

Scrutiny Review – Corporate Parenting



A REVIEW BY THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MAY 2011

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Chair's Foreword:

The Council has an important duty in making sure that looked after children and young people (LACYP) have the same opportunities as other children. We know that many LACYP face tough challenges and do not generally enjoy outcomes that match those of other children. The Panel was nevertheless very pleased to find out just how well many LACYP in Haringey do, particularly in terms of their educational attainment. We were also very impressed by the children and young people that we met, who were very articulate and highly motivated. They had often successfully overcome considerable adversity.

There is nevertheless still room for improvement as outcomes for LACYP still lag behind those for other children. This review looks at what the Council and its partners currently do to support these young people and improve their health, well being and life chances and makes recommendations for how this could be further enhanced. The key message that has come out of our work is that the responsibility for corporate parenting needs to be shared more widely. It is not just down to Children and Young People's Services - we should all make at least some contribution, including Haringey Councillors.



Councillor Joseph Ejiofor
Chair of the Review Panel

Executive Summary

Corporate parenting requires the sharing of responsibility by the whole local authority and its partner agencies for meeting the needs of looked after children and young people (LACYP) and ensuring good outcomes for them. Those parts of the Council that have direct responsibility for providing services for LACYP will inevitably assume the vast majority of the responsibility. This applies particularly to the Children and Young People's Service (C&YPS). The Council's other departments - Leisure, Housing, Adults, Environment - however share this responsibility and should understand how they can contribute to meeting the statutory duty on the local authority to act as the best possible parent for each child they look after. Whilst the involvement of those departments that lack a direct role in providing services to LACYP may always be subject to inherent limitations, there is nevertheless scope for them to do more. The Panel would therefore like to see the responsibility shared more widely and embedded into the business planning process of the Council. Even small areas of assistance can potentially be of great benefit to LACYP and the Panel is of the view that all areas of the Council should ensure that they contribute something.

The Council does not only exist to provide services. It also has both a community leadership and place shaping role and works with a large number of third party organisations. The Panel is of the view that the Council should use its position of influence to promote the needs of LACYP amongst partners and other external bodies and encourage them to provide opportunities as well.

Children often benefit greatly from having assertive parents who actively promote their interests and ensure that they get the best. LACYP should particularly benefit from having their corporate parent to do this for them. The Panel is of the view that this is one area where Members and officers who are not currently directly involved can contribute significantly, by asking the same questions as any parent would and demanding the best possible outcomes.

The educational attainment of LACYP in Haringey is a success story and the achievements of the young people deserve to be celebrated more widely. However, there is still room for further improvement, particularly in the light of the continuing gap with the attainment of other children. More challenging but achievable targets may help to secure even greater success.

Teenage pregnancy can be detrimental to the life chances of LACYP. The Panel is therefore greatly encouraged at the current low levels of teenage pregnancies amongst LACYP. It is nevertheless aware that they are at particular risk and concerned to ensure that current take up levels for support are maintained in the light of budget reductions.

Like other children, LACYP should be encouraged to enjoy leisure pursuits. The Panel feels that this could be assisted further by providing all of them with free access to Council run leisure facilities.

LACYP can be very young when they leave home and become independent. Not all of them find this easy and the Panel is of the view that housing support for LACYP, whilst good, could be enhanced by assistance being available at an earlier stage and by greater assistance being provided for them in bidding for properties.

Finally, the Panel noted that many care leavers suffer from social isolation and have

emotional support needs. It therefore strongly supports the development of measures to improve support and, in particular, develop a mentoring scheme.

Recommendations:

1. That the corporate parenting function be embedded in the performance management framework of the Council through each Council service being required to identify a specific action within their business plan that contributes to their corporate parenting responsibility. (paragraph 2.17)
2. That, subject to minimum criteria being met for the person specification, all Council care leavers be guaranteed an interview for advertised posts within the Council for the first 5 years after leaving care. Care leavers should also be included in the Haringey Guarantee Scheme. (2.18)
3. That each Council service and key partner agencies be requested to identify a staff member of appropriate seniority to champion the interests of looked after children and care leavers and, in particular, provide a role in service development and as a key contact for staff working directly with children. (2.21)
4. That the Council use its key strategic role to influence partners and other third party organisations to provide opportunities and support for looked after children and care leavers. (2.22)
5. That, in order to enhance accountability and transparency, the Council should review and clarify the respective roles of the Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee (CPAC) and the Children's Safeguarding Policy and Practice Advisory Committee, including whether it remains appropriate for the Cabinet Member for C&YPS to chair the CPAC, and, in addition, allocate the specific role of providing scrutiny and challenge in both corporate parenting and the delivery of safeguarding policy and practice to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. (2.24)
6. That Member engagement be enhanced through:
 - Measures being taken to ensure that that all Members attend both initial and refresher training on their corporate parenting role;
 - All Members of the Council receiving more regular updates on looked after children and, in particular, their achievements;
 - An Annual Report to all members highlighting the Council's Corporate Parenting performance towards delivering the 47 promises that the Council signed up to in "*The London Pledge for Children and Young People in Care*" and performance monitoring statistics that Councillors are considered to have a "need to know"; and
 - All Members being given the opportunity to participate in celebrating the achievements of looked after children. (2.27)
7. That an appropriate scheme be developed for Members to champion the educational attainment of particular looked after children. (2.29)
8. That, in the light of concerns raised in evidence received by the panel concerning children missing from our care and especially those missing from our care homes, a scrutiny review be undertaken on the Council's policy, procedures, practices and performance in this area, including the "Missing From Care and Home" Action Plan

as well as the financial impact. (2.31)

9. That enhanced local education targets be developed that provide additional challenge to further improve educational achievement for looked after children. (3.18)
10. That a proactive approach be adopted to delivering and increasing the uptake of tutoring opportunities and to improve and expand the Study Centre. (3.23)
11. That funding be retained to provide specific sexual health provision for looked after children and care leavers, including advice on preventing conceptions. (4.22)
12. That all of Haringey's looked after children be provided with a free Haringey Active Pass offering 70% discount for use in Haringey leisure centres, irrespective of where they live. (4.29)
13. That the element of the carers allowance intended to provide for savings for young people be "top sliced" and used to establish individual savings plans or trust funds for children in care. (4.34)
14. That all schools be encouraged to repatriate funds provided from central government for careers guidance for LACYP to either Connexions or C&YPS and that, if successful, this be used to provide a dedicated worker providing careers advice for all Haringey's LACYP. (5.12)
15. That enhanced support be developed to assist care leavers with finding and maintaining accommodation and that this include support being provided from an earlier stage and a specific resource to assist them in bidding for properties. (5.17)
16. That a policy be developed on semi-independent living for looked after children between 16 and 19. (5.19)
17. That initiatives to improve emotional support for care leavers and the development of a specific mentoring scheme for care leavers be strongly supported that a report on progress be submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in due course. (5.22)
18. That enhanced systems for monitoring of long term outcomes be developed and in particular the progress of NEETs, and that a practical way for remaining in contact with vulnerable care-leavers into their 20s be developed. (5.24)

1. Background

1.1 The review was set up to look at how well the needs of Haringey's children and young people in care were being addressed. In doing this, it looked in depth at the contribution of a range of wide range of services provided by the Council and its partners to the parenting of LACYP including:

