

Report of the Children, Young People & Learning Policy Overview Committee 2013/14

Strengthening the Council's Role as a Corporate Parent



Members of the Committee

Cllr John Riley (Chairman)
Cllr Judith Cooper (Vice Chairman)
Cllr David Benson
Cllr Lindsay Bliss
Cllr Brian Crowe
Cllr Jazz Dhillon
Cllr Dominic Gilham
Cllr John Hensley
Mr Tony Little

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CHAIRMAN'S FOREWORD

This Review and Report has been, as far as the Committee are concerned, one of the most important, in-depth and far-reaching pieces of work that has been undertaken. The role of corporate parent is undoubtedly one of the most vitally important duties and responsibilities that we, as Councillors, Council officers and Staff have under our control. Throughout the course of our work in reviewing the role of corporate parenting we have had one thing in mind as a guide and reminder:

"What would I do if it were my child"

We recognised from the start that everyone involved must see this as the determinative thought, the principle in decision making, policy making and execution of ideas. As Corporate Parents we all need to consider how our Council work affects our looked after children (LAC). We are convinced that putting our LAC's lives right as far as possible now will not only benefit them but also their community and beyond. We are equally convinced that LAC can be transformed into a great societal benefit where they might otherwise have had gloomy predictive outcomes of poor attainment, poor health, poor prospects and could have become a burden on resources. We know from discussions with colleagues in other authorities that successful inputs in the early stages of our LAC's development have a direct knock-on effect in percentage terms of numbers going to University, gaining apprenticeships, jobs, other skills etc. and that is our aim for our LAC.

This Review is intended to be the starting point to make our LAC's lives, aims, aspirations and outcomes better.

We adopted a twofold approach in undertaking this review – firstly, we sought to put forward recommendations that would make a positive and immediate impact on the day-to-day lives of those currently in Hillingdon's care, and, secondly, we sought to make longer term improvements to the Council's services with a view to improving outcomes for future generations of looked after children and young people. Given the breadth of this objective, the scope of the review was necessarily wide and explored the services provided to those in and those leaving care including education, health, housing, sport, leisure and recreation.

We are acutely aware that there is a diverse range of needs to be met, from the most damaged and abused children who come into care, to those who are no different to their peer group save that they are in care, to those who were unaccompanied asylum seekers and other children from foreign countries. The range is very challenging; we are committed to giving the best life to every one of our LAC and ensuring that the leaving

care and transition into a self-supporting lifestyle process is as positive, rewarding and safe as it can be. How would we help our own children into the adult world, into the self-supporting world? That is how we then should help our LAC. With support in whatever form that takes and provide, just as we would for our own children, a “home” to come back to; a skill and advice resource to call on where needed so that our LAC do not feel left to fend for themselves.

We started this process with the Committee’s work on the Care Leaving Grant and now we apply that same rigorous scrutiny to the whole process. Contained within this report are what the Committee feels to be important interventions designed to improve our performance as a corporate parent. We would not have been able to develop these recommendations without the invaluable help of witnesses and officers from across the Council as well as those from partner agencies who attended to provide evidence. I would like to give special thanks to the foster carers, looked after children and care leavers who gave their time to provide us with their suggestions for improvements to the services that they experience on a daily basis.

The Committee looks forward to keeping a keen and critical “eye” on the work of the Corporate Parent Board and its new Working Groups; to Reviewing the achievements that the Board in its new style wants to get to as soon as possible. We are especially keen to ensure that our expectations of Health Service colleagues are fully understood and achieved.

It gives me great pleasure to commend this valuable report to Cabinet and ask that it consider the recommendations contained within it.

Councillor John Riley
Chairman of the Children, Young People & Learning Policy Overview Committee

RECOMMENDATIONS

Following its review the Children, Young People and Learning Policy Overview Committee has made the following recommendations to Cabinet:

- 1) **Welcome the work currently being undertaken to review and revise the remit of the Corporate Parenting Board, its increased overview of the Council's wide ranging role as a corporate parent and endorse its administration by Democratic Services.**

Health and Wellbeing

- 2) **Ask the Health & Wellbeing Board to request that the Hillingdon Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and Hillingdon Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) acquire, maintain and share data on the following areas:**
 - a. **Proportion of total budgets spent on LAC;**
 - b. **Proportion of LAC registered with a GP;**
 - c. **Proportion of the CAMHS caseload that is made up of LAC;**
 - d. **Information on what intervention / therapy is being provided by CAMHS and what health issues are being dealt with via wider case consultation; and**
 - e. **The number of Tier 2, 3 and 4 assessments that CAMHS undertake for LAC.**
- 3) **Instruct officers to continue to work alongside colleagues from Hillingdon CAMHS to provide a designated point of contact to provide advice and assistance for all mental health issues relating to LAC, reporting to the Health & Wellbeing Board if required.**
- 4) **Instruct officers to work alongside the Council's partner agencies to develop a comprehensive understanding of where responsibilities lie between NHS England and CCGs for all aspects of the health needs of LAC and report findings back to the Cabinet Member for Education & Children's Services, the Children, Young People & Learning Policy Overview Committee and the Health & Wellbeing Board as appropriate.**
- 5) **In order to ensure that the mental health needs of LAC are met when placements are out of Borough, instruct officers to produce a protocol on the process of how services are brokered between CCGs and NHS England for agreement by the Cabinet Member for Education & Children's Services and the Health & Wellbeing Board.**

Educational outcomes

- 6) **Instruct officers to monitor data on the number of relevant young people up to the age of 25 approaching the Council for support in education, training and employment and report findings back to the Cabinet Member for Education & Children's Services in due course.**

