

Corporate Parenting Panel

Meeting of Corporate Parenting Panel held on Wednesday, 5 September 2018 at 5.09pm in F11,
Town Hall, Katharine Street, Croydon, CR0 1NX

MINUTES

Present: Councillor Alisa Flemming (Chair);

Councillors Janet Campbell, Jerry Fitzpatrick, Maria Gatland, Maddie Henson, Shafi Khan and Helen Redfern

Co-optees Martin Williams, Angela Christmas, Manny Kwamin

Also Present

Adam Stanley-Feron (Authority Designated Officer), Karen Massey, Quality Assurance Manager), Henrietta Delalu (Service Manager for Looked After Children and Adoption), Rem Besim-Avsar (Senior lead in Early Years Primary and Key Stage 3), Shelley Davies (Head of Education, Standards, Safeguarding and Exclusion lead), Fiona Mackirdy (Leaving Care Service Leader), Ashleigh Searle (former Care Leaver), Phillip Segurola (Interim Director, Early Help and Children's Social Care), Wendy Tomlinson (Head of Service for Looked After Children and Resources), Child M (Young Person), Dionne Sang (Consultant Practitioner for Looked After Children)

PART A

25/17 Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 19 July 2018 were agreed as an accurate record.

26/17 Disclosures of interest

There were none.

27/17 Urgent Business (if any)

There was none.

28/17 Update on actions agreed at previous meeting(s)

There was none.

29/17 **Review of the Council's Staying Put Policy**

The Head of Service for Looked After Children and Resources updated the Panel on the review of the Council's Staying Put Policy.

Officers shared that the Council regularly have young people and children at the meetings. Managers responsible for children's care council was encouraged to be represented at the meeting in front of the Panel.

Care leaver Ashleigh was introduced to the Panel as she had delivered fantastic work supporting youth engagement team and experience in the leaving care team and in preparation for adulthood. Ashleigh returned back to the service eight months ago as a care leaver following the Ofsted inspection, to use her experience and support the service. Ashleigh was supporting the Children and Care Council. She also helped with the Local Offer and was very passionate about driving change.

Following the last Panel meeting, questions arose of the Staying Put Policy which was addressed in the report with regards to young person working and their contribution towards homes, and council tax reimbursement.

The Panel Co-Optees had recognised the changes and had seen a fairer system than before. Foster carers who resided outside the borough, was satisfied with the outcome when the issue of council tax was addressed.

The Panel RESOLVED: To agree and sign off the Staying Put Policy.

30/17 **Independent Reviewing Officer Annual Report**

The report of the Independent Review Officers (IRO) was delivered by former Authority Designated Officer and current Quality Assurance Manager Lead Karen Massey and current Authority Designated Officer Adam Stanley-Feron of Croydon.

Officers highlighted that there was more room for improvement following the Ofsted Inspection for the IRO to challenge social work practice and provide evidence. The service needed to evidence challenges of inadequate performance to help the whole service on the journey and focus on good quality care plans.

Drift and delay was highlighted as a main area of concern where things were not quickly resolved. The service had relaunched the Croydon Escalation Resolution Protocol (CERPs) process, which was a way of formalising challenge talking to team managers and social workers first. The role of the IRO would be to focus on the outcome and not the process, and this would be aimed to be completed in a timely way. This way, the IRO service should be able to manage the drift that happens.

Data was shared with the Panel informing that in the two-thousand and nine reviews there was one-thousand one hundred and nineteen with children. This provided a lot of information in what had happened to looked after children within Croydon. The focus was on the activities of what the staff can do as a service of how to improve.

Officers highlighted the gaps in the service which needed to be improved, which included completing reviews on time and knowing when reviews took place.

Since February 2018, there was a number of structures that changed to better the service. This included the processes of how reviews were monitored. Officers informed that reviewing looked after children cases was a statutory requirement for the IRO to monitor, scrutinise, think about planning, listen to the voice of the child, ensuring that the right consultation forms was shared at the meeting where an outcome is later taken into account. Through this the IRO team can service all LAC Reviews, this also included the quality for the IRO work with their quality of report and minutes and family approach.

