



Haverling

L O N D O N B O R O U G H

CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

4 June 2013

Subject Heading:

Draft Annual Report 2012/2013

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Policy context:

Under the Council's Constitution, each Overview and Scrutiny Committee is required to submit an annual report of its activities to full Council. As a Sub-Committee of the Children & Learning Overview & Scrutiny Committee, practice has been for the Corporate Parenting Panel's Annual Report to also be referred.

Financial summary:

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

SUMMARY

This report is the annual report of the Panel, summarising the Panel's activities during the past Council year.

It is planned for this report to stand as a public record of achievement for the year and enable members and others to compare performance year to year.

There are no direct equalities or environmental implications attached to this covering report. Any financial implications from reviews and work undertaken will be advised as part of the specific reviews.

The Corporate Parenting Panel is a sub-committee of the Children and Learning Overview and Scrutiny Committee and is constituted from the elected members of the Committee. The role of the Panel is to monitor services and care provided to Looked After Children in the care of the authority.

REPORT DETAILS

During the year under review, the Panel met on three occasions and dealt with the following issues:

1. Placement Stability

- 1.1 One of the key areas that the Panel investigated during the period of this report was the stability of placements for Looked After Children. Stability had given cause for concern in 2011/12, when statistics showed that 20% of children underwent a placement move, compared with a national average of 10.7% (statistics correct as at December 2011). In one case, a young person had been moved 15 times whilst in care. As a result, an improvement plan and stability audit was instigated within the service.
- 1.2 In order to monitor the efficacy of the new arrangements, the Panel agreed to follow the progress of three children that came into care in March 2013 to gauge the robustness of the new arrangements for placement stability. The panel receives updates on these cases at each meeting, and will continue to do so throughout the year.
- 1.3 The adoption diagnostic carried out by the DFE was discussed and the reasons why adoption can be difficult to achieve in a timely manner, it was noticed that the situation had improved greatly in 2012/13. There are currently 4 children awaiting adoption and the panel acknowledged that this was a complex area they want to monitor.
- 1.4 The local Authority is now part of a court pilot, to improve timescales for cases which reduces the uncertainty for children about what is to happen for the future.

- 1.5 The East London court project was formed as care proceedings at Stratford Court took longer than elsewhere and there had been particular difficulty proving threshold in neglect cases. The proposal is for courts now to make decisions in 26 weeks rather than the current 40-50.
- 1.5 Panel Members were concerned that the threshold for proving neglect was very stringent. A Family Law Review was undertaken to consider how children might be subjected to fewer re-assessments and avoid unnecessary delays.
- 1.6 The appointment of an in-house lawyer to support social workers in the preparation of court cases is expected to ameliorate the situation, and the plan is for the panel to be advised by the project manager of progress of the project.

2. Private Fostering Ofsted Inspection

- 2.1 Havering's private fostering provision was inspected by Ofsted, and was judged to be performing inadequately across the board. This situation has been discussed by Corporate Parenting Panel and the action plan scrutinised. The Panel has requested a full report on private fostering outcomes and an action plan.

3 Virtual Head Teacher - Annual Report 2012/13

- 3.1 At the meeting in March 2013, the Panel received the Annual Report of Havering's Virtual Head Teacher.
- 3.2 The Virtual School for Looked After Children was set up as a direct consequence of The Children and Young Person's Act 2008. As the title implies, the Virtual School does not exist in real terms, but is rather an organisation that co-ordinates educational services for Looked After Children at a strategic level.
- 3.3 The Panel noted that the Virtual School monitored the attendance and punctuality of all Looked After Children on its school register until the end of Year 11. Where there were concerns, the Virtual School worked with the school, social workers, the children and foster carers to remedy the situation.
- 3.4 Each young person receiving education in care has a Personal Educational Plan (PEP) devised in conjunction with the school, carers and social workers to support the young person in achieving educational success. The PEP is assessed every three months and has proved to be very successful in meeting regulations and supporting both social care and schools.
- 3.5 The challenges for the forthcoming year were to:
 - Narrow the gap in attainment between Looked After Children and their peers.
 - Act as an advocate for Looked After Children ensuring that they benefit from the best possible educational and learning opportunities and monitor the use of PPA.

- To work alongside agents and other professionals who support all Havering Looked After Children both within and outside the borough in either providing or commissioning additional learning.

4 Future Work Plan

4.1 The panel's future work programme will seek to build on the success of the past twelve months in holding officers to account. Plans include :

- Meeting with the Looked After Children Nurse and receiving the Health report.
- Looking at the type of accommodation provided for independent living once a young person leaves care and in particular the need to establish supportive landlords.
- Meeting children who have left care to hear of their experiences and see how this can improve the service for others.
- Meeting with the foster carers.
- Meeting with the children in council care and consider childrens views by receiving reports from Viewpoint the online survey of LAC.
- Meeting with the Childrens Society on the risk of children running away from care, sexual exploitation of children in care and children's advocacy.
- Members will attend the Total Respect training where possible delivered by young people.
- Meet with and receive the Annual Report of the Virtual Head and data on education of Looked After Children.
- Receive a report on private fostering updating the position post inspection.
- Consider the new responsibility of the Local Authority in providing LAC services to young people on remand in custodial establishments.
- Track the court project.