

Minutes

CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

27 January 2026

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 Councillor Jan Sweeting</p> <p>Non-voting Members: Representatives of the Children in Care Council, and Care Experienced Young People Ash Knight, Participation Manager Dr Kate Head, Designated Doctor for Children Looked After covering Hillingdon, Harrow and Brent (virtual)</p> <p>Officers Present: Poppy Reddy, Assistant Director, Care, Support & Transition Lisa Steel, Virtual School Headteacher Lana Hormiz, Children's Participation Officer Kirsty DeSouza, Contextual Safeguarding Co-ordinator 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>
24.	<p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (<i>Agenda Item 1</i>)</p> <p>Apologies had been received from Bridget Owen.</p>
25.	<p>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST IN MATTERS COMING BEFORE THIS MEETING (<i>Agenda Item 2</i>)</p> <p>None.</p>
26.	<p>MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (<i>Agenda Item 3</i>)</p> <p>It was noted that when these draft minutes had been presented to the Select Committee, two corrections had been highlighted. These corrections had been amended and were included in these minutes.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting dated 28 October 2025 be approved as an accurate record.</p>
27.	<p>MAKING HAYES SAFER UPDATE (<i>Agenda Item 4</i>)</p>

Officers and young people gave a presentation on the Making Hayes Safer project:

- Vision
 - The vision of the project was to eliminate violence and exploitation, and make communities feel safe
- Aim
 - To tackle serious youth violence and exploitation through the lens of contextual safeguarding
- Creative Arts Approach
 - Activities included events taking place in the Teen Room at Botwell Library such as youth worker led discussions
 - Outputs included 54 attendances by young people, some of whom were NEET, eight podcasts and music productions
- Feedback from Activities
 - Feedback on the activities was received from young people across six schools and included the child's voice on knife crime
 - Feedback was collected via a survey of 279 young people
- AXIS
 - AXIS, a child exploitation team for Hillingdon, was engaging primary schools on the project
- Responding to Tragedy
 - Following the loss of a 16-year-old to serious youth violence, the project had stepped in to provide crucial bereavement and trauma support, and had been working with the young person's mother
 - The project was also planning a memorial bench near the young person's home
- YMCA West London Youth Project
 - Offered free sports for young people
- Hayes Community Action Day
 - Funded by the Making Hayes Safer project.
 - In partnership with the Teen Room (Botwell Library) and Communities Against Violence (CAV)
 - Featured 356 attendees and guest speakers
- Employment
 - One young person had been employed on the Making Hayes Safer project for three months
 - This included visiting schools, speaking to young people, attending residential trips and mentoring children at risk of exploitation and serious youth violence
 - As the young person had lived through similar experiences, young people were more likely to listen, relate and change their mindset.
 - The young person was commended for their work, and had been nominated for the National CrimeBeat Award
- Residential trip
 - 15 young people took part in a residential trip to Wales
 - Several of the young people were now enrolled in college or in employment
 - Officers played a video by one of the young people giving their feedback on the trip/ Feedback included:
 - *This experience was amazing and something I'll never forget*
 - *The residential has really made a difference to me, I can achieve things I didn't believe I could*
 - *Programmes like this are important because they give young people safe and positive experiences which is what the Making Hayes Safer project is all about*

- Self-Defence Programme
 - 10 young people took part in a six-week programme learning self-defence
 - Successful students will receive a Red Belt with a White Stripe and a Certificate of Achievement
- Basketball
 - Basketball sessions were run at the Global Academy during the summer holidays
 - Feedback from young people highlighted the need for girls-only sessions, as well as mixed sessions, which had been implemented
- Knife bin
 - Following feedback from young people, a knife bin had been re-introduced in Hayes at Pump Lane Car Park.
 - This will run as a one-year pilot.
 - This allowed anonymous drop-offs
- Family Lives
 - Family Lives had been commissioned for one year as part of the Making Hayes Safer project, aiming to support families, parents, and children in addressing serious youth violence
- Business Engagement & Contextual Safeguarding
 - Every business in Hayes would be offered the opportunity to join a free session on 'what is contextual safeguarding', held at their convenience online or face-to-face.
 - The aim was to gain awareness and understanding of what contextual safeguarding is and what to do if you see a child with changed behaviour
- Business Engagement & Safe Hub
 - A safe hub was being launched for children walking home from school or out in the community
 - This consisted of a list of stores with a waiting area whereby young people can step into a safe hub location where trusted staff will offer support
- Making Hayes Safer logo
 - Year 6 students from three local schools are taking part in designing the official logo for the Making Hayes Safer project
 - A winner from each school will receive a 1st, 2nd and 3rd prize
 - This aimed to empower the community to drive lasting, positive change in Hayes

Members asked about funding for the project. It was currently funded by the Violence Reduction Unit, but officers were looking for external funding. It was noted that after one year of the project, there had been a reduction in the number of referrals to the Youth Justice Service.