- Housing
- Leisure
- Adults
- Health

1.2 In addition, the review looked at the role played by Councillors and school governors.

1.3 The terms of reference for the review were as follows:

“To consider how well the full range of parental needs of looked after children and young people are addressed corporately by the Council and to make recommendations on how this role could be strengthened”

1.4 In undertaking this, the review specifically considered:

- How the educational needs of LACYP are supported
- The promotion of health and well-being
- Preparation for leaving care, including support for housing and training needs
- The role of local Councillors and how this can be enhanced
- How the views of LACYP are taken into account

1.5 The Panel considered a wide range of evidence, including:

- Research documentation, national guidance and targets
- Statistical evidence including relevant performance data and information on outcomes
- Comparison with other areas such as statistical neighbours
- Interviews with a range of stakeholders
- The views and concerns of LACYP, care leavers and foster carers.
- The results of a questionnaire of all Councillors

1.6 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee appointed the following membership of the Panel:

Councillors: Ejiofor (Chair) Alexander, Gibson and Solomon

Co-opted Members (statutory): Yvonne Denny, Marcelle Jemide, Sarah Marsh and Sandra Young

2. Corporate Parenting - Roles and Responsibilities

Introduction

- 2.1 Looked after children and young people (LACYP) are children who are in the care of the Council through a care order made by a court or voluntary arrangements.. They can be looked after in a children's home or by foster carers or by other family members. Care leavers are children who have been looked after by the Council and are still provided with assistance, advice and guidance. Children and young people do not like the term but it is a term that is generally understood by people.
- 2.2 The term is defined in the statutory guidance issued to support the role of the Lead Member for Children's Services and the Director of Children's Services and also in the statutory guidance issued to support the Care Planning Placement and Case Review Regulations 2010. This recognises that Councils and their partner agencies should share the role of corporate parent to act as the best possible parent for each child they look after and to advocate on his/her behalf to secure the best possible outcomes by having the same interest in the progress and achievements of children and young people in its care as a good parent would have for their own children. The responsibility applies to the local authority *as a whole* and not just departments directly responsible for delivering services to children and young people. It requires ownership and leadership at a senior level and includes a key role for elected Members. The responsibility is also shared with the local authority's partner agencies.
- 2.3 Being a good corporate parent means that the Council should:
- Accept responsibility for children in it's care and make their needs a priority; and
 - Seek for them the same outcomes any good parent would want for their own children.
- 2.4 Whilst LACYP have a right to expect the same life opportunities and outcomes as other children, they may nevertheless experience disadvantage. Research indicates that they experience significantly poorer outcomes across a range of measures, including health and education:
- Nearly 50% have a diagnosable mental health disorder compared to 10% in the general population. Figures for those in residential care are even higher
 - Between a quarter and a third of rough sleepers have been looked after by local authorities as children
 - Children who have been in care are two-and-a-half times more likely to become teenage parents.
 - Young people who have been in care are disproportionately likely to become unemployed
 - Twenty-six per cent of prisoners have been in care as children, compared with just two per cent of the total population

LACYP in Haringey

- 2.5 Haringey is currently responsible for 601 looked after children and 462 care leavers. The largest age group is children between the ages of 10 and 15. The numbers have gone up significantly in recent years and are well above the national average yet they still track those of statistical neighbours. Encouragement and support is given to families to provide care where possible if the criteria are not met for the child to be looked after by the local authority. Children cared for by such “kinship” arrangements are not categorised as looked after. 65% of Haringey care leavers are in employment, education and training (EET) and 94% are in appropriate accommodation.
- 2.6 The Children Act 2004 and its statutory guidance specifies that the Cabinet Member for Children’s Services has the lead political role in respect of LACYP, contributing to and being satisfied that the local authority demonstrates high standards of corporate parenting, in particular by encouraging Members to promote the educational achievement and health and well-being of looked after children and children leaving care.
- 2.7 There is a particularly important role for C&YPS. In particular, the Director of Children’s services has a statutory role and officers in C&YPS have key responsibilities as they directly manage the case work and support for LACYP and care leavers. The Deputy Director for Children and Families has direct management responsibility for looked after children and children leaving care. Officers within the service have regular contact with relevant children and young people. Part of this role includes seeking their views on the care and services they receive. Officers in C&YPS also have a role in liaising with schools to ensure that they know which children and young people are looked after and are aware of their responsibilities to LACYP.
- 2.8 Council Officers working in housing services also have additional responsibilities relating to LACYP and care leavers. This includes helping to re-house care leavers and ensuring that they are supported effectively so that they are able to live independently and sustain their accommodation. LACYP should be given the same opportunities to take up hobbies and interests as other children and relevant services have a responsibility to ensure that they have access to these.
- 2.9 Communicating with LACYP and obtaining their views is undertaken in a range of ways. There was an expectation arising from the “Care Matters” White Paper that each local area would develop a pledge for looked after children based on its corporate responsibilities. London Councils agreed on a London wide pledge, which Haringey has signed up to. Every child and young person’s care or pathway plan must reflect how the commitments made in the pledge will be delivered for that individual child. There is also a requirement to set up a ‘Children in Care Council’ to enable regular dialogue and involvement from LACYP in developing and delivering services and to monitor the implementation of the pledge. This has now been set up in Haringey and has met twice. There should also be mechanisms in place for involving young people in care in the recruitment of key staff members.
- 2.10 All looked after children are required to have a named Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO). This person plays a very important role as a mentor for the young person. Such individuals are not connected with the decision making process.

Their primary focus is to quality assure the care planning process for each child and to ensure that his/her current wishes and feelings are given full consideration.

2.11 Haringey has a Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee (CPAC), which brings together Members from across the political spectrum. The CPAC is responsible for the Council's role as corporate parent for those children and young people who are in care. The Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee has the key role within the decision making structure in respect of LACYP. It was established in April 2009 and reports to Cabinet and full Council. It is chaired by the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People and has three other Members of the Majority Group and three Members of the Minority Group.

2.12 Its terms of reference are as follows:

- To be responsible for the Council's role as Corporate parent for those children and young people who are in care;
- To ensure the views of children in care are heard;
- To seek to ensure that the life chances of children in care are maximised in terms of health, educational attainment and access to training and employment to aid the transition to a secure and fulfilling adulthood;
- To ensure that the voice and needs of disabled children are identified and provided for;
- To provide an advocacy function within the Children's Trust and the Council on behalf of children in care;
- To monitor the quality of care provided by the council to Children in Care; and
- To ensure that children leaving care have sustainable arrangements for their future wellbeing

2.13 The Committee receives a range of statistical information including the numbers of children in care, their age groups, feedback from visits and educational performance. It has a specific role in listening to the views of children in care and the Committee meets with the Children in Care Council twice per year. Some LACYP have also attended meetings of the Committee and engagement events have been held, sometimes hosted by Tottenham Hotspur. The Committee also considers issues relating to the Councils two children's residential homes – Muswell House and Haringey Park.

2.14 The Panel received evidence from the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People. Whilst she felt that the Committee provided an element of challenge to C&YPS, it was unable to address the wider corporate parenting agenda and the role of other Council services and partners. Services such as parks and leisure had a particular role as both providers of services and potential sources of work placements. There was a specific officer in the leaving care team with responsibility for finding work placements and opportunities at a wide range of organisations had been found but, due to the junior status of the post, its influence could be limited. In addition, economic circumstances were currently very challenging and it was now difficult to arrange things like apprenticeships. She felt that other parts of the Council had the potential to contribute more through, for instance, providing work placement opportunities. One possibility would be to involve care leavers in the Haringey Guarantee scheme.

