

Minutes

CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

Tuesday 16 July 2024

Meeting held at Committee Room 4 - Civic Centre,
High Street, Uxbridge UB8 1UW



	<p>To Members of the Panel:</p> <p>Voting Members: Councillor Nick Denys (Chair) Councillor Heena Makwana (Vice-Chair) Councillor Jan Sweeting</p> <p>Non - voting Members: Representatives of the Children in Care Council, and Care Leavers Ash Knight, Children's Participation Team Manager Emma Kavanagh, Assistant Director Corporate Parenting and Fostering Kathryn Angelini, Assistant Director for Education & Vulnerable Children Bridget Owen, Designated Nurse Looked After Children (Harrow and Hillingdon) (NHS North West London ICB) Dr Kate Head, Designated Doctor for Children Looked After covering Harrow, Hillingdon and Brent</p> <p>Officers Present: Ryan Dell, Democratic Services Officer Rebecca Reid, Democratic Services Apprentice</p>
9.	<p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (<i>Agenda Item 1</i>)</p> <p>There were no apologies for absence.</p>
10.	<p>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST IN MATTERS COMING BEFORE THIS MEETING (<i>Agenda Item 2</i>)</p> <p>There were no declarations of interest.</p>
11.	<p>MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (<i>Agenda Item 3</i>)</p> <p>Members raised a query on the tentative agreement on Council Tax for care experienced young people. Officers noted that discussions on this were continuing.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting dated 22 May 2024 be approved as an accurate record.</p>
12.	<p>LAC & LEAVING CARE AND FOSTER & ADOPTION SERVICE ANNUAL REPORT (<i>Agenda Item 4</i>)</p> <p>At the end of the financial year, the London Borough of Hillingdon acted as Corporate Parent to 318 Looked after Children and 603 Care Experienced Young People (18-25 years old). This represents an increase of 162 Care Experienced Young People from the previous financial year. There has also been a significant decrease in the number of</p>

Looked after Children (LAC) from 351 LAC at the end of the last financial year, a reduction of 33 children. Among the total Looked after Children, 78 were Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC), accounting for 25% of the LAC population. Health assessments remained stable; annual Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaires (SDQs) were conducted.

Education and training statistics were in line with national figures. Placement numbers were stable.

There was a slight increase in foster placements, with 63 in-house carers for Children in Care.

A large number of Children in Care were in supported accommodation.

The Kids in Care Awards (KICA) supported Children in Care. A total of 545 children and young people were nominated, with 148 KICA winners and their guests attending the event.

Dental checks and places were part of a wider national issue. Private funding for Children in Care ensured their access was not impacted.

Priorities for the year ahead included expanding the Staying Close programme beyond the grant offer and embedding a therapeutic approach through services.

Workforce stability remained steady.

Members noted an increase in placement moves from 3.7% and requested an explanation on how this issue was being prioritized. Officers responded that the placement stability process was effective. In October 2023, supported accommodation became regulated by Ofsted. Officers had limited control over whether these accommodation facilities chose to register with Ofsted. Efforts had been made to contact the top 20 providers and assign a dedicated Officer to support the registration process and ensure compliance.

Members raised accommodation queries related to pages 7 and 10 and asked whether placements were predominantly within the borough or if children had to be placed out of the borough.

Officers responded that placement largely depended on the age and needs of the child.

National sufficiency of placements were currently inadequate, so the best interests of the Young People were addressed within the limited options available.

Members raised an additional question regarding whether the size of some HMOs, which would accommodate seven young people, was suitable.

Officers responded that those accommodations were for those over 18.

Properties were vetted before use.

Such accommodations would typically offer multiple bedsits for young people with no unknown occupants and generally included support hours.

If support hours were not included, support advisors or referrals to P3 were available for additional support.

Officers discussed the challenges ahead, specifically finding effective ways to engage young people. There were opportunities such as internships in a building next to The Shard in Central London, which provided references and payment to young people. However, there was a difficulty in engaging young people in these opportunities.

Despite good intentions, the opportunities were not being presented effectively to better engage young people.

A Children in Care Council Member proposed trauma training for foster carers, focusing on age-appropriate approaches, behaviour management, and communication.

Members heard from officers that the new training offer was commendable. It included DDP PACE training, which had been implemented from the top down. A trauma-informed approach was being adopted for foster carers and was mandatory for social carers to ensure consistency in care. The standard of care aligned with foster care expectations.

Additionally, AC Education had been commissioned to provide online training for foster carers, offering over 100 courses that could be completed at their own pace. This approach was said to engage foster carers in diverse learning methods and upskills those transitioning from residential placements.

Even experienced foster carers would receive refreshed induction training. Foster carers were required to complete a set amount of training before being approved. The learning needs of foster carers were addressed for their annual reviews and panels.

A second Children in Care Council Member expressed that their social worker was caring, and the placement was good, but suggested that maintenance work needed improvement. They also noted that the house manager should inform residents when new people moved in.

The Chair emphasised the need to consider ways to enhance the experiences of young people.

Members inquired about the local offer.

Officers responded that the care leavers' offer was available on the Hillingdon Council website. Feedback on this offer was welcomed.

Members also requested further information about whether MAPS (Multi-Agency Partnerships) was used for refugees.

Officers responded that there was a high demand for unaccompanied young people to stay in the borough. Currently, referrals to MAPS did not occur.

RESOLVED: That the Panel noted the content of the report.

13. **CHILDREN'S SERVICES PERFORMANCE DATA Q1 2024-25** (*Agenda Item 5*)

It was highlighted that 50% of children were placed with foster carers.

Less than 10% were in residential placements.

The remaining children were placed in various other settings.

Officers noted that there were nine newly qualified social workers who had joined the Children's Services department. Four "Step Up" students would begin in September 2024, and apprenticeships would also start in the same month.

The Chair expressed support for the "Step Up" and apprenticeship models. Officers noted a low number of agency staff.

An increase in school attendance at the end of the academic year was highlighted.

Attention was drawn to the launch of a NEET tracker for specialised support in the Virtual School, which started in May 2024.

Officers announced "Walking in Our Shoes" training and highlighted the end-of-year events, which showcased excellent opportunities for promoting and supporting young people.

Members asked whether accommodating asylum-seeking young people in borough schools remained a challenge.

Officers responded that the challenge depended on the specific placement within the borough. There were 10 places available in the Virtual School, and there had been no issues with placements for Children in Care this year.

Members inquired about the meaning of "EOTAS", to which the response was that it stands for "Education Other than at School".

Members referenced page 16 and the map at the end of the report, questioning whether the percentage of placements within the borough was higher than those outside.

Officers reported that the percentages of placements both within and outside the borough were stable. Nationally, there were issues with placement sufficiency, which affected availability rather than the choice of how far Children in Care were placed.

Members expressed concern that some young people with local connections may lose their ties when placed out of the borough.

Officers responded that for safeguarding reasons, it was sometimes preferable to place young people out of the borough, particularly in cases involving criminal issues.

Rural placements could be used temporarily to ensure safety and break negative connections.

Currently, there were no more than 35 young people in residential placements.

Monthly planning and discussions were held to explore strategies for bringing Children in Care closer to the borough.

RESOLVED: That the Panel noted the content of the report.

14.	<p>WORK PROGRAMME (<i>Agenda Item 9</i>)</p> <p>The Chair expressed a desire to evaluate the effectiveness of Corporate Parenting Panel (CPP) meetings moving forward to ensure the current format for meetings was achieving the desired outcomes.</p> <p>Plans were made to convene a meeting in September with Panel Members to discuss the optimal use of the CPP. The Health representatives were also planning a similar meeting.</p> <p>The Democratic Services Apprentice was instructed to schedule a meeting to outline objectives and explore ways to enhance the CPP's effectiveness, with a view to maximize the value of the CPP, ensuring that young people had a voice and made meaningful contributions.</p> <p>Officers suggested inviting direct managers to future CPP meetings to gain their insights on various projects they were involved in.</p> <p>The Health representatives noted that Hillingdon had the best Corporate Parenting Panel of those that they attended, and commended the inclusion of young people in the meetings.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the Corporate Parenting Panel considered the report.</p>
	<p>The meeting, which commenced at 5:30 pm, closed at 6:10 pm.</p>

These are the minutes of the above meeting. For more information on any of the resolutions, please contact Rebecca Reid on democratic@hillingdon.gov.uk. Circulation of these minutes is to Councillors, Officers, the Press and Members of the Public.