- 7) In accordance with the budget planning process and to ensure compliance with changes set out in the Care Leavers (England) Regulations 2010, ask officers, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Education & Children's Services, to explore the viability of providing additional general and pastoral support through the Hillingdon Virtual School to relevant young people up to the age of 25 going on to education or training and report findings back to the Cabinet.**
- 8) Instruct officers to investigate the viability of building Education Residential and Respite Accommodation alongside the future development of schools in the Borough and report findings back to Cabinet in due course.**
- 9) Instruct officers to monitor and report back to the Cabinet Member for Education & Children's Services on the success of the peer-mentoring scheme currently being trialed as a means through which to provide additional support to care leavers with a view to expanding the scheme if it leads to improved outcomes.**

Sport, Leisure and Recreation

- 10) Ask officers to collect comprehensive data on LAC's use of the Borough's health, sport and leisure facilities, including their use of and engagement with taster events.**
- 11) Subject to the outcome of Recommendation 10 above, ask officers to undertake feasibility work on whether further discounted rates or incentives could be put in place to increase access to sporting and leisure facilities for LAC and report findings back to the Cabinet for consideration.**
- 12) Subject to the budget planning process, ask officers to investigate the viability of providing regular consultation and social events for LAC to offer them further opportunities to socialise and share experiences.**

BACKGROUND TO THIS REVIEW

Health, educational and social outcomes for looked after children remain poor with a high rate of teenage pregnancies, smoking and substance misuse, mental health problems, school drop-out rate with poor educational attainment and criminality.

The Royal College of Pediatrics and Child Health

As highlighted by the Royal College of Pediatrics and Child Health, research has consistently shown that looked after children and young people (LAC) are more likely to obtain significantly poorer outcomes in a range of areas than children not in the care system. Of the national population of LAC nearly 50% have a diagnosable mental health disorder compared to 10% in the general population with figures for those in residential care even higher. They are also proven to have lower health outcomes and educational attainment and, on leaving care, are more likely to face significant problems in their adult lives. The following sets out only a small number of the increased risks that face care leavers:

- Between a quarter and a third of rough sleepers have been looked after by local authorities as children.
- Children who have been in care are two-and-a-half times more likely to become teenage parents.
- Young people who have been in care are disproportionately likely to become unemployed.
- Twenty-six per cent of prisoners have been in care as children, despite the fact that they make up just two percent of the total population.

From the outset of the review, the Committee heard that these national issues of lower attainment and increased risks were reflected locally for the 374 LAC and 409 Care Leavers in the London Borough of Hillingdon.¹ Although it was acknowledged that the Council is committed to continually delivering improvements in how this vulnerable group is supported, the Committee felt that a review of the full range of services provided by the Council and its partner agencies was timely given recent legislative changes and their implications on the Council's current and future role as a corporate parent. Such changes have been driven by the Government's recent commitment to "address the disadvantages faced by our most vulnerable children and young people" and the Committee was eager to ensure that this commitment was realised on the local level.²

In view of this context, the Committee undertook this major review with a simple objective in mind: *to improve the lives and the outcomes of those in our care*. Members were eager from the outset to improve services so as to ensure that a level of care and support was provided that would be considered *good enough for their own children*. The Committee's focus was twofold: firstly, it sought to make recommendations that would have a real and immediate impact on the experiences of those children currently in the care system and secondly, provide longer term recommendations aimed at improving the range of services provided to this vulnerable group.

¹ Figures as at 31 March 2013

² Children and Families Bill 2013: Contextual Information and Responses to Pre-Legislative Scrutiny

To achieve this, a thorough assessment of how the Council and its partner agencies currently discharged their joint duties as “corporate parents” had to be undertaken and evidence heard from witnesses from across the Council, Hillingdon’s Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), the local Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS). As well as hearing evidence from care providers, the Committee also invited foster carers, looked after children and care leavers to share their experiences and contribute to improving services.

Session with LAC and Care Leavers

The evidence provided by the selection of LAC was particularly commended and the Committee wished to place on record its thanks for the clear, honest and insightful information that they provided.³ Although it has not been possible to quote as extensively as would have been liked from this session, the feedback gathered has informed every aspect of the review and a number of recommendations seek to address directly the issues and challenges raised by those experiencing them on a day-to-day basis.

One of the major areas of concern raised in the session but not included in the main body of this report related to the continuity of social workers and support staff. A number of LAC noted that they had had up to 5 social workers during their time in care. Amongst positive feedback on improving levels of support, Members heard various examples of children being faced with a lack of stability and continuity arising from the transfer between social workers and the process of them getting to know one another. As this was having a real and significant impact on the lives of Hillingdon’s LAC, those present at the session were eager for officers to speak to these issues. At subsequent meetings, the Committee was given further information on what the challenges were in this area and what the Council’s response was on the corporate level.

Officers advised that the retention of social workers was a major issue for social services not just in Hillingdon but throughout the country and, consequently, work to keep them in post for as long as possible was a priority for the Council. It was noted that the Council also sought to provide stability by not moving children from one social worker to another where this was not absolutely necessary. However, the high turnover of staff was a complex problem that would not be easily resolved. Increasing retention with a view to providing better stability for LAC was already a major aspiration for Hillingdon and Members were satisfied that no further work could be undertaken, or recommendations made, in this area that would better the work already being done. Consequently, Members acknowledged the issues that had been highlighted by LAC and commended officers’ aspirations and ongoing work to improve this area of service.

Corporate Parenting Board

It should also be noted that this review was undertaken concurrently with Member-led work to review and revise the Council’s Corporate Parenting Board. This work aimed to acknowledge that corporate parenting is one of the most important functions and duties that a local authority has within its remit and must, the Committee believed, rank very high in the corporate and political structure of the organisation. Hillingdon’s LAC deserve

³ Further information on the remit of the review and a breakdown of each witness session can be found at Appendix B.

the highest and best care in all aspects of their lives including the following essential life assets:

1. Education,
2. Social Development and Participation,
3. Health and Wellbeing,
4. Care Leaving / transition, and
5. Safeguarding / Staying Safe.