2.15 The Panel notes the conclusion of the recent OFSTED report on services for looked

after children that;

“Corporate parenting arrangements for looked after children are adequate but lack flair and imagination in engaging all partners and listening to users. Corporate parents could offer more challenge to services on behalf of looked after children, including in relation to setting joint service targets for continued improvement.”

2.16 It concurs with the view that the corporate parenting responsibility could be shared more equally across the Council and partners. Whilst C&YPS has the lead responsibility and will always have the greatest level of involvement, this does not mean that other services and partners cannot also make a significant contribution. There are a wide range of ways in which they could benefit LACYP and care leavers such as providing work experience, job opportunities, access to recreation and leisure facilities, support and mentoring. Any assistance that can be offered can potentially be of benefit to LACYP. Work experience is particularly important to young people and even a few weeks of work experience could make a lifetime of difference.

2.17 The Panel feels that there is a need to further embed the corporate parenting function into the performance framework to ensure that all services play their part. The Panel heard the fact that all services at Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council are required to identify an action within their business plan that would assist care leavers. It was noted that this initiative has already been identified as an example of good practice in training courses for relevant staff. The introduction of such a scheme in Haringey could help to ensure that each part of the organisation plays at least some part in corporate parenting and increasing opportunities for young people. Despite spending cuts, the Council is still a large organisation and should be able to provide some assistance and opportunities for LACYP. A range of offers could be made but mentoring, work placements or apprenticeships would be particularly welcome. Council staff could also help by acting as mentors and assisting with things such as mock interviews. This could help LACYP to develop aspirations and build better self belief.

Recommendation:

That the corporate parenting function be embedded in the performance management framework of the Council through each Council service being required to identify a specific action within their business plan that contributes to their corporate parenting agenda.

2.18 The Panel is of the view that the Council could play a particular role in assisting care leavers in finding employment. In addition to its corporate parenting responsibilities, it is also one of the largest employers in the area. It therefore feels that it should guarantee an interview for care leavers for all advertised posts provided they meet the minimum criteria for the person specification. Such a move would also assist in encouraging other organisations to offer work opportunities as the Council will be able to provide an example from its own practices.

Recommendation:

That, subject to the minimum criteria for the person specification being met, all Council care leavers be guaranteed an interview for advertised posts within the Council for the first 5 years after leaving care. Care leavers should also be included in the Haringey Guarantee Scheme.

2.19 The Panel noted that the recent OFSTED report on looked after children had stated that the work of the Council's Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee was not disseminated across the partnership. Improvements to address this and other issues that have been highlighted by C&YPS have already begun to be put into place. For example, a multi agency group from across the Council and partners had been set up to champion the interests of LACYP in different parts of the organisation and outside. The Panel noted an initiative being developed in the London Borough of Greenwich to appoint LACYP champions within the Council and key partner organisations. These are identified staff members who provide key services to LACYP and can "unblock" problems where the useful joint working arrangements are not working for individual children and young people.

2.20 They can also provide:

- A service development role by identifying key activities or initiatives which could make a positive contribution to the welfare of LACYP
- A monitoring and reporting role by identifying what activities the department or partner in question is undertaking
- A role as a key contact for staff working directly with LACYP so they can be contacted for support or guidance.

2.21 The Panel is of the view that a similar initiative should be launched in Haringey as this could assist in ensuring that all Council services and key partner agencies share corporate parenting responsibilities as well as increasing opportunities for LACYP.

Recommendation:

That each Council service and key partner agencies be requested to identify a staff member of appropriate seniority to champion the interests of looked after children and care leavers and, in particular, provide a role in service development and as a key contact for staff working directly with children.

2.22 Local authorities do not only have a role in providing services. They also have a community leadership role. As part of this, the Council works closely with local strategic partners as a "place shaper" and promotes community cohesion. It has a relationship with a wide variety of external organisations and has an important commissioning role. The Council could therefore also potentially use its position and influence to promote the interests of LACYP through a wider range of channels.

Recommendation:

That the Council use its key strategic role to influence partners and other third party organisations to provide opportunities and support for looked after children and care leavers.

2.23 The Panel notes the role of the Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee and recognises the useful and important role that it undertakes. However, its formal function within the decision making structure is as a Cabinet advisory body and, accordingly, it is chaired by the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People. As previously stated, the recent OFSTED report identified a need for “more challenge to services on behalf of looked after children”. The Panel is of the view that this would be best addressed by specifically allocating the role of providing challenge and scrutiny in corporate parenting to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. As a non Cabinet and semi independent body, it is best placed to undertake these important roles and therefore enhance accountability and transparency.

2.24 The Children's Safeguarding Policy and Practice Advisory Committee is also a Cabinet body with an important role on issues concerning children and young people although it is not chaired by the Cabinet Member. The Panel is nevertheless of the view that the role that this body has in providing challenge and scrutiny would, as well, be better undertaken by one with a greater level of independence from decision makers.

Recommendation

That, in order to enhance accountability and transparency, the Council should review and clarify the respective roles of the Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee (CPAC) and the Children's Safeguarding Policy and Practice Advisory Committee, including whether it remains appropriate for the Cabinet Member for C&YPS to chair the CPAC, and, in addition, allocate the specific role of providing scrutiny and challenge in both corporate parenting and the delivery of safeguarding policy and practice to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The Role of Councillors

2.25 When they are elected, all Councillors take on the Council's role of 'corporate parent'. They have a duty to take an interest in the well-being and development of LACYP as if they were their own children. Although the Cabinet Member for Children's Services has particular responsibilities, the Council's responsibility to act as corporate parent is held by *all* Councillors, regardless of their particular role. There is an expectation that systems, processes and support should be in place to enable them to fulfil that role. This was emphasised in the launching of the *Quality Protects* programme in 1998, when the then Secretary of State wrote to all councillors about their role and said:

“Elected councillors have a crucial role. Only you can carry it out. You can make sure that the interests of the children come first. You bring a fresh look and common sense. As councillors you set the strategic direction of your council's services and determine policy and priorities for your local community within the overall objectives set by Government.”

2.26 The role of Councillors have, on behalf of the Council, as corporate parents is defined in 'Think Child' (1999) as the following:

- **“find out – get the facts and follow them up**
- **make decisions – play your part in the business of the council**
- **listen to children and young people – find out from them how your council’s services work for them and remember that children are citizens too**
- **be a champion for children – take a lead in your community in putting children first”**

2.27 The Panel undertook a survey of all Councillors in order to determine their views on their corporate parenting role. The Panel was disappointed that only 16 Members responded to the questionnaire. From the results, it appears that whilst Members are satisfied with the training and information that they receive, there may be a need for more regular and ongoing information. A wide variety of information is available including key performance indicators and can be shared with Members on a regular basis. Consideration needs to be given to what information might be of particular interest to Members and has the potential to improve engagement. The achievements of LACYP are celebrated through an annual event that takes places at Tottenham Hotspur and another event that specifically recognises the educational achievement of LACYP. However, space is limited so invitations can only be extended to a small number of Members. It would, however, be possible to circulate information after the event had taken place.

