

Minutes

CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

06 February 2025

Meeting held at Committee Room 6 - 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, Participation Manager Kathryn Angelini, Assistant Director for Education</p> <p>Officers Present: Poppy Reddy, Assistant Director, Permanence & Specialist Service Lisa Steel, Virtual School Headteacher Ryan Dell, Democratic Services Officer Naveed Ali, Democratic Services Apprentice</p> <p>Also Present: Marie Hennessey, Named Nurse for Children Looked After in Hillingdon, CNWL Katie Randall, Clinical Services Manager, Harrow 0-19 Service, CCN Team, Special School Nursing and LAC, CNWL</p> <p>* This meeting was co-chaired by a Children in Care Council member</p>
15.	<p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (<i>Agenda Item 1</i>)</p> <p>There were no apologies from Elected Members.</p> <p>(Apologies had been received prior from Dr Kate Head and Bridget Owen).</p>
16.	<p>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST IN MATTERS COMING BEFORE THIS MEETING (<i>Agenda Item 2</i>)</p> <p>None.</p>
17.	<p>MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (<i>Agenda Item 3</i>)</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting dated 05 November 2024 be approved as an accurate record.</p>
18.	<p>UPDATE ON THE PRIORITIES FOR THE YEAR (<i>Agenda Item 4</i>)</p> <p>Officers and the young people gave an update on each of the seven priorities of the Participation Team for 2023/24:</p>

1. To recruit another Talkers volunteer and a Step Up volunteer
 - Talkers was a group for 6-11 year old young people who met once per month
 - This group allowed the young people to share experiences and build bonds with each other
 - The new volunteer had been in place for several months
 - One of the young people in attendance had been a volunteer here for two years. This was a rewarding experience, as their concerns about three young people made a difference
 - These groups enabled care experienced young people to share their lived experiences with younger people
2. Develop Youth Council
 - The Youth Council now came under the remit of the Participation Team, as of May 2024
 - This group enabled young people to discuss problems in the borough
 - One of the young people in attendance noted that they had joined the Youth Council during a project on knife crime. This project focused on keeping young people safe during the holidays
 - The young people noted that the Youth Council was enjoyable
3. Further embedding young people into interviews into all services in Hillingdon
 - This allowed young people to take part in interviews, and ensured that the young people's voice was heard
 - A further benefit of this was that it allowed the young people to ask questions that other people may not think of
 - One young person had been involved in a successful interview for the Participation Team, which demonstrated that their voice was heard
 - Two young people had taken part in the Safer Hayes Project
 - This involved going into a variety of schools and speaking to young people
 - This allowed the young people to share experiences such as knife crime and a lack of accessible activities. This was a rewarding experience
 - The young people noted that sessions such as Goals can be expensive and there was a lack of female activities
 - The young people spoke to one person who was an unaccompanied asylum-seeking child studying English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) at Uxbridge College, who noted that their experience of knife crime in Hayes was different to that in their home country
 - A new youth group was being set up for young people in Hayes
4. Secure another holiday trip to the NCS
 - The first trip was to the Isle of Wight
 - This was an 'incredible' trip that allowed the young people to discover their mutual experiences
 - There were a range of ages on the trip
 - The young people were able to learn about themselves as individuals and as groups
 - While the trip was to the Isle of Wight, there was a speaker from London, which gave a sense of familiarity
 - This was empowering and the young people developed close bonds
 - A new trip was to NCS in Kent

- This was one of the young people's first experiences as a staff member. The trip was hard work but good fun
 - The trip allowed a range of young people, including those with SEND, to mix and share experiences
 - Residential trips were very beneficial as they allowed people to interact outside of formal settings, which could help in breaking down barriers
5. Explore and provide further opportunities for children known to services
- One of the young people was working as a Project Search intern
 - The young person created a video about Project Search which was showed to the Panel
 - Project Search had been part of Hillingdon for over five years
 - It was a programme offered to autistic adults and adults with learning disabilities
 - The programme helped young people to build transferable skills while going into work
 - Project Search involved three 10-week rotations within different departments
 - This gave the young people the opportunity the gain new experiences, learn skills, and work as part of a team
 - The young people were supported with reasonable adjustments and a job coach
 - Project Search gave young people the chance to experience paid employment
 - The video included interviews with a number of current Project Search interns and job coaches who spoke about their experiences
 - The Panel thanked the young person for creating the video
6. Reaching out to community partners to provide ongoing enrichment opportunities
- The young people had worked with the Virtual School during February half term with a charity called Become on a project called Propel into Education
 - Propel into Education was a service supporting care-experienced young people into college and university
 - The young people took part in weekly football sessions and staff vs young people matches
 - The young people delivered Walking In Our Shoes training (where vulnerable children trained professionals) to a number of external partners. A recent session had been delivered to police officers. A session had also been delivered to the CQC
 - Walking In Our Shoes training was important as it enabled professionals to experience what it was like to be a young person in care. It can also help professionals to know what to look out for and any early warning signs
 - The young people noted a previous session delivered to social workers, which helped one of the young people to know that they wanted to be a social worker
 - One of the health colleagues in attendance noted that they had done this training, and it was the best training that they had ever received
 - It was further noted that professionals can give their feedback on the sessions which the young people incorporated into future sessions
 - Being in care can be scary sometimes, and facing new professionals can be daunting
 - It was good to share good news stories, which can create a chain of positive impact
7. Continue to engage in regional/ national consultations
- Hillingdon Youth Council was involved in the National Youth Council

