

Minutes

CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

28 October 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 Peter Smallwood OBE Councillor Jan Sweeting</p> <p>Non-voting Members: Representatives of the Children in Care Council, and Care Experienced Young People Ash Knight, Participation Manager Bridget Owen, Designated Nurse Looked After Children (Harrow and Hillingdon) (NHS North West London ICB)</p> <p>Officers Present: Poppy Reddy, Assistant Director, Permanence & Specialist Service Lisa Steel, Virtual School Headteacher Donna Hugh, Assistant director of Care Provision Services Filiz Osman, Safeguarding Manager Senay Nidai, Assistant Director of Safeguarding & Quality Assurance Tamisa John-Baptiste, Independent Reviewing Officer Ryan Dell, Democratic Services Officer</p> <p>Also Present: Katie Randall, Clinical Services Manager, Harrow 0-19 Service, CCN Team, Special School Nursing and Looked After Children, CNWL</p> <p>* This meeting was co-chaired by a Children in Care Council member</p>
16.	<p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (<i>Agenda Item 1</i>)</p> <p>Apologies had been received from Councillor Heena Makwana with Councillor Peter Smallwood OBE substituting.</p>
17.	<p>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST IN MATTERS COMING BEFORE THIS MEETING (<i>Agenda Item 2</i>)</p> <p>None.</p>
18.	<p>MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (<i>Agenda Item 3</i>)</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting dated 29 July 2025 be approved as an accurate record.</p>
19.	<p>KICA FEEDBACK (<i>Agenda Item 4</i>)</p>

Officers and the young people presented their highlights of the recent Kids in Care Awards (KICA) event, which included a bouncy castle and a stilt walker. The young people noted that KICA was always fun.

This had been the largest KICA event to date, with 927 award nominations, up from 700+ and 500+ in previous years. The event was growing and took place in a new location at Hillingdon House. Lots of positive feedback had been received and it was noted that, in future, a larger space may be needed for a bigger ceremony. Officers and the young people shared a video of KICA.

Officers and the young people also described their recent trip to Snowdonia, funded by the Domestic Violence Reduction Unit. The young people commended the team for taking them on the trip and noted that, whilst they had needed some encouragement to go on the trip initially, it had been a 'life-changing' experience which included activities such as river weaselling, exploring underground caves and mountain climbing. The young people described it as an amazing experience, and each of the young people received a personal card, keyring and gifts from the team. The young people noted that they had felt more motivated since the trip, and had applied for jobs, college and volunteering opportunities. Officers and the young people shared video of the trip, and noted that a further trip had been arranged for February 2026.

Members commended the young people for sharing their experiences of KICA and the Snowdonia trip, and noted that the young people could help encourage each other in attending future trips.

Members asked how to keep growing the KICA event without losing its special feeling. Officers noted that finances did play a part. It was always the intention to invite all young people, and it was hoped that there would not be a need to cap numbers in future.

Members thanked officers and the young people for sharing their experiences.

RESOLVED: That the Panel noted the presentation

20. **INDEPENDENT REVIEWING OFFICER (IRO) ANNUAL REPORT 2024-25** (*Agenda Item 5*)

Officers noted that it was a statutory requirement for all cared for children to have an Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO), and reviews took place every six months. It was the role of IROs to advocate for young people, and they could escalate concerns if required.

Each IRO meeting was different and could be conducted virtually or face-to-face, depending on the preference of the young person. While some of the meetings can be difficult, lots of work was done behind the scenes for the benefit of the young people.

The young people commended the IROs, noting that they had a good relationship, and that the IRO was like a best friend. The IROs noted that they could be a stable presence and were often the most consistent professional for the young people.

Members noted the role of the IROs to challenge the local authority and asked if they felt they were able to do this effectively. This depended on the situation, but there were mechanisms for escalation to Service Managers and Assistant Directors where appropriate. There was not often a need for escalation, and there were a good working

relationship and communication between services. It was important to have these conversations, including in between reviews.

Members noted that there was not a high turnover of IROs and commended this consistency.

Officers also commended the IROs and noted that social workers wanted the independent challenge from them. Officers further commended the involvement of young people in their own reviews, and it was noted that IROs attended events such as KICA.

Colleagues from the health team noted the IROs were very helpful. For example, when the young people asked questions to the health team, the health team could go to the IROs for help.

Members asked about placement types for young people, noting that numbers of foster placements were lower than neighbouring boroughs. Officers noted that where young people were aged 16+, they would more likely go into semi-independent living rather than a foster placement.

Members highlighted the 38 young people in the category of 'secure units, children's homes and hostels' and asked for more information on this. Officers advised that these young people were in semi-independent living or children's homes. No young people were in secure units, and none were being placed in hostels.

It was further noted that some young people moved through the National Transfer Scheme, and that 12 new residential units (one-bed, two-bed and three-bed) were being prepared for registration in the borough.

The Chair requested that an update on accommodation be added to the work programme for the next meeting.

Officers commended the IROs for their role in assisting the Virtual School as this helped to provide a holistic approach for the young people.