Recommendations:

That Member engagement be enhanced through:

- **Measures being taken to ensure that that all Members attend both initial and refresher training on their corporate parenting role;**
- **All Members of the Council receiving more regular updates on looked after children and, in particular, their achievements;**
- **An Annual Report to all members highlighting the Council’s Corporate Parenting performance towards delivering the 47 promises that the Council signed up to in “*The London Pledge for Children and Young People in Care*” and performance monitoring statistics that Councillors are considered to have a “need to know”; and**
- **All Members being given the opportunity to participate in celebrating the achievements of looked after children.**

2.28 One area of good practice from other local authorities involves providing a role for Members in championing the educational attainment of specific looked after children. This is a behind the scenes role where Members act as “pushy parents” on their behalf in order to help enhance educational outcomes. There is no direct contact with the children or young people, who are not normally aware of the involvement of a Member. It involves social workers keeping specific Members updated on the progress of particular children through periodic e-mails and/or telephone conversations. The intention is that the Member will use their influence to help overcome any barriers that the child might face in their education. Members are updated on the progress on the children and young people by the social worker.

2.29 A scheme of this nature has been undertaken in Westminster and is also being considered in Greenwich. Members involved have developed a greater understanding of the challenges that face LACYP whilst social workers have reported that the scheme has helped to enhance the quality of their work and not been a distraction. The Panel is of the view that it would be beneficial for such a scheme to be developed within Haringey. However, it is noted that the educational attainment of LACYP in Haringey is comparatively good and the scheme may therefore need to be adapted to better reflect local conditions.

Recommendation:

That an appropriate scheme be developed for Members to champion the educational attainment of particular looked after children.

2.30 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee has considered statistics on children missing from care on an ongoing basis. The Opposition Spokesperson, when giving evidence to the Panel, referred to this issue. The view of the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People was that the statistics do not always tell the full story. For example, the figures do not state how long the absence had been or how often. She stated that the issue is taken very seriously and if there was any suggestion that the whereabouts of LACYP were unknown, the Police were informed. It was a complex area and statistics required a degree of interpretation and explanation.

2.31 The Panel noted that foster carers were aware of their role and responsibilities if children went missing. It is included within the foster carers handbook and covered as part of foster carer support meetings. There is also an out-of-hours helpline. There are agreed London wide procedures for addressing such issues. Foster carers are involved, with the social worker, in the follow up to any instances where a child has gone missing. A risk assessment is undertaken together with an action plan. Where issues have previously arisen, plans are put in place before placements commenced.

Recommendation

That, in the light of concerns raised in evidence received by the panel concerning children missing from our care and especially those missing from our care homes, a scrutiny review be undertaken on the Council's policy, procedures, practices and performance in this area, including the "Missing From Care and Home" Action Plan, as well as the financial impact.

3. Education

Introduction

- 3.1 Education plays a crucial role in improving the life chances of LACYP. Foster carers that gave evidence to the Panel stated that education was the biggest challenge that faced LACYP. In 2008, only 14% of LACYP nationally achieved 5 A* - C GCSE grades compared to 65.3% of all children. Disruption caused by constant placement moves can have a particularly adverse affect on educational performance. It may not so much be the fact of being in care that causes LACYP to miss out on education but the circumstances which lead to them entering care. Ensuring LACYP have the right support to be able to participate fully in school life is therefore vitally important. For example, they may need specific help to catch up. A high proportion of LACYP see entering care as having been good for their education.
- 3.2 The previous government brought in the following initiatives to raise the educational attainment of looked after children:
- Each local authority now has a “virtual school head” to champion the educational needs of all LACYP;
 - Each school has a designated teacher for LACYP;
 - Children at risk of falling behind at school have a personal educational allowance; and
 - One-to-one tuition is available if necessary for some looked after children.

Performance Indicators

- 3.3 The National Indicator Set includes several performance indicators about LACYP and three specific educational targets were included within Haringey’s Local Area Agreement:
- NI 99; Looked after children reaching level 4 in English at Key Stage 2 – current performance 58.0% (target 47.0%).
 - NI 100; Looked after children reaching level 4 in mathematics at Key Stage 2 – current performance 63% (target 48.0%)
 - NI 101; Looked after children achieving 5 A*- C GCSEs (or equivalent) at Key Stage 4 (including English and mathematics) – current performance 17.5% (target 11%)

Admissions

- 3.4 The Panel noted that specific measures had been taken by the Council to ensure that LACYP have access to a good education. All care plans for children under five describe arrangements for the child to access high quality early years education. The Council also tries to ensure that children in its care go to the best possible schools available. The current admission criteria for both Haringey primary and secondary schools puts children in care as the highest priority.
- 3.5 The Panel noted that the Council's Virtual Head works with the Admissions Service

to ensure that all LACYP are placed appropriately. Efforts are made to ensure that all LACYP attend a school that is either as rated good or outstanding by OFSTED. Schools rated as satisfactory are considered if they are known to be particularly good at working with LACYP. It was noted that it is not always the best performing schools that are most successful at working with LACYP. School admission appeals are made if applications for preferred options are unsuccessful. Efforts are also made to put gifted children in schools that will enable them to realise their full potential.

- 3.6 However, unnecessary changes of school are avoided and children only moved normally as part of secondary transfer or other planned changes of school. Moving children during the year of their GCSEs can be particularly detrimental and is avoided wherever possible. Measures are also taken to ensure that children placed out of borough have the same access to high quality education as those in borough. In addition, there is also provision of £500 a year for looked after children who are at risk of not achieving expected standards.
- 3.7 There is now also guidance for local authorities on how to support carers in the SEN process. Additional funding is provided for looked after children to have the opportunity for 2 hours free extended activities per week. Home school agreements are also being reviewed in order to ensure that full consideration is given to foster carers and residential staff. Training for foster parents now addresses educational achievement and how to support children's literacy. School governors also have a role and specific training is now provided.

Attainment Levels

- 3.8 The Panel heard that good grades at GCSE are of particular importance for LACYP and help to keep them out of the NEETs (not in education, employment and training) category. The Panel noted that the ages between 16 and 19 can prove challenging if young people have not secured 5 passes at A – C. 69% of current care leavers are in employment and training, although this does not necessarily mean that they will go on to do well. Action to address the educational performance of LACYP focuses on the whole period of their education, up to 19 years of age. One of the reasons why the virtual school had been set up was to enable an overview to be taken. The service had not previously realised just how important the years between 16 and 19 were.
- 3.9 A number of tools are used in Haringey to monitor progress. Data is used and the progress of children tracked. The service can face particular challenges. For example, 40% of LACYP were the subject of fixed term exclusions in the last academic year and schools can find them hard to handle. However, there was only one permanent exclusion.
- 3.10 There is a requirement for all looked after children to be allocated a designated teacher to promote their educational achievement and this role has been strengthened in Haringey. There are also designated school governors for LACYP. All governing bodies have been:
- Sent information on statutory guidance for children in care; and
 - Offered bespoke training on strategic management of school systems in the context of this guidance to ensure LACYP make rapid and accelerated

progress

3.11 18 school governing bodies have taken up the offer of bespoke training. Governing bodies have responsibility for the oversight of the role of the Designated Teacher of Children in Care. On most governing bodies, this role is generally taken on by the either the Chair of Governors or by the Governor with responsibility for Safeguarding and Child Protection.

Exam results

3.12 The exam performance of LACYP in Haringey is a success story. Children in Haringey perform notably better than those in statistical neighbours and a significant number of care leavers – 44 at the moment - now go on to university. . GCSE results for 2010 were as follows:

- 17% 5A* - C including Maths and English
- 31% A5* - C
- 71% 1A – G

3.13 Only a few local authorities have achieved figures above 30% for A-C passes in 5 GCSEs for LACYP. Only 2 young people out of the 31% of LACYP that got 5 passes between A and C had been predicted to gain such passes two years ago at KS3.

