

Corporate Parenting Panel

Meeting of Corporate Parenting Panel meeting held on Thursday, 24 June 2021 at 5.01 pm. This meeting was held virtually.

MINUTES

Present: Councillor Alisa Flemming (Chair);

Councillors Maddie Henson, Bernadette Khan, Pat Clouder, Helen Redfern and Sue Bennett

Co-optee Members

Angela Christmas (Foster Carer Representative),
EMPIRE (EMPIRE),
Ashleigh Searle (Care Leaver Representative),
Dr Julia Simpson (CLA Designated Health Professional)
Roneeta Campbell-Butler (Health Commissioner) and
Fiona Simmons (Health Commissioner)

Also

Present: Roisin Madden (Interim Director of Early Help and Children's Social Care)
David Garland (Lead Commissioner, Commissioning and Procurement)
Shaun Hanks (Head of Quality Assurance)
Veronika Yaricheva (Young Director)
Maret Arselgova (Young Director Apprentice)
Brian Amos (Service Manager Early Help)
Sara Lewis (Children Safeguarding Co-ordinator, Housing)
Thomas Joyce (Youth Engagement Worker)

Apologies: Co-optee Members: Shelley Davies (Virtual School), Angela Griffiths (Virtual School), Manny Kwamin (Foster Carer Representative), Porsha Robinson (EMPIRE staff), Pasquale Brammer (Health Commissioner)

PART A

13/21 Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes to the meeting held on Wednesday 13 January was not approved by the Panel as the minutes were received late.

14/21 Disclosures of interest

Councillor Maddie Henson declared her involvement as a Governor at Monks Orchard Primary School.

15/21 Urgent Business (if any)

There was none.

16/21 Update on actions agreed at previous meeting(s)

There was none.

17/21 Terms of Reference

The Terms of Reference (TOR) report was discussed by the Panel. It was noted that there had been a new Membership for the new municipal year. The TOR had not changed since 2017.

The Panel discussed reports that were to be presented at Panel meeting, and requested that themed topics covered a wide area addressing a detailed breakdown in particular areas.

Further, the extra accommodated existing willingness to have more meetings (total of 6 per municipal year) was welcomed. The Chair shared with the Panel that the increase of meetings had allowed for the Panel to review and hear more of EMPIRE and reports on specialised items.

The Panel **RESOLVED**: To unanimously agree that the current Terms of Reference was sufficient and to include a Housing Officer Member as one of the co-optees.

EMPIRE

A number of EMPIRE Members were present at the Panel who shared their voices on their little involvement on the Corporate Parenting Panel and the experience they have in care. The discussions led the Panel to understand their frustrations on how young people received support mentally and emotionally; having repeatedly addressed that their voices were not being heard particularly for those care leavers who turned 18; and how EMPIRE could be more involved in the conversations and Panel meetings to share their voice.

The co-optee Care Leaver Representative welcomed the voices of EMPIRE that opened conversations of communication. As a care leaver representative, she addressed that the Corporate Parenting Panel was a function that oversaw the work services provided to the young people of Croydon, which included the opportunity for EMPIRE and a Care Leaver Representative engagement. It was noted that through this Panel there had been actions for better services provided for the young children in care such as the housing

changes, allocations to young people on the housing register, accommodation strategy and other pieces of work, and that a breakdown in communication of the implementations of these actions may have led to the disappointments highlighted by EMPIRE Members. Further, departments ought to be working closely with EMPIRE to facilitate conversations and working together.

Panel Members valued all the voices heard from EMPIRE at Panel meetings in the past and present, and noted that meetings held in public had more conversations directed at the young people present, which was very helpful and insightful. Panel Members invited for EMPIRE to continue to share their experience for the Panel to truly receive an understanding of how the services support Croydon's children in care.

The Chair shared with the Panel that Croydon had an open-door policy in inviting young people to attend the Corporate Parenting Panels, and in practice this enabled EMPIRE to be given a greater voice to ensure they were heard. There was no limit to the number of young people in attendance and the involvement from EMPIRE past and present was ongoing and functioned. The participation plan with EMPIRE was further developing for better communication, which included child-friendly reports and alternative approach for engagement in Panel meetings.

