with other Members not on the Panel. It was further noted that letters written to and from the young people and their carers and social workers were exchanged at the end of their relationship. Members raised the possibility of these being shared with other Members not on the Panel.

In terms of quality assurance, officers reached out to the young people and carers, especially when audited.

A number of photos of events run with the young people were shared. Reference was made to a Christmas event for the young people, which included pass the parcel, musical chairs, and presents being given out. There was also an annual KICA event, which formerly took place at Stockley Marquee, and Christmas and Eid events in the

Middlesex Suite. In October, football matches with the young people and officers were played. The young people went on trips to Thorpe Park, Chessington and the London Eye, and a barbeque for the young people was held at Hayes Cricket Club. Eid celebrations were held at the Civic Centre, where local businesses donated items. The young people were also taken on stadium tours at Arsenal FC, Chelsea FC and Tottenham Hotspur FC.

A KICA event took place with police working with young people. It was noted that these types of events can aid in improving relations and perceptions between young people and police, as these were informal and informative sessions that provided contact between the young people and police.

It was noted that a central theme around working with the young people was “Would this be good enough for my child?”.

Corporate Parenting was a vital role in breaking barriers, and it was noted that different local authorities would have different experiences of this, which could provide opportunities for learning. Further to this, Regional Children in Care Council meetings were attended with other local authorities. The Young People Forum was also noted, and cross-team collaboration was commended.

84. **CHILDREN’S SERVICES PERFORMANCE DATA Q4** (*Agenda Item 5*)

Officers presented an update on Children’s Services performance data for quarter 4.

Attendance for the statutory school age cohort had been slightly lower than expected at this point in the academic year, but this reflected a national issue. There was still some school refusal, although in quarter 4, attendance at Post 16 had improved slightly. There were new ‘Power To’ mentors for young people aged 15+. 100% of Personal Education Plans (PEPs) had been completed within the required timescales. The number of suspensions was on average, and so there were no concerns over this, and there had been no permanent exclusions for three years now.

At the end of this quarter there were 12 statutory school age children without a school place. Four of these children were new to care and applications were in progress. Six of these children were awaiting transfer on the National Transfer Scheme. Two children were struggling with engaging with education and were being offered bespoke packages of support.

At the end of this quarter there were nineteen young people who were not in education, employment or training (NEET). Nine of the NEET young people remained unchanged since the previous quarter. Two young people had part-time jobs, however the number of hours they worked did not equate to education, employment or training (EET) status. One young person had left employment during this quarter and was currently looking for new opportunities. The remaining seven young people became NEET during this quarter as a result of leaving their EET placements early. Virtual School Officers were actively working with all young people to re-engage them with new opportunities for the summer term.

There was some interim provision with the Skills Hub for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC).

Members noted that the report compared Hillingdon with national figures and asked

about comparisons with Borough neighbours. Officers noted that national data was only published annually, so would be available for the next Panel meeting.

Members further noted that there was a tightness in the number of school places and asked if this applied to the Looked After Children. Officers noted that it did not apply for those of statutory school age. It was further noted that schools could be instructed to take on Looked After Children beyond their numbers of places.

Members asked about placement moves and how these were managed. Officers noted that a social worker and Virtual School Officer would work together in looking for options.

On Personal Education Plans, Members asked how these were quality assured. Officers noted that for newer officers, all PEPs were quality assured by virtual school senior officers. For more experienced officers around 25-40% of PEPs were quality assured, and there was also internal reviewing. It was noted that Hillingdon wrote its own PEPs.

Members asked about the number of days lost to suspension (90 days lost so far this academic year). Officers noted that this was largely down to one child, and that the figure for this point last year was 84 days.

As at 31 March 2023, Hillingdon was Corporate Parents to 364 Looked After Children and 441 Care Leavers (aged 18-25).

Hillingdon had 53% of 19–21-year-old care leavers in Education, Employment or Training (EET), which was slightly lower than the national average at 55%.

Hillingdon had established partnerships with Catch 22 and Drive Forward. Catch 22 assisted care leavers with accessing further training and employment, and Drive Forward had recently offered funded opportunities for up to 25 young people who received Universal Credit, providing them with access to employment opportunities. Drive Forward was currently supporting 19 of Hillingdon's care experienced young people.

The Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire was a short, annual screening of behaviour for Looked After Children aged 4-16. Lower scores indicated better outcomes. The average score of the latest questionnaires at the end of June was 11.9, which compared positively with the national average in England (13.7) and statistical neighbours (13.6). All young people who had medium and high scores (17 and above) were referred to the in-house Multi-Agency Psychology Service (MAPS) for consultation and/ or early therapeutic intervention. Hillingdon was working together with the Central and North West London NHS Foundation Trust (CNWL) to commission further mental health support for young people, which was currently in progress. Hillingdon had also commissioned a mental health service from the Rees Foundation called Ask Jan, which was entering its second year and had, to date, supported 58 young people with their emotional wellbeing and offered a number of benefits of accessing the service including up to eight face-to-face counselling sessions delivered with a blended approach.