3.14 Young people are not always successful though and things can happen to them which inhibit their performance. For some young people, getting one A-G pass might be a significant achievement and it is therefore important that the achievements of *all* young people children are celebrated.

3.15 It is normally the case that the performance of LACYP attending schools in borough do not vary significantly from those attending schools out of borough. However, the Panel noted that there was likely to be a big fluctuation in the GCSE performance figures for the forthcoming year as a large percentage of LACYP in this particular cohort were in specialist provision.

3.16 Consideration is now being given by C&YPS to what can be done to support 'A' level performance. There is currently a mismatch between birth dates relating to placements and the dates for 'A' Level exams which can lead to difficulties. Whilst care ends at 18, exams take place the following June for most young people.

3.17 Although the borough is doing very well, the aspiration is to do even better. This will allow young people to be more successful and independent and to close the gap with other children. C&YPS has high expectations for young people and had submitted more challenging targets than the ones that were set within the LAA but they were turned down. The targets had been nationally set as part of the set of performance indicators.

3.18 The Panel noted that it was possible to set local educational performance targets for LACYP. The Panel is of the view that current targets are relatively unambitious and that more challenging ones are achievable, particularly in view of the high quality support provided by C&YPS and the recent levels of success.

Recommendation:

That enhanced local education targets be developed that provide additional challenge to further improve educational achievement for looked after children

3.19 The Panel noted that all those who achieved 5 A-C grades were assisted by a range of opportunities including:

- Taking advantage of the 20 hours after school tuition that was offered in KS4
- Attending the Study Club. This had had existed since 2005 and involved young people between key stages 2 and 4 meeting every week with staff from the Tuition Service.
- Visiting Highgate Independent School as part of the Study Club for science lessons
- Undertaking work experience at Tottenham Hotspur

3.20 All of the young people remained in the same school and care placements during Key Stage 4. In addition, the Haringey Virtual School maintained regular contact with school designated teachers throughout. Interventions can be a range of simple and small things like getting to know the young people, showing an interest and having high expectations.

3.21 Foster carers that gave evidence to the Panel were of the view that the children that performed best were generally those that had received after school tuition at home and that provision of this had provided a real benefit for children. All LACYP are offered after school tuition and there is no need for children to be referred as this is a standing offer. The amount of tuition is fixed at 10 hours per academic year. In 2009, although 66 offers of tuition were made, only 29 were accepted. A lot of work is undertaken to ensure that the offer is accepted and there is currently a drive to encourage more young people to take up the offer.

3.22 The Panel is of the view that tuition offers clear benefits to LACYP. Take up levels could nevertheless be higher and it welcomes the fact that LACYP are encouraged by the service to take up such opportunities.

3.23 Panel Members visited the Study Centre for LACYP and were impressed with the dedication shown by the young people in attending the centre as many had come a long way. The centre was not considered to be very accessible. The young people felt that the centre had helped them to improve their performance and all of them were keen to attend. The Panel is of the view that all efforts should be made to both increase the level of tuition that is provided and to improve and expand the Study Centre.

Recommendation:

That a proactive approach be adopted to delivering and increasing the uptake of tutoring opportunities and to improve and expand the Study Centre.

3.24 The Panel noted that the service had been short listed for four Children and Young People Now awards. This included:

- One for corporate parenting for the work to develop a book club. This involved working with the Library Service and the Big Green bookshop to deliver books to children's homes.
- The Learning Award for their Study Club.
- There had also been a nomination for Third Sector Engagement for their South Africa project. This had entailed children and young people who were considered at risk from going into residential care getting the chance to go to South Africa.

3.25 In addition, BBC's Newsround has used the borough as an example of how children in care could do well academically. Of particular note was the partnership with Tottenham Hotspur who were involved in providing a range of opportunities and events for LAC, including work experience.

4. Health, Well Being and Leisure

Introduction

- 4.1 Although education is very important, LACYP have a range of other needs. For example, many can also experience poor health outcomes. LACYP share many of the same health risks and problems as their peers but they frequently enter care with a worse level of health due to the impact of poverty, abuse and neglect. For example, evidence suggests that looked after children are nearly five times more likely to have a mental health disorder than other children.
- 4.2 Local authorities, primary care trusts and strategic health authorities must currently have regard to statutory guidance issued in November 2009 on promoting the health and well-being of looked after children, which requires children in care to have a personal health plan. They must:
- Be registered with a GP
 - Have their immunisations up to date
 - Receive a regular health assessment and dental checks.

Health Assessments

- 4.3 The Panel received specific evidence on how the health and well being needs of LACYP were addressed. There are two nurses who work specifically with LACYP. A health assessment of children is undertaken after four weeks in care. This is reviewed every six months until the child is 18. Nursing staff liaise closely with social workers, who pick up on comments from assessments.
- 4.4 The service is offered first and foremost from Bounds Green Health Centre but the nurses can visit if need be. If any needs are identified, these are followed up to ensure that children receive the appropriate service. Comparisons can now be made with the health of other children and a tool has been developed that allowed a wider picture of health issues to be taken.
- 4.5 The previous system had been a source of frustration to C&YPS. Health assessments had been undertaken previously by GPs and the quality of them was considered to be variable. Foster carers could also find it difficult to get appointments with GPs for children. There was now an electronic system for recording assessments and consideration was currently being given to uploading this directly onto case records.
- 4.6 Nurses who are specially trained in sexual health issues are available and it is discussed in detail with young people. They can also provide Chlamydia screening and contraception. In addition, a lot of targeted work is undertaken and schemes like Teens and Toddlers used. A similar approach is adopted in respect of substance abuse.

Emotional Needs

- 4.7 The Panel noted that it is not unusual for LACYP to have a need for emotional support as they all come from difficult family situations. A small number have a specific psychiatric condition whilst others are upset, unhappy, traumatised or

neglected.

- 4.8 The Panel received evidence on the emotional support that is provided for LACYP in Haringey by the Tavistock and Portman NHS Trust. There are two different services that are provided by them:
- The Tavistock – Haringey service that was provided locally for children who were being fostered or in residential care or in transition between placements: and
 - The Fostering, Adoption & Kinship Care service provided centrally at the Tavistock Clinic in Swiss Cottage that was open to children in care once they had been permanently placed
- 4.9 The Tavistock-Haringey service is commissioned by C&YPS and based at Bounds Green Health Centre. It undertakes a lot of the work that would otherwise be done by CAMHS. The team is multi disciplinary and includes a psychiatrist, two psychotherapists, a family therapist and psychologist. Referrals came from social workers and other professionals. Specific packages of care are developed for individuals. The service takes children and young people who were based in or around Haringey and are currently providing services for 135 children in care, which was 22% of the total.
- 4.10 The service liaises closely with Barnet, Enfield and Haringey Mental Health Trust. They offer flexible services in a range of settings and endeavour to make them as accessible as possible. For example, home visits can be undertaken or clinics used for consultations. The Bounds Green location has the benefit of being co-located with nurses so physical and emotional issues could be better linked.
- 4.11 The Panel noted evidence from the Tavistock-Haringey service that it was a misconception to suggest that children could not access the service until permanently placed but it was acknowledged that the current arrangements could cause confusion. There is no waiting list for the local service. The central clinic is a pan London service that requires a referral from a GP. If issues need to be addressed urgently, the local service is available.
- 4.12 Foster carers felt that support services could respond more quickly and were of the view that this was particularly true of the Tavistock Clinic. Such support was not always wanted by children or carers or suitable for children. Many children went once and did not go back. Although some children needed counselling, others would be more suited to mentoring. Their perception was that that both the Tavistock and CAMHS had long waiting lists and there was little support that was available below this level.
- 4.13 It was noted that although some of the young people who are referred might feel that they do not need or want the service, they are referred because others, for instance their carers, teachers or social workers, are worried about them.
- 4.14 There is currently no formal system for following up on people who have been supported by them. There are close links with social workers so there is an awareness of how many young people progress through the system but long term outcomes are not known. There are differences between children's and adults

services but if emotional issues are identified at a later stage, professionals would want to look at the earlier history of patients. It was noted that the Leaving Care team might be in the best position to co-ordinate the monitoring of long term outcomes.