18/21 Children in Care Performance Scorecard

The Corporate Parenting Panel considered the Children in Care Performance Scorecard which provided an overview of the May month. The Panel received an overview from the Interim Director of Early Help and Children's Social Care, Roisin Madden who highlighted the amber and red key performance indicators.

In summary:

- There were a number of amber performance indicators which were very close to green.
- Most children getting an up-to-date care plans and pathway plans were still difficult as this required the presence of a young person. This was statutory.
- Children in care continued to have the same social worker and the service was striving for this continuity to remain.
- Placement stability key performance indicator was close to green. There were a lot of children in care being placed in Croydon and others placed outside the borough.
- The fostering indicator highlighted that a lot more work needed to be done.
- The Adoption figures had shown that care was provided via the Adopt South, and this was good with the national indicators.
- There were concerns with the care leavers being in education, employment and training (EET). There was nearly 90% in EET and 41% care leavers who were not in EET.

In response to queries raised by the Panel, the following was clarified:

- All services were working together to better the 20-day statutory obligation in completing the initial health assessments (IHA). Dissecting the data further, it appeared that a delayed referral from the social care team to the health services would impact on the 20-day turnaround time.
- The inaccurate data for the last month was presented for assurance. This addressed (for example) that should a young person be referred in the latter part of a calendar month, the 20-day period for their health assessment would enter into a new calendar month, and their attendance may only be seen as one appointment. The data was therefore presented in this manner.
- The fluctuation in April saw seven children referred for an IHA. Young children not attending their scheduled date or children transferred out of borough with assessments not completed before, may look as though the children did not have an assessment. However, this is the lowest number of children who had not received an IHA.
- There was a lot of learning during the pandemic year, whereby children who consistently declined for an assessment were offered telephone assessments which was preferred, particularly from the older children.
- A lot of work was undertaken relating to reducing the delay in initial referrals, many related to consent. Health services and social care services had been able to concur with accurate data since the beginning of this year and there were no longer discrepancies between the services with regards to cases.
- All children were receiving their IHAs in time for their Children Looked After Reviews; and all children were having their assessments completed even if it was a day or two outside of the 20-day timescale.

The Co-optee Foster Carer representative Member commented on the pathway plan and how the service had been performing very well over the last years. Foster carers had now seen their children being more involved in the plan, though it was noticed that the plans were not often completed within the timeframe in time for a change over in social workers or transitioning down. Remuneration was also often an issue.

The Chair informed that the limited change of the social workers for the young person would be helpful and recommended for conversations at an earlier stage to happen.

19/21 Annual Report of Corporate Parenting Panel 2020-2021

The Corporate Parenting Panel considered the Annual Report of Corporate Parenting Panel 2020-2021 which detailed the work of the Corporate Parenting Panel and their services to Children Looked After and Care Leavers. The Panel received an overview from the Head of Quality Assurance, Shaun Hanks.

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

- Panel Members welcomed the annual report which highlighted the Corporate Parenting Panel year in great detail. Though the health section within the report did not include the missing targets data, the report it did address how the Panel discussed and scrutinised topics in detail within the Panel meetings.
- With the budget was under review, the Panel challenged the cost expenditure impact on young people.

The Panel **RESOLVED**: To approve the Corporate Parenting Panel Annual Report 2020-2021 to take to Full Council in July.

20/21 Update on the South London Commissioning Programme

The Corporate Parenting Panel considered the South London Commissioning Programme report which detailed an update on the work of the programme in tackling issues for children in care on behalf of seven South London boroughs with particular reference to the London borough of Croydon. It also contained a summary of the strategic priorities of the programme for the 2021-22 period. The Panel received an introduction from the Lead Commissioner, Commissioning and Procurement, David Garland.

In response to queries raised by the Panel, the following was clarified:

- In the South London Commissioning Programme, the service had seen change within the last six months, which included the Approved Provider Panel Agreement (APPA) now live.
- The 'All About Me' was implemented in other boroughs, which highlighted the importance of hearing the voice of a child.
- The Youth Custody project referred to the holding of a young person in custody under the age of 18. The services had seen that young people held in custody under 18 was not appropriate. The project was to help better placements for young people in better custody whilst waiting for their court hearing. Further, the service was considering specialist services to help assist within the project.

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

- It was helpful to receive feedback and update on the South London Commissioning Programme to help support young people before going to custody to divert from crimes.
- The APPA and framework was a core part of the work programme and had joined items across London.

The Panel **RESOLVED**: To note the updates and progress of the South London Commissioning Programme and the strategic priorities of the programme for 2021-22.

21/21 Independent Reviewing Officer Annual Report

The Corporate Parenting Panel considered the Independent Reviewing Officer Annual Report which detailed the Independent Reviewing Officer Thematic Audit. The Panel received an overview from the Head of Quality Assurance, Shaun Hanks.

In response to queries raised by the Panel, the following was clarified:

- The Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) had shifted the way reviews were conducted, which was more child-centred.
- The issue around information accessible to young people speaking different languages was under review as this was a financial issue.

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

- There was great improvement with the Looked After Children reviews. The letters received from the IROs to the young children were more child-friendly, and better than having a report as the letters were personalised with positive messages.
- The quality of staffing was very good, which was a major improvement to the service.

The Panel **RESOLVED**: To note the recommendations set out in within the report.

22/21 Children's Social Care Placement Sufficiency

The Corporate Parenting Panel considered the Children's Social Care Placement Sufficiency report which detailed an update of the Croydon Sufficiency Strategy and Plan. The Panel received an overview from the Lead Commissioner, Commissioning and Procurement, David Garland.

In response to queries raised by the Panel, the following was clarified:

- The fostering service was an in-house service and supported in-house delivery. There were new and less experienced carers recruited.
- Independent Fostering Agency accommodated young children who could not Stay Put and welcomed them in supported accommodation.
- There were eight residential homes that operated separately to the Council. The highest needs cohort for children residing in this setting were for children experiencing behavioural concern or mental health.
- Semi-Independent was a more systemic designed accommodation for

- care leavers, 16-18 young people and homeless young people.
- There was supported housing was also provided. The service was in favour of a smaller provision of 5-10 bed units; day and night 3-5 bed.
- Supported lodgings were similar to Staying Put. It had positive feedback from young people as there was more family support with more freedom, and was a more natural setting than commissioning development service.

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

- There were concerns raised of the Staying Put policy and the anticipation that Staying Put would not put off a young person who required the security of having a family life;
- The commitment of the Council to Staying Put was to ensure that the concerns raised was addressed within the Staying Put policy;
- The need to recruit more foster carers to support the children in Croydon.
- The Service Manager for Early Help, Brian Amos, highlighted that the more Staying Put arrangements there were, limited the numbers of foster placements, therefore the capacity within the fostering service could increase.

ACTION – To review the Staying Put Policy and update foster carers.

The Panel **RESOLVED**: To note the report.

23/21 How has the Panel helped Children in Care today?

The Panel in turn reviewed that:

- Improvement and evidence of good practice in the IRO service had led to better involvement and care in children;
- The reports presented had mapped out ambitions for children and addressed professional standards. There was also a range of opportunities for the young person;
- It was beneficial to hear the voices of EMPIRE and the impact of their lives, sharing their passion and integrity with the panel; accommodating no filtered expression of their views, feelings whether comfortable or uncomfortable; additionally, visiting and speaking to service users was important;
- Having no limit on the number of young people in attendance to the Corporate Parenting Panels, and also acknowledging more work was required.

24/21 Work Programme

The Panel discussed the work programme to include participation sessions

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with EMPIRE that would co-inside with the Panel, addressing individual experiences.

Further, the Panel discussed receiving reports in the future on fostering breakdown including fostering disruptions and the learning for practitioners; adoption breakdown and the global picture of the figures of children that have been successfully adopted; and incorporating these themes into the Terms of Reference. Additionally, to address in the health themed reports a focus on the challenges raised; to also incorporate juvenile justice into the work programme; and to ensure more presentations from externals be presented at the Panel in the future.

25/21 Exclusion of the Press and Public

This was not required.

The meeting ended at 8:11pm

Signed:

Date: