

## **CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL**

**Meeting held on Wednesday 8 November 2017 at 5.00pm in the Council Chamber, Croydon town hall, Katharine Street, Croydon, CR0 1NX**

### **DRAFT MINUTES - PART A**

**Present:** Councillor Alisa Flemming (Chair)  
Councillors Maria Gatland, Bernadette Khan, Andrew Rendle and Andy Stranack

**Officers** Barbara Peacock (Executive Director, People), Philip Segurola (Director of Early Help and Children's Social Care), Wendy Tomlinson (Head of Service, Looked After Children and Resources), Dr Ian Johnston (Designated LAC doctor) , Sandra Richards (Designated LAC nurse), Dionne Sang (Consultant Practitioner, People), Tom Stevenson (Head of services for Safeguarding, LAC and quality assurance), Stephen Rowan (Head of Democratic Services and Scrutiny) and Ilona Kytomaa (committee clerk)

**Also in attendance:** Looked After Children

**A42/17 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (agenda item 1)**

Apologies were received from Councillors Shafi Khan, and from Gill Manton and Lyn Glover.

**A43/17 MINUTES (agenda item 2)**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting be agreed and signed by the Chair.

**A44/17 DISCLOSURE OF INTEREST (agenda item 3)**

None.

**A45/17 URGENT BUSINESS (agenda item 4)**

The Chair announced that the Panel would consider an additional report, "Strengthening the Corporate Parenting Panel" under agenda item 7a.

**A46/17 UPDATE ON TIMELINESS OF LAC HEALTH ASSESSMENTS IRO VOICES ANNUAL REPORT (agenda item 5)**

This item was presented by Amanda Tuke, Dr Ian Johnson and Sandra Richards.

Officers reminded all present that the report had been requested following the reporting of poor health assessment performance at the 19 July meeting of the Panel. They explained that initial health assessments had to be requested by the Children's Social Care business support team within 3 working days of the child become looked after. As stated in paragraph 3.12 of the report, officers acknowledged that this team rarely request initial health assessment within this deadline. To address this performance issue, the Panel was advised that children's social care managers had submitted a business case for additional resources to create a permanent LAC health coordinator role to make all requests for initial health assessments. This business case was agreed on 27 September for a six month appointment and a new officer is due to start work in November.

Officers also highlighted the creation of a "Did not attend/hard to reach" group to address the health needs of young people refusing to have an initial health assessment. They stated that they had now developed a workable pathway to address the health needs of this group of looked after children, which involves carrying out home visits to do assessments. They gave assurances that every effort is being made to reduce the "did not attend" rate, which had previously been 40%.

The designated LAC doctor highlighted the fact that the number of looked after children aged under 10 years of age had risen unexpectedly between April and July 2017, leading to delays in assessments carried out by Croydon Health Services community paediatricians. To resolve this issue, the LAC designated doctor has delivered training to the North Croydon group practice, which has taken some of these initial assessments to address the backlog.

Members were informed that a new more flexible system has been adopted to commission initial health assessments, leading to a better use of limited resources.

The Panel went on to examine review health assessments. Officers acknowledged that the increase in capacity for these assessments had not been as high as previously anticipated. It had taken longer than expected to agree this funding and to recruit nurses. As a result, officers stated that the estimated performance as at Mar 2018 on % of LAC in care for at least 12 months with up to date health assessments has been

revised down from 74% to 67%. Members were advised that additional funding had been secured, but not enough to cover all outstanding review health assessments.

Looked After Children attending the meeting were informed that, as their stated preference had been to have health assessments carried out by nurses at home or at a location of their choice, nurses and admin staff had now been recruited, with one nurse starting in December and the other in January 2018. Officers explained that funding had been agreed with the Croydon Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) for temporary appointments and that efforts were being made to secure this funding and the relevant posts on a permanent basis.

Officers were asked how long looked after young people had to wait for appointments after referral to a specialist and stated that this depended on the type of health issue. For mental health services for looked after children, there was usually a 6-8 week wait. Officers added that they could give assurances that referrals to specialists *were* being made upon detecting a health issue, based on the evidence of three recent dip samples of health assessments. In addition, looked after children were also registered with a GP, whom they could consult regarding any emerging health concerns. Officers were asked whether there was evidence that referrals to specialists led to children actually being seen by them but explained that they did not receive any feedback as to the outcome of the referral.