The Chair noted that the Panel would try to assist the project where possible.

Members asked how it was ensured that lessons learned were long-lasting. Officers noted that the young people involved were known to the Youth Justice Service and so already had an allocated case worker and had regular contact with the Participation Team. Some young people were acting as mentors, for example on the residential trips. Young people noted that once young people get involved, they stay involved. For example, one young person had become more involved in the project since going on a residential trip. The young people also noted that the project had helped them to see more opportunities, as similar opportunities (e.g. residential trips and KICA) were not common. The young people commended the role of the Participation team as very important, and that it was important to see how different teams fit into the system. The young people noted the importance of having people believe in you.

Members asked if Ward Councillors were involved. Officers advised that they tried to have regular contact with Councillors and local police.

Officers highlighted difficulty in finding venues, noting that schools were more available in holidays.

Members commended officers and the young people.

Members asked how feedback was collected. Young people advised that they had gone into schools and spoken to pupils in Year 7-11. The pupils wrote down what 'safe' and 'not safe' meant to them. It was noted that it was good that the young people felt able to share their feedback. Having a young person going into the schools also helped to build relationships.

RESOLVED: That the Panel noted the presentation

28. **ACCOMMODATION, PLACEMENTS & HOUSING** (*Agenda Item 5*)

Officers introduced the report, noting that there were a range of types of accommodation available to young people from pre-birth up to the age of 25.

The first consideration was always for young people to stay with their birth families where possible. Officers aimed to ensure support, opportunities, empowerment and stability for young people.

Hillingdon played an active role in the regional commissioning work led by the West London Alliance, using shared frameworks to source high-quality children's placements across West London.

Kinship Care

If young people cannot be placed with their birth parents, kinship care allowed them to remain within their extended family or close network, preserving identity, culture, and continuity of relationships. There were currently 223 young people under Special Guardianship arrangements. Officers noted that they tried to mirror the support offered to foster carers to kinship carers.

Foster Care

If young people cannot be placed with their birth families, then foster care was the next most suitable option. Foster care allowed carers to be matched to young people's needs. The new fostering offer had been launched in May 2024. Officers tried to keep young people in the borough as much as possible where suitable.

As of January 2026, there were 72 registered fostering households caring for 75 children. Four more fostering households were due to be presented at panel for approval by the end of the year.

Hillingdon was part of the Foster with West London Hub. Of the eight local authorities, Hillingdon had the highest number of enquiries, 127 compared with the next performing local authority at 103.

Hillingdon had signed up to the Care Friends app. This provided a small financial incentive to foster carers to refer a friend as a potential new carer.

Staying Put

Staying Put was a statutory scheme that allowed young people to remain with their foster carers after they turned 18, allowing for additional consistency and stability.

Staying Close

Staying Close is a programme that currently supported 46 Care Experienced Young People aged over 18 across ten properties.

In partnership with the Estates team and commissioned providers, a pilot scheme was underway to support Care Experienced Young People in moving into the private rental sector, including approval for a six-bedroom property.

From April 2026, operational and strategic responsibility will transfer to the Housing service, aligning with the new statutory duty for all local authorities to provide Staying Close and to support the continued development of integrated housing pathways.

Residential homes

Young people were not placed in residential homes except as a last resort.

In December of 2025, officers successfully registered 12 new residential beds in six new homes. This was the first development of its kind in London, and it brought the total number of in-house residential spaces to 23. These homes were regulated by Ofsted.

There were two step-aside placements that aimed to bring young people back into the borough. This helped to maintain stability and positive outcomes.

Supported accommodation

Supported accommodation services offer accommodation and support to young people aged 16-18 (or up to 21 and 25 for care-experienced young people in education or training). All semi-independent accommodation was accredited and tailored to meet individual needs, facilitating the transition into adulthood. These settings were registered with Ofsted.

The P3 Navigator Plus project had been developed to support young people during their transition into adulthood, offering an early intervention and prevention approach to ensure timely support and avoid long waiting times associated with more acute services.

There was a block contract with the YMCA offering 21 bedrooms with 24-hour on-site support for Care Experienced Young People who are over 18 and need ongoing support to prepare for adulthood.

Shared accommodation

There were approximately 30 independent HMOs specifically for young people aged over 18 who were continuing to seek asylum with no recourse to public funds. There were currently 84 young people in such properties.

Members asked about how to make a house into a home, and how to feel secure. Officers advised that all young people had an allocated worker, and all placements were vetted prior. If the young person was under 18, they were visited every six weeks.