The Committee is dedicated to the principle of giving our LAC the best opportunity in all aspects of their lives, as, no doubt, are the Council's officers and elected Members.

The Committee has overseen this complete overhaul of Corporate Parenting in the Council and had view of a restructure of the Board itself to make it more strategic, directive, focused and effective with 5 Councillors and Director-level officers as Board Members.⁴ The Board is supported by five working groups mirroring the "life assets" set out above. Each Working Group is chaired by an elected Member who either has experience in those areas or the skill required to make a Working Group an effective body. Each Working Group will be responsible for ensuring the highest quality of service is delivered to LAC and will report to the Board on a regular basis. It is the Working Groups that will maintain contact with their communities and LAC for that area and will work to achieve the results for that Group set out on a strategic and joined-up basis by the Board.

The Committee was clear that the Corporate Parenting Board should be settled high in the Council's structure and be considered as "sitting" alongside the Policy Overview Committees. This position was decided so as to ensure that LAC issues – obvious and sometimes not so obvious – feed into everything that the Council does. Every Council decision and policy as they are implemented and actioned is potentially LAC effective / effected, as long as this is kept in mind, the lives of Hillingdon's LAC will inevitably be much better. A refrain and underlying policy statement should be:

"What would I do if it were my Child"

By this we will ensure that Hillingdon's LAC are well cared for throughout their whole experience with the Council.

Although the Committee did not contribute directly to this work itself, Members had sight of revisions to the make up of the Board and wished to highlight their support for the changes and commend the greater overview being afforded.

Recommendation 1: Welcome the work currently being undertaken to review and revise the remit of the Corporate Parenting Board, its increased overview of the Council's wide ranging role as a corporate parent and endorse its administration by Democratic Services.

⁴ Four Conservative and One Labour. The decision was taken to make the politically inclusive as the Board is now in a stronger Corporate position than before.

Structure

The information, evidence and findings of this review are set out under the following headings:

1. Improving Health by Working in Partnership
2. Supporting Care Leavers' Next Steps
3. Sport, Leisure and Recreation for our Looked After Children

IMPROVING HEALTH BY WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP

Local authorities and health care planners and commissioners have statutory duties to safeguard and promote the welfare of children that are in their care. The Committee heard evidence from all of the major agencies responsible for addressing the health needs of LAC and received a broad overview of the current support offered. The details of these agencies and what roles they play as determined by the Health and Social Care Act 2012, are set out below:

Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG)

CCGs are responsible for commissioning most health services for LAC. This includes working alongside local authorities to commission the statutory health assessments and reviews provided to LAC. One of the major services that the CCG provide is a designated nurse and doctor with the role (set out in detail below) of safeguarding children and looked after children.

Designated Nurse and Doctor

The designated nurse and doctor are in place to provide a comprehensive service to LAC/care leavers and to ensure that health services are offered to Hillingdon's LAC and those placed within Hillingdon from other local authorities. They provide:

- A statutory health assessment within the statutory guidelines of 28 calendar days of receipt into care, with a local target of 10 days in place, and thereafter on an annual basis (every 6 months for under 5s).
- Support to ensure that all looked after children are registered with a GP, a dentist and an optician and have had checks within an agreed timescale.
- Monitoring and support in relation to immunizations in line with national guidance
- Health promotion on issues such as sexual health, drugs and alcohol.
- Support and advice to health staff, the local authority and carers in relation to the health needs of LAC.
- Training to health and local authority staff including foster and residential carers.

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)

CAMHS' major roles are to support LAC's mental health needs and to support foster carers ensuring that both are prepared for and able to deal with the challenges of placements. CAMHS provide services targeted directly at LAC but also provide general services that can be accessed by those in care if necessary. Hillingdon CAMHS provide such services through the clinical support of 1.6 whole time equivalent (WTE) Fostering Clinical Psychologists funded by Social Care which includes a trainee psychologist working within the service. Although initial assessments are always undertaken by clinical psychologists, some later sessions are undertaken by trainee psychologists.

The Local Authority

Local authorities have a duty to arrange a health assessment by a medical professional for a child or young person entering care and a review by a medical professional or nurse every year (or every six months if the child is under five). The assessment informs a health plan for the child or young person, which forms part of their care plan.

Local authorities must also take ‘all reasonable steps’ to ensure that a looked after child or young person is provided with appropriate health care services as set out in his/her health plan, including medical and dental treatment and advice and guidance on health, personal care and health promotion issues. Given the diverse range of these duties, they can only be fulfilled with the co-operation of health agencies, in particular the CCGs who have a duty to co-operate with the local authority in their provision of services for children in need and looked after children, including the fulfilment of these duties on health.⁵

Finally, it should be noted that one of the most successful ways of ensuring that LAC were provided with the best possible health care is through providing stable, long-term foster placements. Foster parents are able to ensure that children’s health needs are being met just as a parent would to their own child. The LAC who provided evidence did not note specifically the additional health support that they received from foster parents but they did note generally that they felt much more supported when in a secure placement. Based on this, officers noted that placing children with foster parents was a major priority in their work and the most successful way of improving health outcomes.

Collecting and Sharing Data

It is clear from the information set out above that there is a great deal of overlap in how LAC’s health needs are supported by this range of organisations. Consequently, the Committee believed that there was significant scope for developing new – as well as improving existing – multi-agency approaches on the local level.

To enable the Committee to contribute to these improvements, one of their primary concerns was to gain an understanding of exactly what was currently been done by each agency to address the health needs of LAC. Getting a comprehensive understanding of current support would provide an evidence base from which to provide informed, effective and meaningful recommendations. Consequently, throughout the witness sessions Members requested data from the CCG and CAMHS that they felt should have been readily available. The **four** areas of particular concern were:

- the number of LAC registered with GPs,
- the proportion of the CAMHS’ £1.1m budget spent on LAC,
- the number of active LAC cases being dealt with by CAMHS, and
- the number of active LAC cases that are placed out of borough who were in need of a CAMHS service.