Asked about the characteristics of looked after children who did not attend health assessments, officers outlined a number of trends:

- Young people at risk involved with the council's youth service
- Young people in prison
- Young people who don't want a health assessment – this might be either because they say they feel fine, or because they have a serious health complaint and do not wish to engage with medical staff

Members were given assurances that looked after children had helped to design the initiative to improve the engagement of the hard to reach in health assessments. This initiative had been facilitated by the co-location of the LAC nursing team with social workers, to improve partnership work and problem solving.

Officers were questioned on medical staff training to recognise disabilities, some of which may be difficult to detect. The designated LAC doctor acknowledged that looked after children had a much higher incidence of developmental needs such as ADHD, autism, etc. He supervises trainee paediatricians to ensure that they know how to look out for such issues. He added that the staff working at the North Croydon Medical Centre were also very aware of these trends.

Officers were questioned regarding the health assessments of looked after children placed out of the borough. They explained that initial health

assessments for this group was being recommissioned and that any child within 20 miles of Croydon should have an assessment within the borough. To this statement, looked after children attending the meeting highlighted the difficulties and expense of asking a child to travel a long way for such an assessment. They felt that medical staff should come to them to carry this out. Members asked whether the assessment could be carried out by their local GP. Officers replied that this could be done in principle but that this approach had not worked very well, as GPs, who are paid for such assessments, are not statutorily obliged to carry them out and are in many cases unwilling to do so.

Members asked for regular performance updates on health assessments.

#### **A47/17 Children in Care Council (CiCC) Update (agenda item 6)**

Emily Collinsbeare and Shelley Davis were in attendance for this item.

They announced that the CiCC had been relaunched during the half-term, on 24 October. They stated that there had been a good turnout. In answer to a question, officers stated that about 60 young people had attended the event.

Members were advised that some changes had been made to the CiCC, particularly around support for 8-13 year olds. For instance, feedback from foster carers had led officers to run activities in school holidays to cater for the needs of this age group.

Officers also reported that the event had led to a good recruitment of independent visitors. In addition, a lot of older LAC and care leavers had expressed interest in becoming peer support mentors. A training package is to be developed to give these young people volunteering skills and experience and relevant transferrable skills.

Young LAC attending this meeting acknowledged that it had been a very good event.

Forthcoming activities will include a review of the pledge to looked after children, which will be included in the "Welcome to care" pack for LAC. Members were informed that the new pack will draw some inspiration from the very good pack produced by East Cheshire County Council. In addition, officers announced that a LAC had been nominated to take over the job of the Council's Chief Executive Officer for a day. It is hoped that this will encourage other looked after children in the borough to raise their ambitions for the future.

Members affirmed their strong support for the CiCC. They asked what was being done for LAC who were not engaging with the organisation at the moment. Officers explained that they were planning outreach

activities to engage more children and young people. In addition, they were working with various stakeholders including schools and voluntary groups to reach more LAC.

The Director of Early Help and Children's Social Care spoke of his experience of working with looked after children at Kent County Council. He stressed that a healthy CiCC was an essential element of good corporate parenting. He highlighted the importance of taking a wide variety of needs into account. In Kent, for instance, 18+ year olds could choose to link up with one of three different groups. Activities in Kent had also included a very successful annual awards ceremony for looked after children and young people. He supported the plan to offer peer mentoring. In Kent, the service had been very effectively run by an apprentice. He challenged members to engage more as corporate parents.

Asked what the CiCC might offer its members, young people attending the meeting suggested that it might offer sports activities e.g. football. They also suggested that the CiCC might look at "Staying Put".

The Director of Early Help and Children's Social Care also suggested that LAC might use "challenge cards" to issue a challenge to officers and corporate parents regarding any issue that causes them concerns.

Officers were thanked for their answers to the Panel's questions.

**A48/17 CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL WORK PROGRAMME & STRENGTHENING THE CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL (agenda items 7 and 7a)**

The Executive Director (People department) explained that officers had studied the features of corporate parenting panels run by councils judged by Ofsted to be good or excellent, as well as improvements brought in by councils judged to be inadequate, and Ofsted assessments of these. This work had included looking at the relationship of the Corporate Parenting Panel to the CiCC and the provision of performance statistics to relevant stakeholders.