Challenging Behaviour

- 4.15 The Panel received evidence from some foster carers that there was a need for support to address challenging behaviour by young people as it was important that they understood boundaries. Working to impose discipline on them would be better than constantly moving them. It was noted that the service did not wish to have to move children in such circumstances but had to if carers were unable to cope. Challenging behaviour could sometimes be due to the experience of trauma.
- 4.16 Challenging behaviour is addressed through training for foster carers. In addition, Tavistock-Haringey can also provide assistance when required. Foster carers have social workers who are able to assist them whilst LACYP have their own social workers who can also have a role in providing support. There is also guidance on the issue included in the foster carer's handbook. It is also covered as part of annual reviews.

Sexual Health

- 4.17 The Leaving Care team has a particular role in addressing the sexual health needs of care leavers. It currently has a sexual health clinic on site. This service had been requested by the young people and can also be accessed by their partners. Chlamydia testing and condom distribution is carried out. It is currently not clear whether it will survive the current budget cuts. Whilst budget savings are taking place, the member of staff providing this service for LACYP will still remain as part of the service.
- 4.18 LACYP are a priority group for work to avoid teenage pregnancies. A number of young girls who are in care aspire to be mothers from an early age and some care leavers are young mothers. The motivation for this includes a wish to create a family and to provide a child with a better start than they had been given. A proportion of them have been subject to emotional distress and some have suffered sexual abuse. Some have little interest in protecting themselves and can see parenthood as an opportunity to have something of their own. Whilst some care leavers lose their children to adoption, the Panel noted that others are very good parents.
- 4.19 The number of young women getting pregnant has reduced. Figures for the last financial year are as follows:
- Under 16s: 4
 - 17 next birthday: 4
 - 18: 11
 - 19: 3
 - 20+: 10
- 4.20 The Panel noted that the service tries to influence young women to make different choices and a range of resources are available on site, including virtual babies

which can be used to give young people the opportunity of experiencing the reality of childcare. Young people in care have also access to the borough teenage pregnancy worker and the designated nurses.

- 4.21 The Leaving Care service also supports a number of young fathers and assists them in developing parenting skills. This can sometimes be difficult, especially where there are access issues. Efforts are made to keep young families together where at all possible. There are monthly targeted mother and toddler sessions and the partnership between nurses and families generally works well.
- 4.22 The Panel is concerned that the potential loss of the specific on site sexual health facility could have a detrimental effect on this vulnerable group of young people who may be less inclined to seek support and guidance if it is not so readily available.

Recommendation:

That funding be retained to provide a specific sexual health provision for looked after children and care leavers, including advice on preventing conceptions.

- 4.23 Whilst there is currently a dedicated post to address substance abuse, it is unlikely that this post will survive the current round of budget savings. This does not mean that no service will be provided for LACYP, however, since mainstream services can be accessed instead.

Leisure

- 4.24 It was noted that foster carers receive a weekly allowance that is intended to cover the full range of needs. Checks are made on how the allowance is used. Although this could be more specific about levels of activity and sporting opportunities, it is not possible to ring fence any money for certain activities as allowances are subject to national parameters. In addition, around two thirds of foster carers also live outside of the borough.
- 4.25 The Panel noted that the Leisure Service is responsible for a wide range of facilities including parks and leisure centres. It is a universal service and does not target specific groups of individuals. However, there are specific arrangements for some groups at Tottenham Green Leisure Centre and children from residential care homes can obtain free access to the pool.
- 4.26 The service is aware of the fact that leisure opportunities are important to many disadvantaged groups. However, they do not want to stigmatise them by specific targeting. They instead prefer to, where appropriate, provide vouchers to partners that offer concessionary prices to specific groups of people. They can then use facilities when they wish to.
- 4.27 Entitlement to concessionary rates for children in care who are fostered is currently dependent on the status of their foster carer(s). No leisure services are currently provided free – they are already heavily subsidised. For example, the economic cost of a swim is £7. The service costs the Council around £2 million per year. The service was concerned that if a particular group of people gained free entry, there

was the danger that it would set a precedent.

- 4.28 There are reduced rates for the Haringey Active card offered to specific groups within the community and discounts vary from 30% to 70%. Members of the Council had indicated that they were committed to continuing with this. The service promotes the use of its leisure centres but it accepts that they could link up better with particularly disadvantaged groups within the community, such as children in care.
- 4.29 The Panel notes that if leisure passes are bought for children in care the cost of these comes out of the budget for C&YPS. The Panel was unhappy about this and considered that this ought to be a cost shouldered by Leisure. It is of the view that it is inappropriate for one Council service to be charging another for services to its *own children*. The Panel would have liked to allow free access for LACYP to Council leisure centres but accepts that financial pressures will preclude this. However, a compromise could be to provide all LACYP with a free Haringey Active Card offering them a 70% discount. We contend that this will have little or no actual cost to leisure services, whilst also accepting that it will not be easy to quantify any potential loss of income that might occur as a result of this as this is dependent on the number of LACYP who might otherwise have leisure passes funded by C&YPS.

Recommendation:

That all of Haringey's looked after children be provided with a free Haringey Active Pass offering 70% discount for use in Haringey leisure centres, irrespective of where they live.

- 4.30 The Leisure Service has no specific schemes to assist with the career development of young people who wish to work in the leisure industry. However, they work closely with the College of Haringey, Enfield and North East London who run specific placement projects. They also provide work experience for local schools. There is a substantial need for lifeguards and a rookie lifeguard scheme for under 16s is currently provided. There were further opportunities that could possibly be investigated including increasing awareness amongst staff of the needs of children in care.
- 4.31 The Leisure Service does not have a volunteer programme. Qualified staff are required by the service and it is essential for their qualifications to be maintained. There is a casual pool of staff who filled in on an "as and when" basis. There is generally a low turnover of staff. Volunteers are, however, used in parks. There were also opportunities outside of leisure centres. For example, sports clubs require volunteers on a regular basis and can sponsor individuals who wished to gain coaching qualifications. The service could nevertheless look at what could be done to assist in terms of work placements.

Savings

- 4.32 Foster carers who spoke to the Panel suggested that all children in care should be given a trust fund that the Council controlled and that they received at the age of 18. The allowance given to carers currently includes an element for savings for

young people but not all carers are good at using this effectively. A trust fund could replace this. The longer that children were in care, the more money that they would get. It could also be extended to those cared for by agency carers. It was noted that the Council had looked at this option previously but it had proven to be difficult to set up.