Officers note that there was sixty mid-year reviews that had taken place in August. This helped the service demonstrate better ways in working with children.

The service was looking into the way children would be better involved in the LAC reviews, and this would be by way of an app or a smiley face form instead of a paper consultation, to engage children. This way the service was putting the child at the centre of attention to ensure a better resolution in a plan that would identify their need.

With questions arising of the use of the consultation form, Child M highlighted that she liked the smiley face form (consultation form) as she was able to identify her emotions of being happy or sad. Ashleigh recalled of the paper work being well used, but understood the difficulty of the form and suggested that a voice note or an app would be a better tool at the LAC reviews.

Members of the Panel welcomed the thorough report although they would have liked to have seen more outcomes and examples of the difference made to children. Some Members pointed out the awareness of the IRO role within the council, as the report was a response to the Ofsted failure of service drift and delay, and it was reassuring to note that there was plans in place to build the service going forward.

In response to questions around handling complaints on the forward plan in specifically to the IRO, officers inform that there was an Annual Complaint Report that was presented at the Scrutiny and Overview Committee and identified how matters was tackled and what the service needed to act on.

Panel Members noted the phrase "Independent Reviewing Officer" as important, as it was a clear indication from the Ofsted report that touches the

independence of the IRO and lack of robustness to the IRO which had not come out in the report.

In reference to the IRO Annual Report of 2017/2018, the CERPs report identified how to deliver a better service. The IRO would be able to take better responsibility in their work with the more the CERPs the more the robustness in addressing to all challenges. The idea of setting appraisal objectives and discussing challenges at team meetings, also was other source to support the team and individual.

Panel Members noted that there was not an IRO sitting on the Panel.

In further discussions of the evaluation process, officers informed that there was an issue to challenge and the entitlement to challenge the service, and that the service would need to be enabled to challenge. The idea that the IRO should hold the service to account if there was underperformance, should be a culture of where the service would need to be prepared to take on the challenge. It was further noted by officers that there was far fewer escalations. The change was noted that the challenge and interaction was difficult to put the child in the middle of the conversation. It started with talking with the child to change to culture of the style and language of discussions.

Panel Members noted that there had been a culture of blame between the services which derived from past expectations. Officers ensured that there was now less confusion of roles from all services involved and a better structure was implemented.

Ashleigh shared her experience in the past where she felt IRO and LAC Reviews meetings tendered to be tick box exercises and a child's view would need to be better collated to get the right level of honesty from a child. In all services there was always room for improvement specifically on time scales for better delivery, planning and preparation to get the most from the meeting from the people involved.

The Panel Co-Optees highlighted the involvement of foster carers and IRO in LAC Reviews and with the young person, and highlighted that there was a set structure for the IRO to spend time with the young person providing better quality in having a true reflection of the child. Foster carers would be able to seek support through the Croydon Foster Carer Association. Officers informed that also the looked after children service manager would be available to provide additional support to help resolve immediate matters. Panel Members informed that the fostering handbook of the role of foster carers and the IRO would need to be readdressed, as foster carers should be able to seek support and know where to go to when making complaints. Complaints was also an option for foster carers to use if the channels are not working or if foster carers was not being listened to. Members would like to see foster carers being supported and the monitoring of their concerns be taken into consideration.

The Panel discussed that the social work service was responsible for the delivery of the children care plan, and it was for the IRO to escalate any underperformance as their role was to challenge a social worker's delivery.

The Chair concluded that the service was not about attributing blame, the service was about ensuring that the right process is in place where everyone knows where to go for support and where to find the support.

Action: For the foster carers list to be recirculated.

Recommendation: To look into where there was a process for the Quality Assurance of IRO.

Note: For future reports of complaints to be reviewed to understand how many was dealt with.