The Executive Director also explained that new legislation was soon to be enacted which included defining 'Corporate Parenting' in statute, which would impact on the work of the Panel. Section 1 of this legislation, the Children and Social Work Act 2017, outlines the 7 principles of good corporate parenting, which are to underpin the work of the Panel. Officers stated that these principles would underpin forthcoming training on corporate parenting to be offered to council members.

Officers also highlighted the training material on good corporate parenting available from the Local Government Association. Members were reminded that a link to this information had recently been sent to them

and could be recirculated.

To monitor changes to corporate parenting arising from the above research and forthcoming legislation, the Panel was recommended to agree the following changes:

1.1 That the frequency of Panel meetings be increased to six meetings each municipal year;

1.2 That membership of the Panel be extended to include representatives of the Children in Care Council, care leavers, foster carers and health commissioners and that GPAC be recommended to formally approve this;

1.3 That an Annual Report be produced and made available to all Members to scrutinise at the Annual Council meeting;

1.4 That performance information be routinely reported detailing outcomes for children in care and children leaving care.

The Director of Early Help and Children's Social Care gave a brief overview of the suite of statistics set out in Appendix A of agenda item 7a, and sought the Panel's feedback on content and presentation in order to provide the Panel with regular statistical updates in line with recommendation 1.4 above. Councillors responded positively to the performance and benchmarking data and stated that they would definitely wish to receive such information over the next few meetings, although they reserved the right to ask for different data as circumstances changed in future.

The Panel also welcomed the recommendation to increase the frequency of meetings to six per year, to improve its ability to monitor issues affected looked after children in the borough. They also felt that follow-up of any new issues should be included in the work programme, to secure tangible outcomes to problems identified by the Panel. It was observed that securing outcomes to problems was one of the greatest challenges for the Panel.

It was felt that these changes to the work of the Panel should be used to strive to make Corporate Parenting the best in London.

K., who attended this meeting of the panel, stated that he had had a good experience of corporate parenting. A number of challenges were highlighted through discussions with this LAC:

- The short preparation for independent living (four weeks)
- The challenge of finding housing
- Awareness of one's own political representatives

The Director, Early Help and Children's Social Care stressed the need to provide prompt responses to the queries and concerns of LAC and the fact that the Corporate Parenting Panel was the appropriate forum for holding the council to account on corporate parenting issues.

The Panel discussed recommendation 1.2 above. They agreed that

Panel members should hear the voices of carers, care leavers and foster carers. They also felt that Panel meetings should be attended by health commissioners and voluntary sector representatives, whose outlook might bring a fresh perspective on LAC issues. Officers highlighted the work of two organisations which have been commissioned to do some work with LAC to improve their life-skills and who may be able to make a useful contribution to the discussions of the Panel.

Members also suggested that the Panel should scrutinise the effectiveness of partnership working, and its impact on looked after children, although members were cautioned not to duplicate the work of the Safeguarding Children board.

Officers observed that the Corporate Parenting Panel should regularly consider a number of regulatory items, such as the annual report of the adoption service, an annual review of the work of the Virtual School, the fostering annual review of the statement of purpose

Looked after children and care leavers attending the meeting suggested that the Panel should examine the quality of care provided by foster parents, the stability of social care and the Staying Put service.

Three more topics for the Panel's work programme were put forward at the meeting:

- How care leavers are helped into training and employment
- Accommodation for care leavers

As regards items for the 10 January 2018 meeting, it was agreed to consider the following topics:

1. Staying Put
2. The Virtual School annual report
3. The LAC services performance score card

As regards performance statistics, officers stated that these would be drawn up every six weeks or so and could be made available to the members of the Panel.

RESOLVED that:

- 1.1 The frequency of Panel meetings be increased to six meetings each municipal year;
- 1.2 Membership of the Panel be extended to include representatives of the Children in Care Council, care leavers, foster carers and health commissioners and that GPAC be recommended to formally approve this;
- 1.3 An Annual Report be produced and made available to all Members to scrutinise at the Annual Council meeting;
- 1.4 Performance information be routinely reported detailing outcomes for children in care and children leaving care.
- 1.5 The 10 January 2018 meeting should consider the following topics:
  - Staying Put

- The Virtual School annual report
- The LAC services performance score card

**A49/17 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS (agenda item 8)**

- Wednesday 10 January 2018 at 5pm
- Wednesday 7 March 2018 at 5pm

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The meeting ended at 7 pm