With a great deal of disappointment and concern the Committee heard that health colleagues were unable to provide this information at the witness session. It was noted that each point could only be provided by undertaking significant audit work as such data was not collected or monitored as a matter of course. In the session itself witnesses stated that collecting this information would have resource implications for CAMHS and the CCG but witnesses agreed that the data would be collected and reported to the Committee at a later date. Nonetheless, Members were frustrated that senior health colleagues with a statutory responsibility to support LAC (and who had been invited to a witness session on that subject) were unable to provide this most basic of information.

⁵ Much of the information on the role of the Council and its partner agencies has been drawn from the NCB’s “Delivering the health reforms for looked after children: How the new NHS will work from April 2013”. More detailed information can be found in this recourse.

Following a significant period of liaising between officers and health professionals, only the number of active LAC cases currently being dealt with by CAMHS was provided. Health colleagues noted that the proportion of the CAMHS budget spent on LAC could not be provided because an audit would have too great a resource implication that could jeopardise frontline services if undertaken. Furthermore, at the writing of this report, work was ongoing to ascertain who was responsible for monitoring the registration of LAC with a GP (NHS England or the CCG itself). Members expressed their grave concerns that information could not be provided even within a generous timeframe and, even more worryingly, that there was uncertainty as to who should monitor a vitally important health service to vulnerable children.

Whilst the Committee appreciated the resource issues that faced partner agencies, serious concerns were raised that both the CCG and CAMHS had a duty to support LAC and that not enough work was being done to ensure that this duty was being adequately met. The Committee strongly felt that if it was not possible for those caring for this vulnerable and at-risk group to outline exactly what was being done to address the lower health outcomes of LAC, it would be impossible to make improvements to the service. Emphasis was placed on the vulnerability of the LAC community and how they should be identified as a priority group given the lower health outcomes and increased health risks that they are likely to face as adults.

Following discussion between officers and the Chairman, it was determined outside of the meeting that more comprehensive information would also be required to provide a full picture of the current service and how these complex and often critical health needs are being met. With a particular focus on CAMHS, the following list was suggested by officers as being information that would be required for the Council to monitor and make improvements to the health outcomes of LAC:

- What intervention / therapy is being provided for LAC or whether health issues are being dealt with via wider case consultation.
- The number of Tier 2, 3 and 4 assessments that CAMHS undertake for LAC.
- How much of CAMHS' total budget is spent specifically on addressing the needs of the Borough's LAC population.
- How many LAC who have been referred for a CAMHS service are awaiting assessment or intervention and for how long in each case

In recognition of the financial and resource pressures facing the Council's partner agencies, the Committee decided that the data set out above should not be requested retrospectively as acquiring it would require a costly and time consuming audit of case files. Instead the Committee requested that both the CCG and CAMHS be asked to work with officers to put in place measures designed to capture this information in the immediate future and commit to communicating this information to the Council on a regular basis. The Committee felt that an appropriate level to agree such measures would be through the Health & Wellbeing Board.

Recommendation 2: Ask the Health & Wellbeing Board to request that the Hillingdon Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and Hillingdon Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) acquire, maintain and share data on the following areas:

- a. **Proportion of total budgets spent on LAC;**

- b. Proportion of LAC registered with a GP;
- c. Proportion of the CAMHS caseload that is made up of LAC;
- d. Information on what intervention / therapy is being provided by CAMHS and what health issues are being dealt with via wider case consultation; and
- e. The number of Tier 2, 3 and 4 assessments that CAMHS undertake for LAC.

Mapping out a Multi-Agency Approach

From very early in the review it was apparent that it was being undertaken during a period of significant change for our health partners and that organisational structures and areas of responsibility were subject to major review and restructuring. The changing landscape in the provision of health services was felt to have two implications for LAC; firstly, the transition period itself might lead to children being temporarily “lost in the gaps” between services and, secondly, the uncertainty surrounding where responsibility would lie in the revised system could cause longer term issues.

The Committee paid particular notice to this issue as they were eager to ensure that the jointly administered services were as smooth and efficient as possible and, most importantly, that there was a seamless service from the perspective of children in need of support. One of the primary areas of concern raised by officers and echoed by Members was that there was no designated individual within CAMHS able to act as a point of contact for all advice and assistance relating to LAC. Currently, social workers and Council officers were required to communicate with numerous people in order to receive the required advice or support. In some cases this had led to delays and sub-standard health support being provided to LAC because of difficulties in communication and, at times, a lack of clarity over which agency was responsible for providing a service.

Although witnesses from CAMHS advised that work was underway on providing a single point of contact, Members felt that the matter was of such importance that officers should be asked to work alongside health colleagues to ensure that a contact was designated at the nearest possible opportunity. It was also requested officers ensure that the role is specifically designed to meet the needs of the Council when seeking mental health support for LAC.

Recommendation 3: Instruct officers to continue to work alongside colleagues from Hillingdon CAMHS to provide a designated point of contact to provide advice and assistance for all mental health issues relating to LAC, reporting to the Health & Wellbeing Board as appropriate.

Furthermore, the Committee felt that this transitional period was likely to exacerbate the existing uncertainties surrounding which agency provided what services and where responsibility ultimately lay. The Committee, therefore, also recommended that research be undertaken urgently both by Council officers and health colleagues to map out the areas of responsibility of each of the major health service providers. This mapping process would also assist in clarifying how these providers currently communicated and highlight where communication channels may be improved.

Recommendation 4: Instruct officers work alongside the Council's partner agencies to develop a comprehensive understanding of where responsibilities lie between NHS England and CCGs for all aspects of the health needs of LAC and report findings back to the Cabinet Member for Education & Children's Services, the Children, Young People & Learning Policy Overview Committee and the Health & Wellbeing Board as appropriate.