The Panel adjourned for a short break at 6:33pm

The Panel reconvened the meeting at 6:48pm

31/17 **Care Leavers' Local Offer**

Leaving Care Service Leader presented to the Panel the Care Leaver's Local Offer which had been several months in the making. The document/brochure was presented to internal officers, and more work had been added to this work. The statutory deadlines was within the next few weeks, with an expectation for publication.

The Published Local Offer to Care Leavers was a new duty that came about within the Social Work Act in 2017. A local offer would be required to cover six, and do a corporate piece of work, of the entire council and work done by the leaders.

In depth, officers shared the key part in developing the offer which was the final iteration. The Panel heard that there was two key issues: employment and housing. This version had a strengthened offer where the care leavers would be provided accommodation by the Council, and how young people would be engaged to view properties.

Going forward, care leavers forum and setting up home allowance would be set up as this is a duty for the Council to provide money and goods in setting up their first home.

Feedback was received from the Executive Director for audio files and other summary and development. To summarise key entitlement to the young person via a Care Leavers app that was proposed to go live during Care Leavers Week in October.

Former care leaver, Ashleigh, who sat on the Panel, shared with the Panel of her time as a care leaver. She highlighted that she was not aware of the

entitlements she was to receive from the Council as there was no information, and thus the care leaver's brochure/document would have informative guidelines to help other care leavers that have little support. Ashleigh expressed that when something was in writing it gave the young person something to hold on to as it would be transparent.

Members of the Panel welcomed the brochure which was set in the right direction, and the forum was also welcomed to see the progression going forward. Conversely, there was discussions of the document which was quite lengthy, and suggested a more succinct information for young care leavers to access and have available. In addition, it was highlighted that as the brochure was targeted for young people, it would need to be memorable and identify more with the individual who may rely on the brochure as their bible. Some Members on the Panel wanted the style, culture, pictures and language adaptable to be suitable for the young person and indicate the right message. One Member of the Panel welcomed the comprehensive brochure and made comments that there was no issue with the document in terms of language as it was clear English and referred to the document/brochure as a handbook. Officers reassured the Panel that the deliverance of the brochure was a working process and the delivery would have to be accurate to deliver the right information for the older and the younger children.

Officers shared that there was different ways the document could be received, such as having a hardcopy, online, audio, and translated versions too, which was feedback from young persons. The idea of a mobile app was also welcomed by the Panel, where they learned that it would be downloaded for the young person to access a summary of things they need to know. There was also ongoing consultation around young people with disabilities.

In response to Members questions on pathway plan, officers shared that legally the pathway planning is for young people aged from sixteen years old, and incorporating the plan would be something that would be addressed at the time to network challenge and see what part of the local offer the young person would want. There was a starter point for this at this age and the resource may also bridge the link between the social worker, advisors and young person.

As Staying Put was addressed within the brochure, officers highlighted that for every case in every LAC Reviews and other meetings, conversations of what would be offered on their journey would be a continued dialogue. Officers further addressed that the care leaver's document/brochure was for young people and an offer that they would be entitled to, which the service was required to deliver. It was therefore an important development that the service provided clarification for the young persons' preparation of adult life.

Cllr Henson left the meeting at 7:10pm.

The Panel Co-Optees requested for support to be catered to foster carers to provide ongoing provision to their young person, and to be engaged at an earlier stage to address and support to the young person who may have many

questions of their journey and further support in the process of closure. The Panel appreciated the comprehensive document as a tool for the foster carers. Further, Panel Members felt that the way Staying Put was worded seemed to imply that the young person makes the whole decision when it too is also a decision for the foster carer; and also that there was little information of transition for the Staying Put young person and an eighteen year old young person.

The Panel highlighted that there was a large number of care leavers residing within the borough, and the service's expectations needed to be a clear aspect for what the care leavers can expect. It was addressed that not many care leavers get involved in change and this was something the service wanted to improve on.

