

Corporate Parenting Panel

Meeting of held on Wednesday, 16 March 2022 at 5.00 pm
This meeting was held remotely

MINUTES

Present: Councillor Alisa Flemming (Chair);

Councillors Sue Bennett and Maria Gatland

Co-optee Members

Angela Christmas (Foster Carer Representative), Manny Kwamin (Foster Carer Representative), Dr Julia Simpson (LAC Nurse/Doctor), EMPIRE (EMPIRE) and Porsha Robinson (EMPIRE)

Also Present: Roisin Madden (Director of Early Help and Children's Social Care)
Shaun Hanks (Head of Quality Assurance)
Julie Daley (Interim Head of Transformation)
Hannah Franklin (Missing Lead)
Maret Arselgova (Young Director)
Lajay Taylor (Youth Engagement Worker - EMPIRE)

Apologies: Councillor Maddie Henson, Bernadette Khan, Pat Clouder and Mike Bonello

PART A

10/22 Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 8 February 2022 were agreed as an accurate record.

11/22 Disclosures of interest

There were none.

12/22 Urgent Business (if any)

There was none.

13/22 Update on actions agreed at previous meeting(s)

The actions were not completed.

14/22 EMPIRE Update

The Panel was updated on new staffing within EMPIRE and welcomed the new Practitioner Lajay Taylor.

EMPIRE discussed with the Panel a document titled the Financial Policy Guidance Transition to Adulthood, which was re-released in November 2020, and highlighted the rights and entitlements for care experienced young people who were not receiving what was listed within the document.

The Director of Early Help and Children's Social Care informed that part of the work of the service was to raise awareness of the rights and entitlements and how it would be applied to care experienced young people. The Head of Quality Assurance added that young people were able to apply for driving lessons and other financial grants within means. Starter packs and small grants were also available upon request, and the service were also working towards the local offer provided for young people. Young people who were not receiving their entitlements were to be reviewed.

Further, EMPIRE shared with the Panel of their successful participation in a Walk for Cancer on 12 March 2022 raising money for Cancer, which saw some Panel Members in attendance.

15/22 Children in Care and Care Experienced Young People

The Corporate Parenting Panel considered the Care Experienced Young People report which provided an overview of support for Care Experienced young people [statutory Care Leavers]. The Panel received a short presentation overview from the Head of Quality Assurance, Shaun Hanks.

In brief, the presentation highlighted an overview of the numbers and issues raised in relation to Leaving Care:

- At the end of February 2022, there were 679 aged 18-25 Care Experience young persons who were receiving support through an active pathway plan.
- Young people over the age of 21 were deemed independent and were welcomed for additional support through the service.
- There were 66% of unaccompanied asylum seeking children, however, not all had leave to remain, which made resources difficult.
- There was a significant number of male children looked after that mostly fell within the unaccompanied asylum seeking children.
- Ethnicity showed over 60% of an over representation in both Asian-British and Black-British young people. [This also mirrored the Looked After Children population.]
- The service had a duty to keep in touch with the young people every two months [less than keeping in touch with Children Looked After] and there was better improvement since last year, seeing results of 92% in 17-18 year olds, and 98% in 19-20 year olds.

- There was a gradual increase and improvement with pathway plans. The performance indicator had been a very helpful tool to address improvement as the service currently saw an 82% increase over the last few months.
- Education, Employment and Training had seen some difficulties within the last two years in the wake of the pandemic, however 75% of Care Experienced young people were in Higher or other Education, Employment or Training, which was above their statistical neighbours. The percentage highlighted that some unaccompanied asylum seeking children had no resource to public funds and other access matters.
- The service had improved in working towards providing pleasant suitable accommodation for Care Experienced young people, by ensuring the property was seen by a personal advisor before being let out; and helping to provide alternative accommodation following a short notice of an eviction. Independent Living with support was used more, and Staying Put was well received particularly for the 17–18 year olds.

In response to queries raised by the Panel, the Head of Quality Assurance, clarified the following:

In relation to the issues in the monitoring and performance of pathway plans, there was a better timeliness in the older group (18-25 year olds) than the younger group (16-18 year olds) mainly due to the misunderstanding of care and pathway plans, though with the gradual improvement on the pathway plans, the service was making monitoring and performance improvement sustainable.

In relation to ethnicity, the data was collated from an overview in comparison to neighbouring local authorities and did not provide an overview of the service's own position.

ACTION: To provide information on (1) whether there was a change within the ethnicity data of Care Experienced young people and Looked After Children; and (2) the disproportionality in employment within the Care Experienced population particularly highlighting how many Asian and Black young people were in employment, education, or training.

In response to the service's vision for the Care Experienced Leavers Club and the offer for Care Experienced young people particularly as participation was different to Children Looked After and Care Leavers such as transport or travel money, no internet access, it was said that the service needed to make better ways for Care Leavers involvement using better communication and online digital participation to participate in the Club. Following the pandemic and other contemporary issues, change included peer to peer support. Further, there was also Care Experienced societies and unions available for the Care Experienced Club to explore, reaching out to adult care leavers and sighting helpful links to education, universities, and employers.

The Panel **RESOLVED**: To endorse the areas of focus for 2022-23

Focus for 2022:

- Ensure caseloads remain manageable to enable the best support for an increasing number of Care Experienced young people.
- Further develop peer support and a 'Care Experienced Club' to focus on the needs of young people entering work and becoming independent.
- Understand better the support needs and risks for our Care Experienced young people, particularly for our asylum-seeking population.
- Expand training opportunities and learn from young people's experiences.
- Improve the accommodation offer for young people to ensure the right help is available to enable young people to achieve independence with a stable support network.