Brokering Mental Health Services

Members heard that a major challenge with securing treatment for LAC through CAMHS was with flexibility and thresholds of access. Officers advised that there were cases of children in critical need of mental health support who could not be treated as they did not meet CAMHS' requirement of being in a long-term placement. This had led to the Council employing its own psychologists to ensure that unmet mental health needs were addressed appropriately. It was both the view of the Committee and officers that, if the needs of LAC were to be better met, the ease and speed with which children with mental health problems were provided with CAMHS support would need to improve drastically.

Furthermore, officers advised that a significant proportion of Hillingdon's LAC were placed outside of the Borough which exacerbated further some of the challenges with getting CAMHS treatment. Local authorities with which Hillingdon's children were placed were also experiencing problems with getting support from CAMHS and were, instead, supporting them with their own in-house services. Although it was not the place of the Committee to comment upon how other local authorities discharge their duties, there were significant implications for those children if and when they were brought back to Hillingdon as the Council was not able to broker mental health support with other local authorities. The role of acting as broker in such cases would usually be undertaken by CCGs and NHS England but, for this to take place, LAC would have to be within their, rather than a local authority's, system. Consequently, there was the risk that there were children with complex needs waiting for years to receive appropriate support or were experiencing significant interruptions to their treatment.

Once again, the Committee raised their concerns that the needs of one of the most vulnerable groups in our community were not being met due to inefficiencies and uncertainties in how agencies communicated with one another. The Committee was not in a position to advise exactly how this process should work but asked that officers produce a protocol to set out exactly how mental health services could be brokered.

Recommendation 5: In order to ensure that the mental health needs of LAC are met when placements are out of Borough, instruct officers to produce a protocol on the process of how services are brokered between CCGs and NHS England for agreement by the Cabinet Member for Education & Children's Services and the Health and Wellbeing Board.

SUPPORTING CARE LEAVERS' NEXT STEPS

In 2012 the Committee, in its previous form of Education & Children's Services POC, undertook a major review into the leaving care grant which resulted in major improvements to the support offered to care leavers. Recommendations were made on increasing the grant provided to care leavers, improving support throughout the move to independence and the provision of a dedicated housing officer to ensure as smooth a move as possible. These recommendations were subsequently welcomed by Cabinet and the Committee is continuing to monitoring their implementation closely.

However, as the first year after leaving care can be one of the most vulnerable times for these young people, the Committee was concerned that this review should undertake further work in ensuring that the Council is providing the best possible support during this time. Since the Leaving Care Grant Review, the Children and Families Bill 2013 has also moved forward which, if enacted, will have significant implications on how the Council supports those leaving care. In further reviewing leaving care, the Committee aimed to address some of the main changes proposed in the Bill. In particular, it was felt that the areas support that required further scrutiny and consideration were:

- the provision of support to care leavers going on to education or training up to the age of 25;
- the possibility of providing residential arrangements alongside the future development of schools in the Borough; and
- the general pastoral support offered to care leavers during the early stages of independent living.

Education and Training for Care Leavers

The Committee heard that significant improvements have been made in recent years in the number of care leavers going on to education, training and employment and that this was, in part, thanks to improvements in the education provided to LAC. This improving service was emphasised to the Committee through the informal witness session with some current LAC in which a young girl who had recently entered care stated that:

“when you go into care there is more of a focus on your education [...] the school and your carers do LAC reviews which give you a measure for your own success”.

The Committee was mindful of the work that the Borough's schools, carers, social workers and officers were currently doing to provide the best possible education to these vulnerable children and commended them for their work. However, it was clear that further work needed to be done to ensure that an equally high-quality education was provided to care leavers beyond the statutory school age.

Recent legislative changes now mean that local authorities have a duty to provide Personal Advisers to care leavers up to the age of 25 who inform the Council that they have returned, or wish to return, to education or training. The Children (Leaving Care) (England) Regulations 2001 state that the role of Personal Advisers is:

- to provide advice (including practical advice) and support;
- where applicable, to participate in his assessment and the preparation of his pathway plan;
- to participate in reviews of the pathway plan;

- to liaise with the responsible authority in the implementation of the pathway plan;
- to co-ordinate the provision of services, and to take reasonable steps to ensure that he makes use of such services;
- to keep informed about his progress and wellbeing; and
- to keep a written record of contacts with him.

Given that such educational support has only recently been extended to those up to the age of 25, officers were not in a position to state what the level of uptake would be in the longer term but, if all former relevant young people approached the Council requesting this support, there would be a minimum increased caseload of 326. Moreover, it was felt that the number of care leavers requiring additional support would be significant enough for it to be prudent for the Council to consider how their needs would be resourced. The Committee recommended in the first instance that officers draw together complete information on this emerging group of care leavers and their requirements and report findings back to the Committee.

Recommendation 6: Instruct officers to monitor data on the number of relevant young people up to the age of 25 approaching the Council for support in education, training and employment and report findings back to the Cabinet Member for Education & Children’s Services in due course.

It was envisaged that this additional support would ultimately be provided by the Hillingdon Virtual School (HVS) as it would amount to an extension of the support already provided to those under the age of 16. However, there were concerns that the current resources that HVS had in place would not be sufficient to meet a significant rise in demand for Personal Adviser support. The Committee was concerned that the needs of care leavers entering the next stages of their lives were met and that the Council was compliant with the Care Leavers (England) Regulations 2010. As a means to achieve this, it was recommended that scoping work be undertaken on providing further Personal Advisers through HVS to support this emerging group.

Recommendation 7: In accordance with the budget planning process and to ensure compliance with changes set out in the Care Leavers (England) Regulations 2010, ask officers, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Education & Children’s Services, to explore the viability of providing additional general and pastoral support through the Hillingdon Virtual School to relevant young people up to the age of 25 going on to education or training and report findings back to the Cabinet.

