



MINUTES OF THE CORPORATE PARENTING COMMITTEE

Monday 14 July 2014 at 6.00 pm

PRESENT: Councillor Moher (Chair) and Councillors Conneely and Hossain

Also present: Councillor Dixon

Apologies were received from: Councillor Thomas

1. Declarations of interests

None declared.

2. Deputations

None.

3. Welcome

Gail Tolley (Strategic Director, Children and Young People) welcomed members to the first meeting of the council's Corporate Parenting Committee which had been preceded by an induction session. The session had outlined to members the responsibilities of a Corporate Parent and received a presentation from Care In Action (the Looked After Children Council) from representatives present at the meeting.

4. Terms of Reference

The committee's terms of reference, as agreed at the Annual Meeting in June, 2014 were noted.

5. Corporate Parenting Scorecard

The committee considered the Corporate Parenting Scorecard, a revised version of which was tabled at the meeting. Graham Genoni (Operational Director, Social Care) advised that the scorecard presented an opportunity for members to be assured how well the department was functioning. The authority had slightly less than the national average of children in local authority care and all were allocated to a social worker. Placements were relatively stable.

Graham Genoni agreed to report to a future meeting on adoption, the number of placements for which was also relatively low. He was pleased to report that the average number of days between a child entering care and moving in with its adoptive family had improved significantly. Data on employment and the number of

young parents would be reported to the next meeting. There was strong performance in the timeliness of reviews for children in care, with the young people being very involved. On the number of Looked After Children in custody, the numbers were low however some children then came into care after having been involved in crime.

Members, in discussion, raised questions on in and out of borough placements and breakdown of adoptions. Graham Genoni acknowledged that the authority had a strategy of placing gang affiliated children further away in an effort to break ties and help give them a fresh start. Performance on the breakdown of adoptions was good with only one in the last five years. This was due in part to the work of the Post Adoption Team and the use of Special Guardianship Orders. The committee noted that participation of LAC at their reviews had decreased from 98% to 92% in the first quarter of 2014-15 and Graham Genoni agreed to report back in more detail to the next meeting.

The committee heard that there was no evidence of reluctance on the part of schools, including academies, in taking Looked After Children and the role of the Headteacher of the Virtual School for Looked After Children was key.

6. Report on placement stability

Vernon Bamforth (Care Planning and Children in Care) introduced the report on placement stability a key area of performance of Children's Social Care. 15% of 3+ placement moves was above that of neighbouring boroughs and he drew attention to the challenges likely to result in placement breakdown particularly in middle to late teen years. Data also suggested a correlation with gang affiliation and efforts were being made to map out-of-borough placements to avoid easy access to gang involvement. Vernon Bamforth drew attention to the action plan in place to improve placement stability. Residential care was rare and mainly for children who presented extremely challenging behaviours. Support initiatives also included increasing the numbers of Brent foster carers for children who may have complex needs, presented challenging behaviours or have complex relationships with birth families. Also, a new Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service was due to start work with the council imminently.

7. Annual Independent Reviewing Officer report

Sarah Alexander, Head of Safeguarding and Quality Assurance presented the Annual Independent Review Officer's report April 2013-March 2014. There was a legal requirement for every looked after child to have an IRO and Sarah Alexander referred to the benefits of the IRO in providing consistency and continuity in children's care planning. She drew members' attention to data on ethnicity and gender of the cohort of Looked After Children and the significant number of reviews that had taken place. Sarah Alexander drew attention to the Advocacy Service and its work in representing children unable to adequately represent themselves in care planning meetings. The committee heard that problems in the care planning process could be escalated up the management hierarchy to get a resolution.

Sarah Alexander recognised that more work was required around health assessments ensuring they took place within timescales and an action plan was in place.

Members thanked Ms Alexander for her presentation.

8. **Any other urgent business**

None.

9. **Date of next meeting**

The next meeting was due to take place on 6 October 2014.

The meeting closed at 7.00 pm

R MOHER
Chair