The Chair thanked officers for their report.

16/22 Children Missing

The Corporate Parenting Panel considered the Children Missing Review report, which provided an update regarding Missing Children and the continued improvement in performance and quality of practice.

The Panel received a short presentation overview from the detailed report from the Interim Head of Transformation, Julie Daley, and the Missing Lead, Hannah Franklin.

In brief, the presentation highlighted:

- There was a 20% reduction in the total number of missing children in (January – December) 2021 in comparison to 2020.
- 25% (105) of the 425 children had been subjected to the Multi-Agency Child Exploitation protocol in relation to child criminal exploitation with concerns mainly relating to County Lines Drug Dealing.
- 31% (134) of the 425 children were in care of the local authority, which was 23% lower than for 2020.
- The top twenty missing children were in care of the local authority and accounted for 41% of all missing episodes.
- Key themes of repeat missing children included 95% of criminal and/or sexual exploitation; 85% were of Black, Asian or ethnic minority background; 80% were of Children Looked After of which 20% were unaccompanied asylum seeking children; 75% were children aged 17 years and above; 55% were male and 45% were female.
- The Return Home Interviews (RHIs) was a statutory responsibility to understand why children go missing. The data showed 93% of RHIs was offered to children and 49% of the RHIs were completed. This was a result of children having the option to decline an interview. The

service reviewed their process on this to enhance better practice in the interventions of children and young people.

- There had been a development in capturing areas for improvement [such as building relationships between the young person and their social worker, foster carer or key worker] and working with EMPIRE in responding to missing episodes.

In response to queries raised by the Panel, the Interim Head of Transformation and the Missing Lead, clarified the following:

Foster Carers had a vital role to support the reduction of missing episodes in young people. With the depth of knowledge, it was key for liaisons with social workers to address observations, communications and other known contributing pull factors of a young person going missing, though it was noted that a balance of an independent person would see a young person reach out. Further, there was also within the RHIs a section for foster carers to contribute to the risks and understanding of missing episodes as standard practice. Additionally, The Director of Early Help and Children's Social Care highlighted the legal requirement of corporate parents to ask young people of their wellbeing; there was more support provided for young people who presented missing, and further encouragement for parents and carers to signpost the young person to speak to an independent person so their voice could be heard.

During the consideration of the recommendations, the Panel discussed the following:

EMPIRE welcomed the flexibility in the relationship building with other key workers for young people to benefit from a better RHIs outcome.

The Chair welcomed the continued focus on children missing and missing episodes particularly with the 17 year olds and facilitating RHIs. In support, other Members were also pleased to see an increased focus on missing children and RHIs and supported the continuity of this focus, as the number of missing episodes in the past had been a concern. With the learned comments relating to relationship building, Members were in support for the renewed work around this.

The Panel **RESOLVED**: To

1. Note the progress made to date including improved quality of practice.
2. Note the further improvements proposed, which is designed to embed further cultural and operational changes to achieve positive and sustainable change to the quality of services provided to children and families of Croydon.
3. Provide Corporate Leaders with an understanding of progress made to date and an understanding of the continuous improvements.

The Chair thanked officers for their report.

17/22 Children in Care Performance Scorecard

The Corporate Parenting Panel considered the Children in Care Performance Scorecard which provided an overview of the February month. The Panel received an overview from the Head of Quality Assurance, Shaun Hanks, who highlighted the following red and yellow performance indicators:

- The numbers of Children Looked After had continued to reduce.
- Visits within six weeks had been a continued issue, and the service was working on the performance which currently stood at 92% of their 95% target.
- The percentage of children with an up-to-date care review was at 96%, 2% under the year to date target.
- The participation review was 75% which was under performed over the year.
- Up to date care plans was at 81% for 0-18 year olds
- Up to date pathway plans was at 69% for 16-18 year olds, and at 81% overall for care leavers aged 18 plus.
- The percentage of health assessments up to date was at 87%
- The performance for the same social worker – is red at 65% being the target. The year to date performance was at 56%. Reason based on the restructure of the service. This will not change for a while.
- Children Looked After placed within twenty miles from home had a percentage of 83% of the 90% target, though the service was doing well in this area there was more room for improvement as the National review highlighted the importance for young people to be closer to their community.
- Announced foster carer visits within timescales (6 weekly with a supervised social worker) highlighted pressures within the team factoring a low percentage of 89% of the 95% target.
- The percentage for young people in employment, education, or training was at low at 61% of the 85% target for young people aged 17 to 21; and also low at 59% of the 85% target for young people aged 19-21.

In response to queries raised by the Panel, The Head of Quality Assurance clarified the following:

In relation to the operational guidance for social work visits, within Croydon, visits were to be held within four weeks; the national minimum for visits was within every six weeks. The Croydon service continued the four weekly visits to develop the importance of building relationships and to review the stability of the young person within their placement, though there was room for systemic changes upon review and sign off. At 73%, the service was working to better the performance.

18/22 How has the Panel helped Children in Care today?

The Panel welcomed the gradual improvement in the pathway plans and the continued focus in this area.

The Panel welcomed the important conversations addressed relating to Care Leavers and the challenges of the Care Experienced Hub and noting the balance of young and experienced care leavers on the Panel.

The Panel welcomed the beneficial review of the Children In Care service to Members and the Panel.

19/22 Work Programme

The work programme was received for information.

20/22 Exclusion of the Press and Public

This motion was not required.

The meeting ended at 6.30 pm

Signed:

Date:

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