Education Residential and Respite Accommodation

One of the priorities for the Council in its support of children in care is bringing as many of them as possible back into the Borough. Currently a significant proportion of the Borough’s LAC are placed out of the Borough and are, therefore, largely supported by partnering local authorities. Although the Council is confident through its monitoring that children placed outside of the Borough are being provided with high quality care, it is considered desirable that as many children are brought in-Borough as possible so as to

ensure that all LAC are offered the same opportunities and able to remain within a familiar area near to their families and friends.

It is currently not possible for all LAC to be brought in-Borough due to insufficient foster care, adoption and residential places available to meet demand and due to safeguarding issues. In order to increase the number of such spaces, the possibility of attaching residential provisions to future schools being built within the Borough was explored. Such schools are already in place in 30 local authorities nationally and in some areas, for instance, Derbyshire, this is a long-established and widespread practice. The merits of such arrangements have recently been outlined in a Policy Exchange report on long-term approaches to supporting vulnerable children as follows:

“There are a range of potential advantages to using residential schooling as part of a care package. Not least is the fact that it can provide children with two types of stability – that of home and that of school. Importantly, by providing respite and the opportunity for support for foster carers or birth parents, these approaches provide the opportunity of more families staying together and reducing the need for the care system and for a reduced likelihood of placement breakdown for those moving into care.”⁶

The Committee was positive about exploring the option of developing such residential and respite accommodation in future school expansions as an efficient way to increase the number of Hillingdon’s residential places and enable as many LAC as possible to remain in the Borough. However, Members were mindful of the budgetary implications of such development and acknowledged that they would have to be subject to the Cabinet’s budget planning process. In the light of this, the Committee asked that officers undertake research to scope the viability of implementing such arrangements within Hillingdon and provide a report on the findings back to them and the Cabinet in due course.

Recommendation 8: Instruct officers to investigate the viability of building Education Residential and Respite Accommodation alongside the future development of schools in the Borough and report findings back to Cabinet in due course.

General Support

Throughout the session with LAC and care leavers it was noted that the support currently being provided was of a high quality and had been improving over recent years. Members who attended the session heard from one young man who had been in his foster care placement for 10 years who stated that his family treated him as their “son and brother” and not as a foster child. He also stated that they had provided him with helpful advice on which college he should attend on leaving school that had led to him making a wise decision that he would otherwise not have made. On this point, officers later emphasised that getting children placed in stable foster placements was the best way to achieve the highest levels of support across the board and, consequently, that this was a major aspiration for all children in the Borough.

Additionally, those at the session noted that they felt very comfortable in “popping in” to the Civic Centre when they had issues or when they required support. The welcoming

⁶ A Better Start in Life: Long-term approaches for the most vulnerable children

atmosphere of the place, Personal Advisers and social workers was commended and the young people noted that they felt that they generally received very good support. It is important to note this positive feedback as an assurance that, despite some of the more challenging points raised, the Council's services are of a high quality, improving and positively contributing to the lives of Hillingdon's community of LAC.

However, notwithstanding the provision of additional Personal Advisers as set out in Recommendation 7, positive feedback or work to place children in foster families, there was additional work underway to diversify the way in which care leavers were supported and provided with advice. Witnesses advised the Committee that a peer mentoring scheme was currently being piloted by the Council's Participation Team in which young people who had left care were encouraged to mentor those in the process of moving into independent living.

At the writing of this review, the scheme had only recently been implemented which meant that there had only been a small number of referrals and that mentees were still in the process of being matched with a mentor. As this initiative was only in the early stages, the Committee were not in a position to recommend that it be expanded or revised. However, it was felt that the scheme had potential to be a valuable diversification of the ways in which care leavers are supported and suggested that officers monitor its success and report findings back to the Cabinet Member for Education & Children's Services and the Committee with a view to potential expansion in the future.

Recommendation 9: Instruct officers to monitor and report back to the Cabinet Member for Education & Children's Services on the success of the peer-mentoring scheme currently being trialed as a means through which to provide additional support to care leavers with a view to expanding the scheme if it leads to improved outcomes.

SPORT, LEISURE AND RECREATION FOR OUR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN

Although the Committee primarily focused on improving the health and educational outcomes of LAC, Members felt that it was also important to review the social, sporting and leisure activities that were on offer to them. In particular, the Committee wished to be reassured that the Council was doing all that it could to allow these children to engage in activities according to their individual tastes and needs. As with other areas of the review, Members were concerned that the opportunities offered by parents to their children were extended to LAC by the Council as their corporate parents.

Sport and Leisure

The Committee was informed that engagement with LAC by the Council's Sports Team was predominantly through updates provided at the Corporate Parenting Board and Health Sub Group. This included information on the range of activities and initiatives available to encourage all young people to be more physically active. It was noted that the Sports Team has also provided taster activities at LAC-specific consultation events including the Festival of Education event hosted at Brunel University. Furthermore, the Committee was informed that the Council provides LAC with the same discount at leisure centres as other concessionary groups including the disabled, foster carers and families on low incomes.

However, as these children did not have parents to encourage and facilitate involvement, it was felt that the Council should continue to review whether needs were being met and where improvements could be made. An increased involvement in physical activities would not only offer LAC leisure activities for their enjoyment but could also be seen as a means through which to improve their health outcomes and wellbeing through promoting a healthier lifestyle.

Despite the potential benefit associated with increased engagement and the discounted rates already in place, the Committee heard that there was currently no mechanism in place to capture LAC-specific data on the usage of the Borough's sport and leisure facilities nor was data collected on the number of 'taster events' that this group attended. As with the collection of data on health outcomes outlined in section 1 of this report, Members considered it impossible to assess the level of support being provided to LAC or to make improvements to this support without a complete understanding of the current situation.