Members noted that 63.5% of children and young people actively spoke for themselves during their cared for children reviews and asked how this could be improved. Officers noted that they were working across services on methods for ensuring the voice of all young people was heard, including young people with disabilities and young people who were non-verbal. It was suggested that those young people who did not actively speak during their reviews may include those aged under five, and that a further breakdown of this information could be included in future.

Members asked about the safeguarding element when young people did not want to speak during their reviews. Officers noted that IROs would communicate with the child and young person in a method they preferred, including by phone call, WhatsApp, emails or text messages. IROs could also offer advocacy where appropriate.

Members asked about dental checks. This was a national issue, and there was no longer a school toothbrush campaign for young people aged over seven. It was noted that Harrow Council had a dentist specifically for cared for children.

On health assessments, as of August 2025, Hillingdon was at 74% take-up for review health assessments (RHAs) and 33% for initial health assessments (IHAs), while the target was 95% take-up. It was noted that Harrow Council held twice-weekly meetings

	<p>with Heads of Service in the local authority and representatives from CNWL and the ICB, and that this was having a positive effect. It was hoped that this could be arranged with Hillingdon. It was suggested that these matters would be raised with the Cabinet Member for Children, Families & Education.</p> <p>Health was a big part of IRO meetings. There was a small cohort of young people who had refused health assessments. It was suggested that young people may not feel the need for a health assessment in these instances.</p> <p>It was suggested that there had been cases where foster carers had reported that they were unable to bring their young people to their health assessments.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the Corporate Parenting Panel considered the report and noted its content.</p>
21.	<p>ANNUAL REPORT – CARED FOR CHILDREN & FOSTERING AND ADOPTION 2024-25 (<i>Agenda Item 6</i>)</p> <p>Officers introduced the report, noting that it had been renamed from the Looked After Children to the Cared for Children annual report.</p> <p>At the end of the financial year, Hillingdon had acted as Corporate Parent to 312 Cared for Children and 602 Care Experienced Young People (18-25 years old). This represented a decrease of five Cared for Children and a decrease of one Care Experienced Young Person from the previous year.</p> <p>During the year, all young people had been seen by their Social Workers, and 70% of visits had been completed within statutory timescales. This demonstrated an increase from the previous year's figure of 69%.</p> <p>79.7% of care experienced young people were in education, employment or training, up from 76% in the previous year.</p> <p>12 young people had been placed for adoption, four of which were in early permanence placements. It was noted that it would be helpful to have more early permanence placements, especially for older young people.</p> <p>There had been an increase in the number of Special Guardianship Orders to 218, and there was robust support for SGO carers. 175 received financial support. It was noted that there was a current Welfare Bill which would include additional support for Special Guardian carers, and the revised Local Offer would include feedback from young people and Special Guardian carers.</p> <p>Members commended the report, and asked about challenges for the year ahead, specifically around that of promoting training and workplace opportunities for young people. It was noted that work experience was needed for young people, and career development month was upcoming.</p> <p>Related to this, Hillingdon was signed up to the pan-London Family Business Model. This was a project focused on supporting care experienced young people into employment, based on the principle of corporate parenting. It was noted that Level 2 qualifications often presented a barrier in this. 12 young people aged 16+ were currently studying for English and Maths qualifications. There was a career fair upcoming in November. Two young people had recently been recruited to the Participation team and were due to start</p>

	<p>soon. The Family Hubs had offered 3x one-year work experience placements to young people, tailored to the young person. An update on the Family Business Model would be added for a future meeting.</p> <p>A Council Tax Policy for Care Experienced Young People was now in place.</p> <p>The Brokerage Team commissioned independent accommodation in approximately 30 House of Multiple Occupation (HMO) properties specifically for young people aged 18 and above.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the Corporate Parenting Panel noted the content of the report</p>
22	<p>CHILDREN'S SERVICES PERFORMANCE DATA Q2 2025-26 (<i>Agenda Item 7</i>)</p> <p>Officers introduced the report.</p> <p>Members commended the offer of gym memberships at Council-owned facilities for young people in the Staying Close project.</p> <p>It was noted that there was a policy for a number of driving lessons for young people, rather than a fee.</p> <p>The Virtual School had delivered its second conference at The Winston Churchill Theatre for designated teachers for cared for children, welcoming a wide range of schools and partner organisations. Highlights included keynote speaker Ashley John-Baptiste, and an inspiring panel of care experienced young people. Feedback from the conference was very positive, with attendees noting learning new ideas and a deeper understanding of the experiences of young people.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the Corporate Parenting Panel noted the content of the report</p>
23.	<p>WORK PROGRAMME (<i>Agenda Item 8</i>)</p> <p>Members considered the work programme.</p> <p>It was suggested that the Panel could be renamed, and the Panel welcomed the suggestion that the young people suggest ideas for a new name.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the Corporate Parenting Panel:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Considered the report; 2. Added an update on accommodation for the next meeting; and 3. Added an update on the pan-London family business model for a future meeting
	<p>The meeting, which commenced at 5:30 pm, closed at 6:50 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.