4.33 The Panel noted that savings arrangements for LACYP were currently being reviewed and various options were being considered. Trust funds could be complex to administer but simple savings plans would not. This was due in part to the number of children and young people that passed through the Council's care. Many already had savings accounts but the service was looking to ensure there was appropriate provision for all LACYP. There was a particular need to consult with young people on this.

4.34 The Panel is of the view the provision of a trust fund would enable there to be some consistency in the savings provision that is made for LACYP. It could also assist in ensuring that good returns on savings were achieved for all LACYP.

Recommendation:

That the element of the carers allowance intended to provide for savings for young people be "top sliced" and used to establish individual savings plans or trust funds for children in care.

5. Leaving Care

Introduction

5.1 LACYP face particular challenges when they leave care. The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 sets out local authorities' responsibilities to help care leavers develop a 'pathway plan' to independence with the help of a personal adviser. Assistance must currently be provided for care leavers up to the age of 21 and beyond if they are in full time education. This is shortly due to increase to 25. The expectation is that Councils should provide the support a good parent would give on housing, education, training and employment. This can make the difference between achieving independence and requiring long-term help. Whilst Councils will now have a statutory duty to keep in touch with care leavers until they are 25, parents normally remain in touch and offer help and advice to their children throughout their lifetime.

The views of care leavers

5.2 The Panel met with a group of care leavers from a range of backgrounds to obtain their views on the issues that faced them on leaving care. All had been fostered and none adopted. Several of them were still in touch with foster carers and some still regularly visited them. The length of placements varied and there were often a number of social workers that they had contact with. The majority of them were currently in higher education. The following points were raised:

- The experience of being in care could affect their outlook on life. There was not much opportunity to talk about this. Support from social workers was good but sometimes they were over stretched. Young people got less attention as they got older but they still felt that they needed someone to provide support and guidance. Social workers were only available to provide support for them during the day and not out-of-hours.
- People could be wary of them and they were often reluctant to disclose that they had been in care because of this. Sometimes people were not aware that how they responded could be upsetting. Their reluctance to disclose could be a limiting factor on friendships as it meant that they put up barriers and were wary of becoming too close to people. They felt more able to be open with other people who had been in care. They were able to look after themselves and had adapted to being in care. They had learnt to be independent from an early age.
- Care leavers were frequently affected by loneliness and lack of social contact. There was nowhere for them to meet other people from a similar background and socialise. They met in cafés occasionally but this cost money. Although there were youth clubs, these cost money to attend which put them off going. In addition, youth clubs could be dangerous places due to the post code rivalries that existed. Just wearing the wrong clothes could result in trouble.
- Some of the accommodation that they were given was not regarded as being very good. Although they were given £500 to help them settle in, this was not felt to be sufficient. They were given some information and advice about housing but felt that more assistance could be provided. It could be hard to

make ends meet and it was easy to get into debt.

- They thought that they could be better prepared for leaving care through being given more explanation of life outside of care and what they would need to do. The sudden change could be traumatic and could happen when people were still very young.
- It could be tough being in higher education. Bills and travel costs had to be met and the student loan was not enough to cover these. It was particularly difficult for them to go to university outside of London as they would lose their home. It was noted that local authorities were now required to assist with this. A bursary was now available which amounted to around £2,000 over the period of the course. The young people had not been aware of this. The current situation meant that most young people in their situation would not go to university outside of London.
- They would all be interested in acting as mentors for other young people coming out of care. A mentoring scheme would be beneficial as young people might be more inclined to listen to advice from their peers.

Preparations for Leaving Care

- 5.3 The Panel received evidence on how young people were prepared for leaving care and supported once they became independent. The Leaving Care and Asylum Service works with young people between 16 and 21 and provides personal advisers and an after care service. Their work includes preparing pathway plans, which help to prepare young people for the transition to adulthood. These are holistic and include reference to their families as well as education and employment and housing issues. In addition, they also deal with both practical and emotional issues. Residential social workers assist young people who are placed in Children's Homes to develop their life skills.
- 5.4 The Panel noted that foster carers have a specific role in helping young people to prepare for leaving care. Care leavers are currently given £52 to live on and, to assist with this, they are taught budgeting skills. However, foster carers that gave evidence to the Panel felt that young people could sometimes not be prepared for the range of costs associated with independence, such as heating and lighting.
- 5.5 There is a range of accommodation options for young people who leave residential care at 16. If they are felt to be in substantial need, foster care was found. However, some young people are in residential care as they cannot cope with foster care. Permanent accommodation is normally found when a young person is 18, although exceptions can be made if further support is needed. Accommodation is normally social housing.
- 5.6 The Leaving Care team undertake work with particularly challenged young people. Whilst some young people cope very well with the transition, others struggle. In particular, some have mental health issues and, in such circumstances, links need to be developed with adult social care as well as mental health services. Care leavers can have problems with relationships and struggle to make friends.
- 5.7 The transition of support from C&YPS to Adults tends to be smoother if the referral

takes place before the age of 18. The lack of a diagnosis can be a barrier to this but they did not wish to unnecessarily stigmatise young people. Efforts are currently being made to improve the transition process. Once young people were known to Adults, there could be difficulties in engaging with them as there was a tendency for some to not turn up for appointments. C&YPS staff had to persuade them to attend in such circumstances.

- 5.8 The Cabinet Member for Children and Young People felt that the practical needs of care leavers were addressed well. Housing support was particularly effective with care leavers placed in the highest priority band for housing. Young people could be accommodated in a wide range of accommodation including some that was semi independent. All young people received specific guidance on finance and budgeting and there was also input from health partners.
- 5.9 The Panel noted that many care leavers take advantage of the services provided by Connexions and the Youth Service. The services have access to a young persons counselling service and can make referrals for mental health issues, substance abuse, trauma and other issues. Targeted support is available for young people at risk of offending.

Employment and Training Opportunities

- 5.10 The main purpose of Connexions is to help young people into employment and training. Although it is a universal service, much of its work is targeted. The service also receives referrals. The support that can be provided is generally of a light touch but more intensive assistance can be provided if need be. Individuals can be passed onto specialist advisers or referred to other services if necessary. The service is proactive in making contact with young people before the age of 16 and has good sources of information. All young people are tracked until the age of 19. The relationship with young people is nevertheless purely voluntary. Particular attention is given to young people not in education or employment (NEETs). The service works intensely with them and helps with things like the preparation of CVs. They liaise closely with Job Centre plus and Housing.
- 5.11 Connexions was funded by the Department of Education through Area Based Grant. However, this ended in March 2011. The Youth Service receives core funding but Connexions would have to revert back to being the Careers Service. Funding for the additional services that had been provided has been moved back to schools. Funding for career guidance for young people in care is to be given to schools but the Panel noted that they can pass it back to Connexions or to the local authority if they wished. The Panel is of the view that all schools should be 'strongly encouraged' to do this.
- 5.12 Careers education can also be undertaken as part of the school curriculum. The Panel noted that the Connexions worker in the Leaving Care team is to be lost and there is concern about the implications of this as it would make such assistance less accessible for care leavers.

