

Corporate Parenting Panel

Meeting of Corporate Parenting Panel held on Wednesday, 22 September 2021 at 5.00 pm. This meeting was held via Microsoft Teams.

MINUTES

Present: Councillor Alisa Flemming (Chair);

Councillors Pat Clouder, Sue Bennett and Maria Gatland

Co-optee Members

Angela Christmas (Foster Carer Representative),
Shelley Davies (Virtual School),
Sarah Bailey (Virtual School),
EMPIRE (EMPIRE),
Porsha Robinson (EMPIRE)
Roneeta Campbell-Butler (Health Commissioner)

Also

Present: Roisin Madden (Interim Director of Early Help and Children's Social Care)
Adam Feron-Stanley (Independent Reviewing Officer & Independent Visiting Service Manager)
Shaun Hanks (Head of Quality Assurance)
Veronika Yaricheva (Young Director)

Apologies: Councillors Maddie Henson, Bernadette Khan and Mike Bonello

PART A

1/21 Minutes of the previous meeting

There were no minutes to consider.

2/21 Disclosures of interest

There were none.

3/21 Urgent Business (if any)

There was none.

4/21 Update on actions agreed at previous meeting(s)

There was none.

5/21 EMPIRE - Summer Provision Overview Presentation; and EMPIRE - Engagement (January to June 2021) Presentation

The EMPIRE presentation was shared with the Panel by the Service Coordinator for EMPIRE, Porsha Robinson who gave a comprehensive summary of EMPIRE's Summer Provision and EMPIRE Engagement (from January 2021 to June 2021).

In summary, the EMPIRE overview highlighted:

- The EMPIRE offer;
- Wellbeing calls and messages;
- Life Skills and Accredited Programmes; and
- Rewards and Incentives.

The Panel heard that all Children Looked After and Care Leavers become automatic members of EMPIRE. Staff engaged with over 100 Children Looked After and Care Leavers through attendance at sessions (both face to face and online), regular communication, surveys and consultations; which the potential to expand further within the borough reaching out to more young people. The Panel learned that staff support and training was advocated through mentoring and training was currently provided in-house.

Amongst some of the highlights within the report, EMPIRE was awarded the Children & Young People New National Awards 2020, which was highly commended.

A video presentation of EMPIRE (which stood for Empowerment. Memories. Positivity. Interesting. Respect. & Educational) was also shared at the Panel and illustrated the young people's commitment to the service during the covid-19 pandemic and how EMPIRE had helped them through the difficult times. EMPIRE members present at the Panel also shared their experience of the service.

The Chair congratulated the work of EMPIRE and the impact it had made with the future young people who had reached out to inspire others. Panel Members welcomed the presentation from EMPIRE and the testimonies from young people.

Recommendation (put forward from the Panel): For training to be provided to EMPIRE staff.

7/21 Annual Report of Virtual School

The Corporate Parenting Panel considered the Virtual School Annual Report which detailed the summary of achievements and involvements for the Croydon Virtual School for Children Looked After in the academic year 2020-

2021. The Panel received an overview from the Head of Virtual School, Sarah Bailey.

In response to queries raised by the Panel, the Head of Virtual School clarified the following:

- The challenge to increase completed PEPS from 98% to 100% relied on the timeframe a young person came into care as the process would take twenty days to complete. Though there were often a very small number of young children whose PEP was completed out of that timeframe.
- Post-16 PEPs were lower than it should be as there were no funding in staffing for the Post 16 education cohort. There were also young people in colleges receiving different support for education and training, thus the consistency with the quality in training were difficult to improve. Relationships with colleges had improved greatly which included neighbouring boroughs. Further field colleges were difficult to receive information and building relationships were revised.
- General attainment (exam) results saw of the total young children - 26% were struggling and 68% were on track to the predictions of trajectory. The general attainment results were not compared to other local authorities as the track targets were set personally to the young people within the school. Benchmark of each key-stage were compared with other local authorities. In detail, young children in the 'below target' cohort were a grade below their predicted trajectory, and young children in the 'significant' cohort would have had additional mitigated circumstances that affected their trajectory.
- Good Development Level was a measure for young children in reception at aged 5. Greater Depth was beyond the national expected standard (higher achieving standard).
- There were three secondary school exclusions in the borough which were rescinded and upheld by governing bodies, and effectively Croydon did not officially have any exclusions from Children Looked After in the academic year. The children were provided further intervention. There were no primary school CLA exclusions.
- Attendance in schools had been affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. The primary school cohort had a very strong attendance and secondary school attendance had dipped hugely. The attendance lead staff member within the cohort helped to improve the young person's attendance on a case by case basis. It was established that late attendance was marked as a non-attendance (high numbers of young children were marked as absent for being very late); further, during the pandemic, not all schools marked attendance in the same way, meaning some children were marked as absent for home learning and not present in the school building.