Currently 89% of young people had up to date health assessments. This was in line with statutory neighbours and the national average.

57% of young people had had a dental check within the last 12 months, which was being kept under review. There were a small number of young people refusing to attend dental appointments and there was also an issue of dental practices not registering new patients due to capacity restraints.

The leaving care service offered independence to young people by enabling them the choice of who their allocated social worker and personal advisor were. This took place for any young people transitioning into the service. This promoted the young peoples' identity and the service had already seen a positive change in engagement with the chosen worker. However, given the increase in unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) and the impact on demand and capacity, it had not been possible to offer this approach consistently in the last quarter.

During the last quarter, the service had begun offering Looked After Children the choice of personal advisor from the aged of 16. This aimed to foster a positive working relationship.

Many of the care leavers aged 19-21 were living independently, including in shared houses, university accommodation, privately rented accommodation and those under their own Council tenancy. 12 plus young people remained with their foster carers under Staying Put arrangements.

In the last 6 months, 145 children started to be looked after. The largest percentage was as a result of Absent Parenting (68%) due to high UASC numbers, followed by Abuse and Neglect (25%).

Children's Social Care's second and third cohort of social work apprentices were all on track to complete the academic year and move into new teams in September 2023. Three apprentices from adult services were due to move into a children's social work team in September 2023 to enable them to meet the university's requirements for a 'contrasting' placement, and to develop the skills and knowledge to allow them to "Think family" as they continue their social work careers. A fourth cohort of social work apprentices was current being recruited for a September 2023 start. Three apprentices would be recruited and completing their first year of social work education whilst placed in the Stronger Families Key Working service.

Members asked about the map of placements of Looked After Children outside of the Borough on page 16 of the agenda and noted that the placements appeared to be scattered. Officers noted that this was partly due to need and sufficiency. Sometimes there was a need to look further afield for placements due to the young people's needs or specialisms. It was noted that sometimes there were rural placements for safeguarding reasons. It was noted that the placement in Scotland was due to the placement being with a family member. Reference was also made to kinship carers (*For children whose parents are unable to look after them for short or long periods of time, kinship care (also called connected persons or family and friends care) provides a child with stability and the chance to stay with people they already know*).

Members asked about the map of placements of Looked After Children inside of the Borough on page 17 of the agenda and noted that placements appeared to be centred around the south of the Borough. Officers noted that there was no specific reason for this and it just came down to need and availability. The young people noted that residential placements tended to be in the south of the Borough.

	<p>Officers further highlighted the ‘Staying Close’ programme, whereby £1.5m of funding had been secured for young people to move into accommodation with each other while also having access to emotional support, a transition nurse, and lots of holistic/ wraparound support.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the Panel noted the content of the report.</p>
85.	<p>UPDATE ON THE CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND EDUCATION SELECT COMMITTEE’S APPROVAL OF THE UPDATE TO THE CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL’S TERMS OF REFERENCE (<i>Agenda Item 6</i>)</p> <p>At the previous Panel meeting, Members and officers requested two updates to the Panel’s Terms of Reference: the first to update the wording of the voting members paragraph, and the second to add the Head of Corporate Parenting to the list of non-voting members.</p> <p>These changes were agreed by the parent Children, Families and Education Select Committee at the 14 March 2023 meeting. This report informed the Panel that the requested changes had been agreed, and the changes had been made to the Terms of Reference.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the Corporate Parenting Panel noted the contents of the report.</p>
86.	<p>MULTI-YEAR WORK PROGRAMME (<i>Agenda Item 7</i>)</p> <p>Consideration was given to the Panel’s Work Programme. The Chairman suggested adding themes to the upcoming meetings. Following discussions with Members and officers, it was noted that the July 2023 meeting would have a theme around Safeguarding; the November 2023 meeting would have a theme around Health and Wellbeing; the January 2024 meeting would have a theme around Education and Opportunity; and the May 2024 meeting would have a theme around a Review of the Year.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. the Work Programme be noted; and 2. the new themes be added to the Work Programme
	<p>The meeting, which commenced at 5.30 pm, closed at 7.05 pm.</p>

These are the minutes of the above meeting. For more information on any of the resolutions please contact Ryan Dell at rdell@hillingdon.gov.uk or 01895 25 0636. Circulation of these minutes is to Councillors and officers.