The Chair addressed in her final remarks that this was a leaving document that would be evolving over time and would return for review. It was noted that since the first document version, there had been two or three other versions and this would continue to change as there was commitment to housing and other matters. A formal twelve month review to put on the work plan was pending, and this document would also be brought to Cabinet for further detailed discussion.

Action: The Panel advised for officers to look at re-wording the section of Staying Put within the brochure i.e. with further discussions with current carers.

32/17

Children in Care Performance Scorecard

Officers informed that there would be a commitment to make a regular performance scorecard. The performance scorecard presented to the Panel was the July outturn. The RAG rating showed some areas of development and progression.

Officers shared that there was issues around medicals, and the review medicals for 2016/2017, pathway plans and care reviews and small administrative business support.

Officers addressed the strength of the performance scorecard which highlighted that basic stability was good. The CIC 3 or remote placements and performance was strong which was a good testament to the foster carers.

The Panel highlighted that there was reasonable consistency. Going forward the Panel Members would want to scrutinise an area in more detail for analytical review on the performance.

Recommendation: To move performance scorecard to the beginning of each meeting to address particular areas.

How has the Panel helped the Children in Care today?

The Panel highlighted the following accomplishments which helped Children in Care:

- The Panel identified key gaps.
- Time mask.
- The Panel highlighted that it was refreshing to see young people at the meeting in the hope that more young people can attend to challenge officers.
- The Panel highlighted that it was interesting to have Virtual school listen in with LAC reviews and hear the feedback from foster carers. It was also good to know of the ongoing work of Quality Assurance if the LAC reviews and the education of care would feed into it.
- The Panel was delighted to hear of the Local Offer and Ashleigh's engagement in the meeting.
- Having the commitment and the discussion of what the Local Offer would mean to the care leavers
- Generally attending the meeting as an adult, from attending previously at a younger age, and to see how things had change and how people was not afraid to challenge.
- IRO report and the challenge for them to do better; and to hear back from Ashleigh as it is good to see what it looks like when it goes right.
- IRO implementation if fundament to be more affective at corporate planning for hardwiring better practice.
- Staying Put Policy which was fit for purpose and Care Offer for care leavers. Good balanced thorough discussion.
- Ground breaking and the change in the young people. The staff was enthused as the energy is incorporated. The fact it exist was good. Signoff for Staying Put Policy is good. Grateful to Ashleigh and Child M.
- I loved it today. It's great living with foster carers as they take me out, take me to church and give us so much lovely food.
- Giving more confidence to explain to other foster carers who share the same issues. The commitment and passion delivered in here is very different to what we feel outside the Panel. It was about ensuring the process was delivered, and feeling the same passing as other officers in the room.
- Depth of discussion that takes place, as foster carers we raise issues and the fact the department has taken all on board is positive that people are listening.
- Foster carers do feel that they are not listened to, but in the Panel we was able to address some things on behalf of the foster carers. Today we focused on older children as recommended by Ofsted. A great inspired meeting.
- We asked good questions and there was an honest debate. It was not just about the Ofsted comments we were discussing, but the discussion had would ensure that we was making steps to make our services better.

- The discussion about the IRO and recommendations made. They would make big differences to see how we was ensured everyone listed to and more transparent of where people will go to, and care leavers and the conversation and the depth of it. Excited to making a difference to prepare young person to go out into the world.
- To see Ashleigh here and to see her growth and to help in improving service to the care leavers. Passion in LAC and pleased that the Staying Put Policy was now agreed.

The Panel unanimously identified a young person, Kieran, and shared their appreciation of his positive progress and how he was moving on well. The Panel wished Kieran all the best.

34/17 **Work Programme**

The work programme was considered and it was noted that there was flexibility to amend the work programme as required should new items be identified. It was highlighted that the report of the Care Leaver's Offer was to return at the next meeting in November.

35/17 **Exclusion of the Press and Public**

This was not required.

The meeting ended at 7.52 pm

Signed:

Date:

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