	<p>Members asked about the 30 HMOs, asking if there was support available to the young people living in them. Officers highlighted key working sessions, allocated PAs and networks. Officers further advised that the HMOs were spread throughout the borough.</p> <p>Members commended the “excellent” report.</p> <p>Young people asked if the training was the same for Special Guardians as it was for foster carers. Officers advised that training for foster carers was replicated for Special Guardians, including attachment training.</p> <p>Young people noted that help past the age of 21 was needed. While young people had an allocated PA until the age of 21, it was often needed beyond this. Officers advised that 21 was the statutory cut-off, though some young people had a PA up until the age of 25 as needed or were supported via a duty PA.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the Panel noted the content of the report</p>
29.	<p>VIRTUAL SCHOOL ANNUAL REPORT (<i>Agenda Item 6</i>)</p> <p>Officers introduced the report.</p> <p>The Virtual School oversaw a complex cohort of young people, with a high number of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children.</p> <p>Termly visits were made to young people in out-of-borough settings.</p> <p>PEP completion was at 100%, and more than 97% of PEPs were confirmed as meeting the highest quality benchmarks.</p> <p>All young people aged 2-18 had an allocated Virtual School Officer.</p> <p>The Virtual School held its second annual conference, with a wide range of schools and partner organisations in attendance. Highlights included a care-experienced keynote speaker and an inspiring Hillingdon Care Experienced Panel. Over 70% of attendees rated the event as exceptional.</p> <p>Over 64 children had engaged in enrichment activities.</p> <p>Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance (EBSNA) had been rising, and EBSNA training was given to all Virtual School Officers.</p> <p>The number of children receiving one or more suspensions had decreased from 15 to 11 this year. Two Permanent Exclusions had been issued to Care for Children. Both decisions were robustly challenged and as a result, one exclusion was overturned.</p> <p>Targeted mentoring and evening classes had been introduced for young people not in employment, education or training. These were funded up to the age of 18 but also offered for young people over 18. 60% of NEET participants had transitioned into EET.</p> <p>23% of young people achieved a grade 5+ in English & maths (Key Stage 4). This highlighted the need for continued focus on core subjects, particularly English Language. Officers highlighted that a young person’s education cannot be taken away from them.</p>

Colleagues from the health team noted that there were events run by CNWL for NEET young people, but these had low attendance.

The report noted that *“Over the past five years, while the overall number of CFC has risen slightly (up 1%), the proportion of younger children has declined”*. Members asked why. This was in part due to more early intervention, early collaborative working and improvements in SEND identification.

Young people asked if there were rewards and incentives for engagement. Officers noted that there were, but they would like to do more. However, there were some funding implications.

Members asked about Pupil Premium Plus (PPP) and how this worked. Officers explained that a lump sum was received, and that some was retained for staffing, resources and interventions. The Virtual School had continued with a new method for the devolution of PPP to schools which enabled a clear focus on usage and impact. This involved schools making requests for the funding they wish to use for each child as part of the termly PEP meeting. This process had improved the scrutiny of grant fund usage.

On absences, officers noted that this was often linked to medical needs. There were also often additional needs for children in care such as dental needs.

Members asked about reasons for EBSNA. Officers advised that this was partly a COVID legacy. This was a national issue that needed to be addressed. EBSNA appeared to affect children in care less than other young people. It was also noted that the school environment can be triggering for some young people. The young people highlighted that young people had to attend school whilst adults can work from home, although school can be a safe place. The Virtual School was exploring alternative strategies, such as AV1 Robots, to bridge learning gaps and help highly anxious learners return to the classroom. This may be useful for emergency school placements. The young people highlighted that this had the potential to make them stand out in a negative manner.

RESOLVED: That the Corporate Parenting Panel:

- 1. Noted the educational outcomes and progress detailed in the report and endorsed the continued strategic priorities for 2025/26; and**
- 2. Noted the Virtual School’s planned restructure to strengthen locality-based working and improve outcomes for vulnerable learners**

30. CHILDREN’S SERVICES PERFORMANCE DATA Q3 2025-26 (Agenda Item 7)

Officers introduced the report.

Members commended officers for replacing references to LAC in the report.

As part of an improvement plan, a Peer Review into Transition to Adulthood had been commissioned. This would include a number of meetings and focus groups with internal and external partners, Care Experienced Young People and providers. This review would help to identify areas for improvement. It was suggested that findings of this review could be presented to the Panel.

RESOLVED: That the Corporate Parenting Panel noted the content of the report

31.	<p>WORK PROGRAMME (<i>Agenda Item 8</i>)</p> <p>Members considered the work programme.</p> <p>It was suggested that some items be moved back from the March meeting, including the health team annual report. Any further changes would be discussed and agreed prior to the next meeting.</p> <p>It was noted that the Children, Families & Education Select Committee had recently considered the Family First Reforms. The young people gave an update on their involvement in this:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This included weekly group meetings of young mothers and expectant mothers to network with each other • The young person was involved in this as a way to support new families • It was recognised that being a new mother can be scary <p>RESOLVED: That the Corporate Parenting Panel considered the report</p>
	<p>The meeting, which commenced at 5:30 pm, closed 7:00 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.