

Corporate Parenting Panel

Meeting of Corporate Parenting Panel held on Thursday 23rd June 2022 at 5.00 pm.
F10, Town Hall, Katharine Street, Croydon CR0 1NX in Room F10, Town Hall, Katherine
Street, Croydon, CR0 1NX

MINUTES

Present: Councillor Maria Gatland (Chair);

Councillors Sue Bennett, Mike Bonello, Samir Dwesar, Maddie Henson, Tamar Nwafor, Helen Redfern and Catherine Wilson,

Co-optee Members

Manny Kwamin (Foster Carer Representative)

Also

Present:

Roisin Madden (Director of Children's Social Care)

Shaun Hanks (Head of Children in Care and Care Experienced Young People)

Kim Jones (Youth Engagement Practitioner (E.M.P.I.R.E))

Maret Arselgova (Youth Engagement Practitioner E.M.P.I.R.E.)

Child K (E.M.P.I.R.E)

Kerry Crichlow (Director Quality, Commissioning & Performance (Deputy DCS))

Adam Fearon-Stanley (Service Manager IRO & Children's Participation)

Apologies:

For lateness Councillors Maddie Henson Tamar Nwafor

Co-optee Members: Shelley Davies, Porsha Robinson, Lajay Taylor, Angela Christmas

PART A

32/22 Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 27 April 2022 were agreed as an accurate record.

33/22 Disclosures of interest

There were none.

34/22 Urgent Business (if any)

There was none.

35/22 Update on actions agreed at previous meeting(s)

There were none.

36/22 Terms of Reference

The Chair welcomed the new Panel to a new cycle and municipal year which was formed of a new membership and shared that the Panel was in need for new changes this year.

ACTION – Senior officers to review and update the Terms of Reference for the Corporate Parenting Panel.

37/22 Corporate Parenting Panel Moving Forward & Forward Plan

The Chair informed the Panel of the proposals for how the Corporate Parenting Panel would deliver in the future which included the Forward Plan.

The Chair reminded the Panel that the Corporate Parenting Panel's role was to ensure they were doing all that they could for children in social care.

The Panel discussed change within the Panel meetings and suggested that the Panel meetings were to be of a business forum, ensuring that the services was delivered to young people; by this direction, the Panel would be better corporate parents and carry responsibility that they ought to have.

Councillor Tamar Nwafor attended the meeting at 5:11pm.

The Director of Children's Social Care added that future Panel meetings would be better structured, to include child focused sessions, where children and care experienced young people would attend Panel meetings where appropriate for their understanding. Formally, the Panel meetings addressed what was asked of the Council by capturing the view of the parents, young people, foster carers and more.

Panel Members welcomed the idea for more involvement with the young people particularly where experiences were to be addressed, it was important for the Panel to understand from a child's perspective to cross reference.

Members of E.M.P.I.R.E shared with the Panel of previous Q&A sessions with senior practitioners that was attended by young people, where questions such as 'What can you do to be more parent and less corporate' was asked. E.M.P.I.R.E shared that this Q&A session constructed compelling conversations as young people were able to speak their truth and empowered conversations. E.M.P.I.R.E was happy to continue to build on these sessions for effective partnership with actions to work with young people. Upon reflection, E.M.P.I.R.E appreciated that everyone was working towards the same goal.

In conclusion, the Panel agreed to split the Corporate Parenting Panel meetings to provide more business material, further, to engage with E.M.P.I.R.E to learn and understand what young people would want from corporate parents.

ACTION – Officers to work with E.M.P.I.R.E on a programme for Members of the Panel for visits that they need to do to understand lived experienced and help Member move forward as Corporate Parents.

38/22 Children in Care Council E.M.P.I.R.E. Update

Members of E.M.P.I.R.E updated the Panel with some of the activities the young people had partaken in. They shared that there were fourteen activities booked for the summer provision, with a residential trip due in October.

The monthly Sunday service had commenced, which was to support young people in transition for moving to a semi-independence or care leavers. The service also included conversations and sharing ideas with lived experienced care leavers with other advice provided. The Sunday Service was a shared space for peers to listen to their truth. E.M.P.I.R.E hoped to attain that young people and care leavers feed into their forums to take and be part of decision process. E.M.P.I.R.E had also created a training programme to help young people express themselves on various platform whilst speaking with senior professionals, carers and young people. This helped maintain relationships for positive change.

Panel Members welcomed the provision from E.M.P.I.R.E. and the Sunday service which saw a safe space for young people within the community and enabled young people to be open in their feelings.

In response to the question from Panel Members relating to Sunday Service, the Youth Engagement Practitioner of E.M.P.I.R.E shared that the first Sunday service session saw eleven young people in attendance which was a good turnout. The service provided to the young people were tools to receive information and add further support to their need.