- There was also a pan-London Children in Care Council
 - This included a two-year project to create safe spaces for black children in care
 - As part of this project, young people met with professionals who worked nationally
 - Members asked how Hillingdon became involved in this project. Officers noted that they applied and were accepted. Furthermore, while usually only one young person would be accepted, Hillingdon had two young people on the project. This facilitated the representation of diverse backgrounds, including the two young people who were of mixed race and black heritage, and who were in foster care and semi-independent living arrangements
 - The young people noted the Participation Manager was their biggest ally on race issues
- Members commended the young people and the wider team for the work they do. Members further noted that the young people were doing 'amazing, positive' things, and making a positive difference
- Members also commended the inclusion of young people on interview panels
- Members commended the Principal Social Worker and the Participation Manager for the vast improvements they had made in Hillingdon in recent years
- Members also commended one of the young people's speeches at the recent Kids in Care Awards (KICA)
- The young people thanked the Participation Manager for always being there for them
- Colleagues from the health team also commended the young people

RESOLVED: That the Panel noted the update

19. LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN HEALTH TEAM ANNUAL REPORT *(Agenda Item 5)*

Colleagues from the health team presented their annual report.

Initial health assessments

There were a number of challenges with initial health assessments (which were carried out by a doctor, with a KPI of a 20-day timeframe). These included late notifications, an increase in A&E admissions, the number of out of borough young people, and doctor's caseloads:

- Despite the caseloads, doctors had helped with some of the duties of the Named Doctor. The Named Doctor role had been filled, and the new Named Doctor had started
- Late notifications were a national issue, and there were occasions where young people had been relocated
- There had been some training for new social workers, including on health assessments. It was planned to make this annual training
- There were instances of young people in placements in areas of high concentration (areas with a waiting list), which had led to some delays

There were a number of achievements on initial health assessments. Of 218 requests, 178 were completed. Of those not completed, this was often due to some young people being transferred via the National Transfer Scheme, some no longer being young people, and some refusals. 138 were seen within 20 days, while some required a second appointment.

	<p><u>Review health assessments</u></p> <p>Review health assessments (carried out by nurses) faced similar challenges. Staffing presented a challenge with an increase in complex safeguarding issues, A&E admissions and strategy meetings.</p> <p>Children who were out of borough and placed in high volume areas can be challenging. In this instance the Named Nurse would liaise with the relevant area and escalate to the Designated Nurse if required. It was noted that Hillingdon was not a high volume area.</p> <p>The ICB were looking to make IRAs and RHAs easier, as there were similarities across all eight boroughs. There was due to be a new model next year. Travel time for staff and funding were an issue.</p> <p>The prevalence of mental health and emotional issues remained high.</p> <p>There were a number of achievements in RHAs. 99.7% of young people had been seen on time. One young person had been seen one week late.</p> <p>Feedback was important, and it was noted that feedback was received via a yearly survey. The young people noted that the child mental health team helped a lot.</p> <p>Members asked about the follow-up to health assessments. The Named Nurse would be involved in follow-up, and that the Transition Nurse worked with care experienced young people.</p> <p>The young people noted the importance of having role models that their younger selves needed.</p> <p>It was noted that funding for the Transition Nurse (funded by the ICB) was non-recurrent. The Chair noted that they had quarterly meetings with the ICB, and this would be raised with them. The young people noted that the Transition Nurse was vital.</p> <p>One of the health colleagues was a former Transition Nurse for care experienced young people. This was a role that was guided by the young people, who had brilliant ideas.</p> <p>Members noted that the report stated, “the number of young people who moved into independent living with no formal support has increased (from 7.0% to 17.9%)” and asked for more information on this. Officers clarified that this referred to moving from semi-independent to independent living, but officers would follow up on this. It was noted that moving into independent living can be difficult, and this emphasised the need for the Transition Nurse.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the Panel noted the report</p>
20.	<p>UPDATE ON THE SELECT COMMITTEE’S REVIEW OF PERSISTENT ABSENTEEISM (<i>Agenda Item 6</i>)</p> <p>Councillor Makwana gave an update on the Children, Families & Education Select Committee’s review into persistent absenteeism.</p>