Consequently, witnesses were asked to undertake immediate work to determine whether this data could be collected. Following further investigation, it was confirmed that information on the use of leisure centres could be collected if LAC included their status on their LeisureLink scheme application. Unfortunately, if this information was not included on applications it would not be possible to monitor their usage of facilities. Nonetheless, the Committee requested that as comprehensive data as possible be collected to provide an evidence base for how this group could be engaged better in sporting and leisure activities.

Recommendation 10: Ask officers to collect comprehensive data on LAC's use of the Borough's health, sport and leisure facilities, including their use of and engagement with taster events.

It was noted that the Committee was not in a position to determine what additional support, opportunities and encouragement LAC require to become more involved until the above data becomes available. However, it was recommended that work should be undertaken by officers to increase LAC uptake of sporting and leisure activities once data has been provided. It was highlighted that this work would not only be done by officers in the Sports Team but would also involve those that work directly with LAC raising the profile of the activities available.

Recommendation 11: Subject to the outcome of Recommendation 10 above, ask officers to undertake feasibility work on whether further discounted rates or incentives could be put in place to increase access to sporting and leisure facilities for LAC and report findings back to the Cabinet for consideration.

Recreation

Although increased engagement in sporting and leisure activities would provide LAC with more opportunities simply to have fun, the Committee was also concerned to ensure that they were offered additional opportunities to relate to, share experiences and socialise with one another. Furthermore, Members felt that one of the Council's aspirations should be to provide LAC with the same, if not more, opportunities to have fun as those children not in care and the phrase that informed much of the Committee's thinking on the issue of corporate parenting – *"What would I do if it were my child"* – was felt to be particularly pertinent here. Just as a parent might spend time on a weekend transporting or supporting their children in a sporting or recreational activity, the Council should ensure that it was facilitating and encouraging these activities as best it could.

Witnesses emphasised that there was a broad range of LAC and care leavers within the Borough and that they had varying circumstances, situations and support needs. Evidence was heard from LAC themselves, foster carers and officers indicating that many children in care did not want to be identified or labeled as being in care. As such, this specific group of children was seen not to require LAC-specific events. However, it was also noted that there were children who would benefit from events in which they could relate to those in similar situations and facing similar challenges. The main focus of these events would be on providing a fun, social time but it was suggested that they could also act as consultation events in which feedback was gathered on the services and support offered by the Council.

It was noted that the Kids in Care Awards (KICA) were already in place and offered an opportunity for some LAC to celebrate their success. A number of Members had attended the Awards in the past and praised the event as an excellent way to recognise the achievement of LAC and care leavers. The Committee wished to commend officers' work in producing this event and, moreover, the hard work undertaken on a daily basis that contributed to many of the challenging but successful stories that were shared on the evening itself. However, this event was not seen to meet the need for fun and socialising as the event was designed for and attended by only those who have won awards and therefore did not extend to the Borough's full LAC population.

The Committee was mindful that providing any such events would necessarily have budgetary implications and would require consultation with LAC to determine exactly what types of events they would enjoy. However, subject to this further research and viability work, the Committee wished to ask the Cabinet to endorse its support for these events.

Recommendation 12: Subject to the budget planning process, ask officers to investigate the viability of providing regular consultation and social events for LAC to offer them further opportunities to socialise and share experiences.

Background Reading

To assist with the writing of this review, reference has been made to a wide-ranging selection of background information.

- National and local statistics on the profile of looked after children- DfE: Children Looked After by Local Authorities in England – year ending 31 March 2012

<http://www.education.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s001084/index.shtml>

- If This Were My Child – A Councillors Guide to Being a Good Corporate Parent – Department for Education and Skills/LGiU

https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/_arc/Parentscarersandfamilies/Page3/ITWMC

- Report from the joint enquiry into children who go missing from care (June 2012 – APPG)

http://s3.amazonaws.com/rcpp/assets/attachments/1461_joint_appg_inquiry_report..original.pdf

- DfE (March 2010) The Children Act 1989: Guidance and regulations, Volume 2, Care Planning, placement and case review – London: HM Government

<http://www.education.gov.uk/search/results?q=children+act+1989+volume+2+care+planning>

- The Children and Families Bill 2013

<http://www.education.gov.uk/childrenandfamiliesbill>

- NCB's "Delivering the health reforms for looked after children: How the new NHS will work from April 2013"

https://www.google.co.uk/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&ved=0CDAQFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.ncb.org.uk%2Fmedia%2F905675%2Fiac_health_reforms_briefing_010213.pdf&ei=TTM4UrO7D4ep7Aa58YGQDA&usq=AFQjCNFh_3kwqbWeVxoPRouM7CBrGO4gTw&bvm=bv.52164340,d.ZGU

- Voice of the Child

<http://www.education.gov.uk/childrenandyoungpeople/families/childrenincare/regs/b0074845/voice-of-the-child>

- NCAS – leaving care org. Corporate Parenting

http://leavingcare.org/what_we_do/corporateparenting_home

- Health of LAC

<http://www.rcpch.ac.uk/LAC>

- A Better Start in Life: Long-term approaches for the most vulnerable children

<http://www.policyexchange.org.uk/publications/category/item/a-better-start-in-life-long-term-approaches-for-the-most-vulnerable-children>



HILLINGDON

LONDON

London Borough of Hillingdon Corporate Parenting Board

DRAFT Terms of Reference

(a) Introduction

In accordance with the Children Act 1989 and subsequent related legislation, The Corporate Parenting Board will seek to improve the quality of life and outcomes for Looked After Children and Care Leavers.

Children in care need to be the priority across the Council. The Board will oversee arrangements for the effective delivery of corporate parenting responsibilities and act as a body through which high-level collaboration between the Council, the NHS and other agencies can take place. The Board will also develop and oversee strategies relating to the Council discharging its duties as a corporate parent.

The purpose of the Board is to oversee arrangements for the effective delivery of corporate parenting responsibilities to looked after children and young people and to its care leavers.

The Board will comply with the requirements of the Equality Act 2013, Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Data Protection Act 1998 in undertaking its responsibilities.

(b) Membership

1. The Chairman of the Board shall be an Elected Member nominated by the Leader of the Council.
2. The Board membership shall comprise:
 - 5 Elected cross party Members (the Chairman will be appointed from these 5 Members)
 - Director of Children and Young People
 - Head of Safeguarding Children and Quality Assurance
 - Interim Head of Children's Services
 - Head of Housing
 - Chief Education Officer
 - Executive Lead Hillingdon CCG
 - Head of Early Intervention Services for Children and Young People

APPENDIX A

- Corporate Parenting Manager
- Performance and Intelligence Manager
- Chairman of the Foster Carers Association
- 1 x Foster Carer
- 1 x ex Care Leaver

3. Members should have sufficient authority to represent their service / organisation. Members of the Board will not be permitted to nominate substitutes.

(c) Co-opted Members

From time to time, and upon the agreement of the Board, other individuals or representatives may be invited to attend Board meetings as Co-opted members without voting rights. Co-opted Members may not send substitutes. Step Up members will have the right to attend meetings of the Board without an invitation.

(d) Voting rights

All the above members of the Board (except the two Step Up members) will be entitled to one vote. In the event of a tied vote, the Chairman will have a casting vote.

(e) Declarations of Interest

Members must disclose any interest and withdraw from the meeting where: (i) there is a conflict of interest; and/or (ii) they have a pecuniary interest in the matter.

(f) Meetings

1. The Board will meet approximately every 2 months.
2. Meeting dates will be set at the start of the year for the whole year.
3. The agenda and briefing papers/reports will be distributed to the Board members in 5 clear working days in advance of the scheduled meeting.
4. The Board may establish and appoint to sub-groups. The Board may delegate any of its functions to sub-groups or request them to undertake task and finish reviews or project work in the pursuit of the Board's goals.

(f) Terms of Reference

The Terms of Reference of the Corporate Parenting Board are to:

1. Maintain a clear strategic overview of the statutory services that are available for looked after children and young people across the Borough and ensure that all parties take collective responsibility for promoting and ensuring positive outcomes for this group of children and young people.

APPENDIX A

2. Provide leadership and direction to set strategic priorities for services for looked after children.
3. Ensure that the successes of looked after children are celebrated and communicated appropriately across the Council and to partners.
4. Promote awareness of the corporate parenting role within the Council and its partners.
5. Provide information and training relating to corporate parenting to Members of the Board.
6. To oversee and monitor the key performance indicators for the health, well-being and education of looked after children.
7. Engage young people who are looked after by the Council in order to ensure they have an opportunity to influence the development of services.
8. Receive six monthly reports from the Independent Reviewing and Safeguarding Officer on trends and issues arising from statutory reviews.
9. Receive reports concerning the inspection of services for looked after children and care leavers, and of visits made under Regulation 33 of the Children's Homes Regulations 2001.
10. Review annually the Care Pledge made to looked after children to recommend any changes required to improve outcomes.
11. Advise the Cabinet Member for Education & Children's Services on matters relating to corporate parenting.
12. Submit quarterly reports to the Joint Commissioning Board / Hillingdon Children and Families Trust on the progress of the Board's work plan and any other matters relating to looked after children.
13. Contribute to the Hillingdon Children and Families Trust Plan, Hillingdon Safeguarding Board annual report and business plan with regards to matters relating to children in care.
14. Submit reports to the relevant Policy and Overview Committee as and when required.
15. Review the Terms of Reference and operation of the Board at least annually, making amendments as required.

These terms were agreed on

Name of Chairman:	
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APPENDIX A

Signature:	
Name of Vice-Chairman:	
Signature:	

TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. To gain an understanding of:-
 - i) The profile of children and young people looked after by Hillingdon Council.
 - ii) The role of each Elected Member as a Corporate Parent and how this can be enhanced.
2. To explore how the Council and partner organisations support looked after children / young people across all aspects of their lives which include:
 - i) how they are kept safe;
 - ii) how their views are taken into account;
 - iii) the educational needs of LAC and care leavers;
 - iv) the promotion of their health and well-being; and
 - v) their preparation for leaving care, including support for housing and training needs.
3. To explore the performance of the Council against national trends.
4. To understand the impact of recent legislative changes and judgments on the delivery of services to LAC and care leavers and the impact of these on current and future budget pressures.
5. To ensure that the Local Authority's pledges to LAC and care leavers are promoted and delivered.
6. To gain an understanding on early permanency planning for LAC
7. To make recommendations to Cabinet based on the outcome of this review.

WITNESSES

Witness sessions for the review were held on the 04 June and 30 July 2013 in which the Committee heard from the following expert witnesses:

Session 1

- Fiona Lyon - Head Teacher of the Virtual School
- Teresa Chisholm - LAC Health Nurse
- Jackie Shaw and Mel Woodcock
- Joan Veysey - CNWL Commissioner – Health
- Khalid Rashid - Housing Services

Session 2

- Keith Ivey and Tedros Tzeghai - Foster Carers
- Ann Holmes - Service Manager, Children in Care and Leaving Care Service
- David Fry - Interim Head of Early Intervention
- Steve White - Registered Manager of a Children's Residential Unit

Session 3

- Tom Murphy - Service Manager, Children's Resources
- Josephine Mee and Sarah Rayner - Participation Workers
- Howard Griffin - Sports and Leisure Manager

In addition to these formal witness sessions a number of Members attended an informal session with children from Talkers (aged 7-13) and Step Up (aged 14+) groups made up of children in care and care leavers. Members asked these young people about their experiences of being in the care of the London Borough of Hillingdon and provided a report back to the Committee.