In response to the question relating to accommodation provided for young people who have reached university, and the local offer for young people who have reached university and transitioning from 1st year to 2nd year, the Head of Children in Care and Care Experienced Young People clarified that councils could not act as guarantors and this was being reviewed, additionally communication with the homeless department was under review as this was a gap to be closed.

During the discussion, the Panel identified that there were issues and a lack of communication with young people and other service officers in relation to the home allowances and other packages and local offer offered. The Panel

addressed that communication was something that needed improvement and reviewed in more detail as there was a gap in what the council had to offer.

Councillor Maddie Henson attended the meeting at 5:39pm

Further, the Panel Members discussed the local offer leaflet and booklet for young people which was a standard item on Looked After Children Reviews that E.M.P.I.R.E had an impact on. The Youth Engagement Practitioner shared that E.M.P.I.R.E was very inclusive on this work and had worked within and above their means and were more than happy to share lived experiences with powerful messages to share.

The Chair was grateful for the inspiring service from E.M.P.I.R.E and thanked E.M.P.I.R.E for their contributions. The Panel welcomed the complaints and compliments discussed.

39/22 Children's Social Care Placement Sufficiency & Update on South London Commissioning Programme

The Corporate Parenting Panel considered the Children's Social Care Placement Sufficiency & Update on South London Commissioning Programme, which provided an update on work undertaken by the South London Commissioning Partnership, which sought to address, and collaboratively respond to a number of commissioning workstreams for Children and Young People. The report also contained an update on the commissioning teams intentions to refresh the accommodation and sufficiency strategy. It also contained a summary of the strategic priorities of the programme for the period 2022-23. The Panel received a short presentation overview from Kerry Crichlow, Director Quality, Commissioning & Performance (Deputy DCS).

In summary, the Panel heard that:

- In 2013, the Department for Education (DfE) awarded Croydon funding which aimed at testing out the proof of concept for successful commissioning and alliance alongside with other boroughs with Croydon as the host for this partnership.
- Since 2013, the DfE funding had fallen out and was now based on subscription with two elements, homes for children in care and special educational needs (with providers).
- There were enough decent quality homes for young people.
- There were now five local authorities that was part of the partnership.
- There were delivery priorities for 2022/23 and what the future held for the South London Commissioning Programme.
- An outlined timeline for the accommodation strategy was streamlined.
- The young children were the centre of this work, which reflected on what was seen as good through their eyes.

The Director Quality, Commissioning & Performance (Deputy DCS) further addressed that the service aimed for young people to be involved in making the service better.

Panel Members thanked the officers for the annual report which was a huge improvement. The future priorities were also welcomed.

In response to queries raised by the Panel, the Head of Children in Care and Care Experienced Young People clarified the following:

In relation to the timeline for the sufficiency strategy to be completed, the service was working towards the end of March 2023. The team were working for a more detailed project plan, and there was more engagement with adults and young people. The process to this was to discuss the work with the Chair and E.M.P.I.R.E for a more inclusive positioning and setting out Croydon providers and organisations to work with.

In relation to the service consulting with social workers and personal advisors who worked with young people residing in the provided homes, the Panel was informed that there were various conversations with partners which included seeking other services that would form a view for young people. The service was seeking to take a more robust view in how information was triangulated for where differences could be made for a more accurate view.

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

The importance of young people being part of the consultation, with the inclusion of young people with diverse background, challenging need, and complex behaviours to be supported. There were a number of opportunities to engage and build relationships with young people at different stages and ensure that their voices were important, additionally having a safe person to work with them and share their needs.

The importance of listening to young people through their reviews, feedback and voices, and support children in the homes they reside in. Further the sufficiency strategy would also review children with complex needs that were deemed high risk.

The Panel **RESOLVED** to:

1. Note the updates and progress of the South London Commissioning Programme and the strategic priorities of the programme for 2022-23.

and
2. Note the update of the refresh of the accommodation and sufficiency strategy for children looked after and the associated timescales for this workstream.

40/22 Independent Reviewing Officer Annual Report

The Corporate Parenting Panel considered the Independent Reviewing Officer Annual Report, which provided an update on analysis of the activity of the Independent Reviewing Officer Service and its effectiveness and impact on children's and young people's safety and care in Croydon between 31st October to 31st April 2022.

The Panel received a short presentation overview from Adam Fearon-Stanley, Service Manager IRO & Children's Participation.

Panel Members thanked the officers for the annual report as a huge improvement. The upcoming priorities addressed within the report was also welcomed.