Recommendation:

That all schools be encouraged to repatriate funds provided from central government for careers guidance for LACYP to either Connexions or C&YPS and that, if successful, this be used to provide a dedicated worker providing careers

- 5.13 The Panel also heard evidence on the Haringey Guarantee scheme, which is aimed at people above the age of 16 to help them get into sustained employment. The aim is to remove any barriers to finding work. An action plan is developed that aimed to not only get people into work but to enable them to stay in work. The scheme provides employment advisers and wrap around services. Training opportunities can be provided in a wide range of areas such as social work, security, construction and fashion. Support is also given to people who want to establish their own businesses. There are very good relations with Tottenham and Wood Green Job Centre plus as well as Connexions, who can refer to the scheme. The Panel noted that the future of the scheme in its current form was uncertain. However, it is likely that the opportunities that it provides will still be available in some form.
- 5.14 Job Centre Plus deals with young people with a wide range of needs. It is a universal service and they will not normally be aware that someone is a care leaver. There are close links with both the Haringey Guarantee scheme and Connexions. Some care leavers can be particularly attracted to a career in the armed services as it could appear to be an extension of the care background.

Housing

- 5.15 Care leavers above the age of 18 are considered for permanent housing when their placements end. Care leavers are given 'reasonable preference' under the Council's allocations policy. Approximately 1,000 households are re-housed into social housing each year, including roughly 200 who are re-housed in one bedroom flats. There are currently around 20,000 people on the Council's housing register. A new policy is shortly to be introduced which will see the end of the points system. It will instead place people into bands according to their level of need. A quota of care leavers (currently set at 50) will be placed in band A, which is the highest level of need. This normally means that they are re-housed in a matter of weeks/months rather than a longer period. The quota of 50 lets for care leavers will be reviewed each year to ensure that it is consistent with actual demand. The Panel noted that the Leaving Care team advise young people on what was the best option for them.
- 5.16 In situations where young people are placed out of borough, the responsibility to re-house them rests with the home borough. If they wish to re-locate to where they have been placed, they need to approach the Council in that area for assistance and, if necessary, make a homeless application. Alternatively, help can be given to them in finding private rented accommodation in that area. It is possible for young people to defer their right to be re-housed until after university if that is agreed in advance between the Housing Service, Leaving Care and the young person.
- 5.17 A social housing map is available that shows the location of properties, the nature of the area and what is available. If particular issues have been identified with a property, a decision can be made not to offer it to a young person and to deal with it as a "sensitive let". The service has someone who can assist people in bidding for properties and is able to look out for suitable properties for them. The Housing Support service stated that consideration could be given to providing a specific

resource for care leavers. In addition, they felt that support could be improved by starting to work with the young person at an earlier stage in order to increase the opportunity for planned moves and a smooth transition.

Recommendation:

That enhanced support be developed to assist care leavers with finding and maintaining accommodation and that this include support being provided from an earlier stage and a specific resource to assist them in bidding for properties.

5.18 The Panel noted that some LACYP apply for universities outside of London. In such circumstances, social housing allocation will nevertheless be in Haringey. If LACYP return home to their foster carer during holidays, then an allowance is payable. If they opt to stay in halls of residence, their rent will be paid. It is currently beyond the power of any local authority to swap entitlement to social housing via a reciprocal arrangement with another local council. It is acknowledged though that this can be an issue of some LACYP, particularly where they have not received a permanent offer of housing before going to university. Concerns relating to this were raised by both the foster carers and the care leavers that the Panel received evidence from. It is apparent that this issue may be deterring some care leavers for applying for universities outside of London.

5.19 The Panel notes that a semi independent care scheme is being developed. A specification has been designed and the intention was to go out to tender shortly. Discussions were taking place housing regarding the provision of floating support. The Panel supports the setting up of a specific scheme and is of the view that it has the potential to be of benefit to young people between 16 and 19 who might not be completely ready for full independence.

Recommendation:

That a policy be developed on semi-independent living for looked after children between 16 and 19.

Emotional Support

5.20 The Cabinet Member for Children and Young People had particular concerns about emotional support. "Care leavers could become very vulnerable and loneliness was a big problem. Most young people were still living at home at the age that young people left care. They therefore did not have the same support networks. Two young care leavers had died in the previous year. The reasons for these deaths were still unclear but care leavers were a high risk group. There were particular challenges in meeting the needs of young people who came into care as teenagers, such as those affected by the implications of the Southwark judgement. These young people could be very damaged".

5.21 She felt that one option that could be explored was mentoring, which some other local authorities had set up. She had asked the Leaving Care Service to consider how emotional support could be improved and a report is being prepared for the Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee. Although peer support could be

developed, some young people did nevertheless not wish to be defined as being in care.

- 5.22 The Panel notes the views of both care leavers and the Cabinet Member in respect of emotional support. It welcomes the development of a mentoring scheme as a means of supporting care leavers. In particular, it feels that a mentor who is able to follow a young person for a sustained period of time would be especially beneficial.

Recommendation:

That initiatives to improve emotional support for care leavers and the development of a specific mentoring scheme for care leavers be strongly supported that a report on progress be submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in due course.

- 5.23 The Panel has noted that there is a lack of means of monitoring long term outcomes for LACYP. It is, however, mindful of the practical difficulties that exist in tracking people over a longer period of time as it can only be done on a voluntary basis. In addition, there is a greater likelihood of young people who have been successful remaining in voluntary contact as opposed to those who may have encountered challenges or difficulties.

- 5.24 It is nevertheless of the view of the Panel that more information on outcomes would help to better inform future service planning. There remains a concern that a small amount of additional contact, or input into the lives of care leavers into their 20s, could return long-term lifestyle benefits for them. The law now instructs Council's to do this and Haringey is complying. In addition, it could also provide a potential pool of sources of support and guidance for future care leavers, many of whom may be without immediate family to assist.

Recommendation:

That enhanced systems for monitoring of long term outcomes be developed and in particular the progress of NEETs, and that a practical way for remaining in contact with vulnerable care-leavers into their 20s be developed.

Appendix A

Participants in the review:

Debbie Haith - Deputy Director for Children and Families, Children and Young People's Service (C&YPS)

Attracta Craig - Virtual School Head, C&YPS

Chris Chalmers - Head of Service, Children in Care, C&YPS

Emma Cummergen - Senior Team Manager, Leaving Care and Asylum Team, C&YPS

Louise Jones - Head of Integrated Youth Support, C&YPS

Andy Briggs - Head of Sport and Leisure, Adults, Culture and Community Services

Wendy Lobatto - Manager, Tavistock - Haringey Service

Judy Mace - Haringey Designated Nurse for Children in Care, Bounds Green Health Centre

Paul Clarke – Programme Manager Employment and Skills, Urban Environment

Denise Gandy - Head of Housing Support and Options, Urban Environment

Helen Smith - Job Centre Plus

Councillor Lorna Reith - Cabinet Member for Children and Young People and Councillor

Rachel Allison - Opposition Spokesperson for Children and Young People

A group of foster carers

A group of care leavers

Appendix B

Documents referred to in the preparation of this review report:

The Role of Councillors as Corporate Parents – Rotherham MBC Lifelong Learning Opportunities Scrutiny Panel
Aspects Of The Council’s Corporate Parenting Responsibilities – Middlesbrough Children and Learning Scrutiny Committee
Children Looked After by Camden – Camden Corporate Parenting Scrutiny Committee
Children and Young People’s Strategic Plan – Haringey Council
The Role of Councillors as Corporate Parents – Wakefield MDC Children’s Services Scrutiny Working Group
If This Were My Child – A Councillors Guide to Being a Good Corporate Parent – Department for Education and Skills/LGiU
Show Me How I Matter; A Guide to the education of Looked After Children – LGA/IdEA
London Borough of Greenwich Phase Three Corporate Parenting Review



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