	<p>The Select Committee had chosen to review this subject as it was a national issue, and the Committee intended to explore the root causes of persistent absenteeism and to consider its impact on education and wellbeing. The Committee would also explore partnerships with schools before making recommendations to Cabinet.</p> <p>The Committee had held six witness sessions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The first was with education officers who set the scene • The second considered information from a range of other local authorities • The third allowed Members to discuss with schools (via an in-person session and a survey sent to schools) to ascertain their input • The fourth sessions allowed Members to engage directly with young people. This was an important session, and Members thanked the Participation Manager for arranging, and the young people for taking part in the session • The fifth session saw Members meet with safeguarding officers • The sixth session saw Members meet directly with parents and carers <p>Now that the witness sessions had concluded, Members were considering their findings and conclusions, and putting together their recommendations.</p> <p>It was noted that there had been a recurring theme of early intervention.</p> <p>The young people noted that the longer a young person was off school, the more difficult it was to return. It was further noted that during COVID, when classes were online, this helped young people to attend their classes while bullying and social anxiety were reduced. During this time, friends would also keep the young people up to date with school matters.</p> <p>There were a number of reasons why young people did not attend school, including emotional reasons and just not liking school. Some absences were related to behavioural issues that persisted when the young person returned to school.</p> <p>The young people noted that schools often did not teach in the way that young people learn; that there needed to be more training on neurodivergence; and that practical ways of learning were important.</p> <p>The young people also noted that school could be an avenue to release stress.</p> <p>It was noted that early intervention was key, and that recurring support was vital.</p> <p>Colleagues from the health team noted that a school uniform can present issues.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the Panel noted the update</p>
21.	<p>VIRTUAL SCHOOL ANNUAL REPORT (<i>Agenda Item 7</i>)</p> <p>Officers introduced the Virtual School annual report. The report covered September 2023-August 2024.</p> <p>The Assistant Director for Education noted that she would no longer be attending the Panel and would be replaced by the new Virtual School Head Teacher, who was introduced to the Panel.</p> <p>The Key Stage 1 and 2 cohorts had displayed impressive outcomes.</p>

	<p>The Key Stage 4 cohort had exceeded its target of Attainment 8 (<i>this measured the average achievement of students across eight qualifications</i>).</p> <p>A top priority had been on reducing the number of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET). There had been an impact on this of current cohorts being post-COVID. There was also an emphasis on getting young people into school placements quicker.</p> <p>The Virtual School had come a long way, and was commended by the young people.</p> <p>Members thanked the Assistant Director for Education for their many years of work and the positives outcomes.</p> <p>It was noted that people liked working for the Virtual School and that Virtual School officers enjoyed working with the young people.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the Panel noted the content of the report</p>
22.	<p>UPDATE ON PATHWAY PLANS (<i>Agenda Item 8</i>)</p> <p>Officers introduced the update on pathway plans.</p> <p>The Assistant Director for Permanence and Specialist Services noted that they had replaced the former Assistant Director for Corporate Parenting and Fostering in attending the Panel.</p> <p>A Pathway Plan was a document created to support young people in transitioning to independent living.</p> <p>In Hillingdon there were currently 733 care experienced young people aged 18+. Pathway Plans served as the primary document for young people aged between the ages of 15 years and 9 months up to 21 years. (Young people would still have a care plan until they were 18). Between the ages of 21-25 the pathway plan was optional, but officers encouraged its continuation.</p> <p>Currently there are 436 active Pathway Plans.</p> <p>When a young person turned 16 years, they had the choice of choosing a Personal Advisor they wish to work with and who will work alongside their social worker. During this time the Personal Advisor will get to know the young person, attend all statutory meetings, visit the young person and build a positive relationship with them, to ensure a smooth transition at 18 when the social worker's role will cease. The PA was responsible for reviewing the Pathway Plan with the young person every six months or as needed.</p> <p>In January 2024, Your Family Matters were commissioned to facilitate Family Group Conferences and mediation which care experienced young people can access. These conferences can also enable care experienced young people to create family safety plans to support their transition into adulthood. One of the main missions for care experienced young people was for them to have enduring, loving, safe and meaningful relationships with family members and friends, and to avoid any stigma associated with social care.</p> <p>The young people noted that they had achieved a lot by being on a pathway plan, though noted that they needed to be more young people friendly.</p>

	<p>Members asked how engaged families were in the family group conferences. Officers noted that this varied and often depended on previous engagement. Some families did not have a positive impression of social services; however, the conferences were not led by social services. The young people noted that there was often a stigma attached to social services.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the Panel noted the content of the report</p>
23.	<p>CHILDREN'S SERVICES PERFORMANCE DATA Q3 (<i>Agenda Item 9</i>)</p> <p>Officers introduced the performance data report.</p> <p>Officers noted that there was a typo in the report on page 62, where the '% with 1+ suspension' should have read 1.6%.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the Panel noted the content of the report</p>
24.	<p>WORK PROGRAMME (<i>Agenda Item 10</i>)</p> <p>Members considered the work programme.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the Corporate Parenting Panel considered the report</p>
	<p>The meeting, which commenced at 5:30 pm, closed at 7:20 pm.</p>

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