In response to queries raised by the Panel, the Service Manager IRO & Children's Participation clarified the following:

In relation to the frequency of Looked After Children (LAC) Reviews per young person, the Panel were informed that the number of LAC Reviews for a young person was based on their circumstances. At the point of the review, the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) would have oversight on the progress made which was an effective way to track collaborated progress, further the IRO would have more discretion to initiate the reviews within six months. Equally, a LAC review for a young person may happen earlier depending on the rationale of the child and their progress. Officers were mindful of not having too many reviews to also allow work to take place.

In relation to the reduction of caseloads, the Head of Children in Care and Care Experienced Young People clarified that the main reason for the reduction was the amount of work completed with the unaccompanied asylum-seeking children which included transporting cases much quicker. Cases would remain in Croydon services for between four and six months before they were transferred out of borough. Statistics had shown that the service was working well.

The Panel **RESOLVED** to note the report.

41/22 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 Head of Children in Care and Care Experienced Young People, Shaun Hanks.

In response to queries raised by the Panel, the Head of Children in Care and Care Experienced Young People clarified the following:

In relation to the significant reduction of Children Looked After being a result of the Covid-19 pandemic and its consequence, and the unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, would the numbers increase as the country moved out of the pandemic? The answer was unknown as statistics had shown that during the pandemic caseloads did increase and caseloads had also reduced. There was continued support from the Early Help services to address some of the arising issues in supporting families. The Director of Children Services added that the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic had seen numbers risen for Child Protection cases where some children had gone into care, and this had been due to the impact of services available. Services were doing all they could to manage this. The Service Manager IRO & Children's Participation also addressed the issue around the judiciary of supervision orders where services were much more reluctant to separate children, and thus the focus to return children home was under review.

In relation to the low percentages relating to the key indicator CLA 17 (the initial health assessments requested for health service within three working days of date child become looked after), and the key indicator CLA 18 (the initial health assessments delivered within 20 working days of date child became looked after), the Panel heard that this was a result of how quickly a form was completed within a certain time as the turmoil of a child going into care was sometimes missed. There was also a small number of children who led to the variant of percentage being reported, and this could be missed by a day and a half. Officers further informed that the service was working on including the parent's agreement for children to be giving a medical. This included providing more parent friendly paperwork for parents to avoid complication or a notion of uncertainty. The work included the front door service tracking all children who came into care and ensuring all forms were completed within a certain time and included consent for the health service.

Panel Members commented on the excellent work over the last twelve months in relation to the key indicator AD8 (the average time between the LA receiving court authority to place a child and the LA deciding on a match to an adoptive family (days) (12 months rolling average)), and asked what learning was required throughout the year and how could it be carried in the future. The Head of Children in Care and Care Experienced Young People shared that the proactive approach in working with the Adopt London South helped provide better communication with other services and in relation to the judiciary and delays, further, there had also been enthused conversations to ensure services were working better together.

Further, Panel Members noted that children were adopted quickly, and asked whether Croydon was part of a service where adoption was. It was confirmed that Croydon was part of the Adopt London South. The regional adoption agency was made mandatory which was two years old. Staff were working with the reviewing officers as there was a lot more focus on adoption. It was noted that some adopters were approved foster carers, though there was a different process for relinquished children. There were also children who did not match to a family and was the alternative picture in the data.

The Chair referenced the number of red key indicators on the scorecard and queried on the progress. The Head of Children in Care and Care Experienced Young People informed that the key indicator CLA14 (the percentage of eligible CLA with an up-to-date Care Plan (6 months)), and CLA 15 (the Percentage of eligible CLA with an up-to-date Pathway Plan) were linked together.

In detail, the Head of Children in Care and Care Experienced Young People informed that the key indicator CLA14 had jumped up in percentage and the key indicator CLA15 (for children aged 16-17) were looked after children of which most of them had a care plan and a pathway plan for being looked after for more than thirteen weeks. Though every child had a care plan, it was apparent not all had a pathway plan. Of the 174 children in care; 125 had an up-to-date pathway plan; there were 27 children who did not have a pathway plan triggered or started due to case transfers between services and system issues; and there were 22 children who had a pathway plan out of date.

The Chair was optimistic that the service was working towards green key indicators. There was also a lot of green key indicators on the scorecard which had shown there was a lot of improvements, additionally, the scorecard reflected on how the service was looking after the young people.

The Chair encouraged the Panel to review the Scorecard carefully and to scrutinise what was working and not working for children and young people and the reasons and challenges that lie behind the indicators.

42/22 How has the Panel helped Children in Care today?

The Panel **RESOLVED** to review this item at the next meeting.

43/22 Exclusion of the Press and Public

This was not required.

The meeting ended at 7.09 pm

Signed:

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Date:

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