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

- The role in which the Panel would play to explore how to demonstrate the continuance in supporting young people to success.

The Chair welcomed the excellently detailed report and presentation from Virtual School and the Panel congratulated Virtual School on the work over the last few years particularly seeing better results in the PEP and SEND expectation and understanding the education sector.

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

8/21 Independent Visitor Service and Mentoring Services

The Corporate Parenting Panel considered the Independent Visiting Service report which provided an overview of volunteering services provided to Children Looked After in Croydon. The Panel received an overview from the Independent Reviewing Officer & Independent Visiting Service Manager Adam Feron-Stanley.

A short video was presented at the Panel titled "Have your say" which illustrated a young person's experienced support from their Independent Visitor, capturing the value of the relationship based practice and volunteering.

In response to queries raised by the Panel, the Independent Reviewing Officer & Independent Visiting Service Manager clarified the following:

- The framework around the issues of safeguarding and continued support were to avoid ad hoc relationships Post 18; and with working models, the service invited more quality assurance with the Local Authority Designated Officer who reviewed any allegations against adults. The framework also included reviewing its appropriateness for both the young person and the volunteer in supporting relationships.
- Volunteers were taken from various platforms such as the website portal, local advertisement (to where a young person was based), volunteering pages and word of mouth. Training was intensive that consisted of an interview, five days of training, panel interview and matching. This was done to ensure that volunteers were volunteering for the right reasons, making time and space in their life to prepare for commitment, and further addressing their values in volunteering.

The Chair appreciated the great work from the service and particularly consistent support provided to young children Post 18, which was a good success. Further highlighting the 15% against the national average which was also an accomplishment. Additionally, the Panel acknowledged the presentation and the good work from the Independent Visiting Service around loss and change and encouraged the service to maintain the support the relationships of the young person and their Independent Visitor.

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

9/21 Children in Care Performance Scorecard

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

- *CLA10 and CLA11 - Visiting*: these were coloured amber and slightly off target from being marked green, which was a consequence of a service restructure over the summer months and other mitigating circumstances affected by covid-19 effecting availability. This was to be improved.
- *CLA 14, CLA 15 and CLA 16 - Care Plans, Pathway Plans and Health Assessment Plans*: these were coloured red and was a continued concern within the service in keeping up to date. Significant impact included high level support a young person required, which was often the challenge social workers had in completing plans within time; there were also practice issues that the service was reviewing to address within the coming months.
- *CLA 19 - Young person having the same social worker for a number of time*: The ongoing service restructure and loss of staffing resulted in social workers keeping cases for a longer period of time.
- *CL 1a - NEET*: Some of the issues of the care leavers were unavoidable.

The green key performance indicators were reflected as very good.

In response to queries raised by the Panel, Interim Director of Early Help and Children's Social Care clarified the following:

- Better outcomes was to come in regards to the key performances indicators: care plans, pathway plans and health assessments that had often been highlighted in red for a significant length of time. This included further implementing staff training together with understanding the impact the plans and meetings had for children and the process of recording them on time. As part of the service, the restructure had created a 16-25 team and a 0-16 team which would provide more focus on the 16+ young children and the younger children. Supervision was another area for improvement, to respond and supervise difficult circumstances.
- The scorecard did not illustrate the impact of any obstruction to why plans were not up-to-date, though when officers reviewed the percentages of children who had plans out of timescale, it was noted

that $\frac{3}{4}$ of them were out of date by a couple of weeks, though the detail of this was not clear and would be looked into further for future reports.

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ACTION – for some Panel Members to work with officers to provide additional scrutiny focusing on understanding key indicator detail, and bring back to the Panel.

The Panel **RESOLVED**: To note the October performance scorecard.

10/21 How has the Panel helped Children in Care today?

There were positive feedback throughout the meeting on how the Panel had helped the Children in Care today. Further reflection was shared on the focused discussions of how well children were supported and highlighting positive messages.

11/21 Work Programme

The Work Programme was received with no amendments.

12/21 Exclusion of the Press and Public

This was not required.

The meeting ended at 7:47pm.

Signed:

Date: