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| REPORT TO: | Children and Young People Scrutiny Sub-Committee 15 March 2016 |
| AGENDA ITEM: | 6 |
| SUBJECT: | Children’s Social Care and Early Help |
| LEAD OFFICER: | Paul Greenhalgh, Executive Director, People |
| CABINET MEMBER: | Cllr Alisa Flemming Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Learning |
| PERSON LEADING AT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING: | Ian Lewis, Director, Child and Family Early Intervention and Children’s Social Care |

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| ORIGIN OF ITEM: | This item is contained in the sub-committee’s agreed work programme. |
| BRIEF FOR THE COMMITTEE: | To examine and review: The performance and progress of Children’s Social Care functions, with reference to Early Help functions, Child Protection, Children Looked After and Care Leavers. |

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide information on the progress of Children’s Social Care. It is an Annual report. Due to the timing of the publication of National Indicators, these refer to the year 2014-15. However, the main body of the report refers to progress since the start of the current financial year, April 2015, in order to ensure that members have the opportunity to scrutinise current progress and performance. This report follows a similar format to that provided in March 2015.
- 1.2 The report aims to give information on all of the main functions of Children’s Social Care. In addition, there is considerable reference within the report to

Early Help services. The relationship between Early Help Services and Children's Social Care is vital in ensuring that children receive support before their needs have become so great as to warrant statutory help.

- 1.3 The report gives a range of statistical performance information. Not all indicators are included as the intention is that the report should give a balance of qualitative assessment and information as well as data. The report therefore comments on the outputs from audits, information from service users, from staff and from our partner agencies. It is important to triangulate this information to understand as full a picture as possible in understanding the effectiveness of a complex service such as Children's Social Care.
- 1.4 The report also looks at some specific areas of service delivery and comments on the more specific performance in regard to those areas.
- 1.5 Last year's report gave the following priority areas for 2015-16, which will be referred to through the report:
 - To continue to embed the systemic approach across the Children's Social Care and Early Help services to improve practice and the experience of supervision. **Please see Sections 5 and 6**
 - In line with the Council Independence Strategy, to increase the number of Early Help assessments undertaken across the partnership and to measure their effectiveness. To reduce the number of assessments required by Children's Social Care. **Please see Section 4**
 - To reduce the average caseloads across Children's Social Care to enable more effective working. **Please see Section 6.9**
 - Continued workforce, including management development. **Please see Section 6.7**
 - Better user engagement to inform service improvements. **Please see Section 6.8**
 - Continue work to ensure that we are looking after the right children **Please see Section 17**
 - The development of an all age disability service. **Please see Section 12**
 - To ensure that learning from audits and case reviews is embedded within service planning. **Please see Section 6**
 - To further develop multi-agency partnerships through the Safeguarding Children's Board. **Please see Section 10**
 - To further develop multi-agency processes to protect children at risk of sexual exploitation. **Please see Section 13**
- 1.6 Overall, the past year has seen Child and Family Early Intervention and Children's Social Care making steady progress against the priorities set out in paragraph 1.5. At the time of the most recent Ofsted Inspection, the service was judged to be Adequate overall. As will be set out in Section 8 of this report, the expectations have been raised since that time, but we can demonstrate consistent progress in most areas and very good progress in many areas.
- 1.7 The senior management team has continued to build upon this platform to improve performance, improve the experiences of our service users and employ performance management to demonstrate how we are improving,

including the use of audit information. We have improved the strategic working relationships between Early Help and Children's Social Care and this is most specifically represented in the work to bring together the Best Start programme with the Children in Need Croydon Challenge Project, which will be referred to in Paragraph 4.13

- 1.8 In support of the Croydon Values, we have developed an additional set of values to support our work across Early Help and Children's Social Care.
- Families are the best place to look after children where possible
 - We help children and families to achieve independence and take control of their own lives
 - We manage risk carefully and proportionately. We will use the strengths of families and communities to build safety
 - Our resources and expertise can come from anywhere in the system
 - We work alongside our families to help them reach a better place
 - We offer care and opportunities to the children we do look after
 - We will listen to children and families and explain our decisions to them
- 1.9 Staff morale is positive and social workers feedback that they are mainly well supported to do their work and that they feel that they are making a difference in the lives of the children and families that they serve. The turnover of permanent social work staff is significantly lower than the average in London and the retention rate of Newly Qualified Social Workers employed in the past three years is high.
- 1.10 The significant challenges ahead remain. Some of the most pressing of these are:
- Managing the potential increase in demand in the short-term. This means ensuring that children and families have their needs met at earlier stages where possible and that they are assisted to step down to less intense services where safe and appropriate
 - The likely ongoing increase in demand through population rise and changes in demographics
 - Recruitment of permanent social work staff in some key areas, in particular the Assessment Service
 - Child Sexual Exploitation and the numbers of children going missing
 - The continued rise in the numbers of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children, particularly in the light of ongoing international migration issues
 - The establishment of the All Age Disability Service, incorporating children with Special Educational Needs
- 1.11 As a response to these challenges, the Division has developed a model of Demand Management that is based on:
- Providing a high quality of service to children and families, which is based on promoting independence and resilience, building on family strengths
 - Ensuring that children and families receive early help where appropriate
 - Managing thresholds appropriately and safely

- Where children and families need specialist support that this is focussed on addressing needs in a timely and effective way

1.12 As specifically requested, the Annual Report on the Independent Reviewing Service for Looked After Children is attached as a separate item.

2. INTRODUCTION - FUNCTIONS OF CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE AND LEGAL BASIS

2.1 Children's Social Care is based within the Division of Child and Family Early Intervention and Children's Social Care. Services for Special Educational Needs and the support services for Special Schools are also contained within the Division, as is the Youth Offending Service and the Family Justice Centre.

2.2 Since 01.01.15, the Division has been based within the People's Department, which has given stronger emphasis to the Think Family approach and support the Council aims under the Independence Strategy, particularly around collective approaches to Demand Management.

2.3 The main legal frameworks that guide Children's Social Care are:

- The Children Act 1989
- The Care Standards Act 2000
- The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000
- The Adoption and Children Act 2002
- The Children Act 2004
- Children and Adoption Act 2006
- Children and Young Persons Act 2008
- The Children and Families Act 2014

2.4 Additional Key Regulations:

- Fostering Services Regulations
- Adoption Agencies Regulations

2.5 All of the above have a range of statutory guidance that support them. There is considerable additional guidance but a key document is Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015. This sets out the multi-agency arrangements for the protection of children and their oversight by the Local Safeguarding Children's Board. The document was considerably shortened following the recommendations by Professor Eileen Munro in her review of child protection. Croydon subscribes to the London Child Protection Procedures, which are the principal Procedures covering matters concerned with the protection of children.

2.6 Safeguarding is defined in Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015 as:

- protecting children from maltreatment
- preventing impairment of children's health and development
- ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care and
- taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes

- 2.7 Council members have a duty to ensure that children are sufficiently safeguarded within their local authority.
- 2.8 Safeguarding has a much wider remit than the functions provided by Children's Social Care, which carries out particular functions regarding Child Protection services and Children Looked After services.
- 2.9 Council Members are also Corporate Parents to Children Looked After by the Local Authority and this responsibility extends to young people who have left care and are subject to the provisions of the Children (Leaving Care) Act.
- 2.10 The Corporate Parenting Panel meets five times per year and scrutinises detailed information regarding the services offered to children looked after and care leavers. The Panel is chaired by the Lead Member for Children Families and Learning. The Children's Scrutiny Panel considers the Annual Report of the Local Safeguarding Children's Board as well as this annual report. In addition the Scrutiny Panel may request specific reports, as took place in 2015 with a specific report on Fostering.
- 2.11 The Lead Member of Children Families and Learning attends the Local Safeguarding Children's Board as a participant observer, as set out in Working Together.
- 2.12 Local Authority members are also members of both the Fostering Panel and the Adoption Panel.
- 2.13 The Lead Member meets with the Director of Children's Social Care and Family Support on at least a fortnightly basis.
- 2.14 Members have been provided with Safeguarding training through three training courses in 2015 and 2016. A further course is planned for February 2016.

3. THE CROYDON POPULATION OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

- 3.1 There are three significant contextual factors in relation to Croydon's child population:
- The child population in Croydon is growing rapidly. The LGA's analysis of 2012 local authority school place planning returns to the DfE showed that Croydon has the highest percentage growth in school age population of any authority in the country.
 - The population in Croydon is becoming significantly more deprived. Census 2011 information shows that the population of Croydon became significantly more deprived in the decade to 2011. This trend has been exacerbated by the impact of more recent benefit reforms. A Needs Assessment undertaken by the Croydon Safeguarding Children's Board in June 2014 illustrated this growth in demand and in deprivation. One example of this increase is that the number of children eligible for free school meals at age 7 rose by 15% in the three years up to 2014.
 - Croydon houses the country's major immigration centre and this means Croydon has an unusually high number of unaccompanied asylum seekers.

This has a major impact on the profile of our LAC population. In the course of this year, the proportion of LAC who are UASC has become more than 50%.

- 3.2 The impact of the first two points above has been that the services have to manage a significant increased demand (both in number and complexity) during a period when significant improvement has been required, and when funding pressures have become much more acute. Some of this will be illustrated later in the report.

4. AN OVERVIEW OF THE SERVICE: EARLY HELP

- 4.1 In this section of the report, a summary of information is provided regarding the recent progress that has been made. It is important to recognize that Early Help is a partnership activity and the Council is often not the main delivery agency. It is clearly important that children and families receive the support that they need as early as possible in order to prevent more serious and potentially damaging problems developing later.
- 4.2 Croydon has a well-established four stage intervention approach – using the ‘wedge’ model - to provide appropriate and proportionate support for children and families: there is an established offer of Early Help at stages two and three to provide preventative support.
- 4.3 Early Help work is overseen through the Early Help Board, which reports to the Children and Family Partnership. The provision of early help services is a priority area for the Partnership. The Safeguarding Children’s Board also plays a key role in the oversight of early help services. The Board is hosting a Conference on early help services in March 2016.
- 4.4 During 2014 we worked with partner agencies to re-design our Early Help Pathways Operational Guidance - launched in June 2014 (1.02/1.07). The guidance sets out the local arrangements for identifying and supporting babies, children and their families where a need for early help is identified. It clearly defines what the response of practitioners should be at each stage and what services and support are available. We also provide this online through www.practitionerspacecroydon.co.uk. There is a version of this site for families and an Early Help for Families Leaflet . The revision of the guidance was also the opportunity to review the threshold for referral to Children’s Social Care, which forms a key section within the Guidance and was agreed by the Safeguarding Board and the Children and Families Partnership. The Early Help strategy is now being reviewed and a new 2015-18 commissioning strategy is in development that takes account of the demographic changes and needs.
- 4.5 The Early Help Hub is the main early help contact point for partners provides the following services:

- Advice, guidance, support and consultation at Level 2 and 3 for all agencies with more than 2,000 contacts and referrals in the first 6 months of 2015 (average 400 per month).
- Direct support to agencies providing the lead professional role through a team of Early Help Advisors (with 100% of schools involved).
- Response to early help referrals where specific services or input are required such as parenting programmes, links with extensive voluntary and community sector offer.
- Data checks so that information on children and families is brought together as part of an assessment, includes data tracking for troubled families programme.
- Aligned with MASH and provides data and information to MASH intelligence system and follows through MASH step-downs.
- Coordinates and chairs the stage 3 meeting across early help and social care so that families with complex needs are supported by the most appropriate service, where allocation is not clear.
- Programme for auditing of assessments is overseen by the Quality and Performance Sub-group, leading to learning and development opportunities for practitioners.

4.6 *Stages 1 and 2:*

- *Engaging schools:* School engagement through the Hub, Link Advisors and Fair Access Panel has strengthened: but only 60% of schools are engaging with the Early Help Assessment. Nevertheless, the use of pupil premium grant (PPG) funding for those pupils entitled and who are supported at Stage 1 and 2 is legitimate, is monitored by the local authority and has good impact in Croydon's schools. In 2014, the performance in Children in Need at Key Stage 2 achieving Level 4+ in reading, writing and maths placing was in Band B (of A-D) compared to authorities across England. The Local Authority conducts reviews of pupil premium spending and shares best practice.
- *Commissioned Early Help services:* Targeted at specific areas of need, e.g. evidence based parenting programmes, counselling services for adolescents, community provision such as Homestart etc.

4.7 The implementation of Best Start, which is an innovative and transformational model of delivery for 0-5 year old children by developing joint services with Health providers and Early Years providers. This model received approval from Cabinet in December 2014 and is supported through a Transformation Grant from the DCLG. The first phase of the programme goes live in April 2016. The teams will now include social work staff as part of the Children in Need Project, which will be referred to in Para 4.13. The Best Start programme will be delivered through three locality areas, which are geographically based. Our Primary Prevention Plan 2013-16 demonstrates the evolution of our approach to 0-5s. Multi-agency Family Engagement Partnerships provide a focus for families with children aged 0-4. We currently have cases held by children's services with oversight by the Early Help Hub. Over the previous 12 months we have received 650 referrals to the FEP

- 4.8 *Direct provision of service at stage 3:* The existence of our multi-agency Family Resilience Service ensured that we were well-placed to secure strong local delivery of the national 'Troubled Families' programme. The criteria for making claims against the Troubled Families programme have changed in this financial year. The service works closely with the Think Family programme to maximise opportunities to turn families around.
- 4.9 We have established a Functional Family Therapy Team that is working with both the Family Resilience Service and the Youth Offending Service. The Project will be supported through the Early Intervention Foundation and we are working with Queen's University Belfast to evaluate the effectiveness of the interventions
- 4.10 *Domestic violence and sexual abuse:* Our strong approach to domestic abuse and sexual violence has a strong early intervention focus. This is a major priority for the Council. Cabinet agreed an ambitious Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Strategy for 2015-18 in December 2014 and this Strategy is being delivered. The Council Congress on Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence took place in May 2015. This was a highly successful event that enabled the wider community in Croydon to engage in the Strategy.
- 4.11 *Information and tracking:* The Authority is investing in the implementation of the Early Help Module of the Children's Recording System used by Children's Social Care. This has supported the creation of the Early Help Dashboard which both Early Help Board and the MASH sub-group use to provide support and challenge to partners. Further elements of the EHM will be implemented through 2015-16, including the Troubled Families workspace, the Domestic Abuse workspace and enabling partner agencies to directly load Early Help Assessments onto the system.
- 4.12 *Volumes and outcomes of early help:*
- *Assessments:* CAFs were at a rate of 30 per month in early 2014. Since the introduction of the Early Help Hub and the Early Help Assessment (family based CAF), we have seen the number of children that have an assessment increasing to more than 500 in the first six months of 2015 (average of 88 per month)
 - *Under 5s:* For Family Engagement Partnerships working with under-fives, the use of the Family Star system shows (298 records on the system) that 70% had made improvements in education and learning, 69% in emotional well-being and 68% in social networks. Across the Early Years Foundation Stage profile the achievements of children eligible for free school meals has improved.
 - *Examples of outcomes at stage 2:* A review of commissioned services indicates wide range of family support has been accessed with evidence of parental confidence in parenting and improvement in children's behaviour. In the latest Ofsted report published on the subject, the outcomes for children and young people in receipt of

pupil premium grant, in terms of the impact on learning, are shown to be the 15th highest in the country on GCSE indicators and to be improving strongly.

- *Outcomes at stage 3:* The troubled families programme reached 100% of target in 2015, with extensive outreach key working provided through the Family Resilience Service

4.13 *The Children in Need Project.* This project is aimed at reducing the numbers of Social Care assessments and allocated Children in Need cases within Social Care by incorporating social workers within the multi-disciplinary early help settings. The initial pilot of this project will commence as part of Best Start in April 2016. We believe that by moving social work resource into multi-disciplinary teams we will prevent the need for escalation and be able to meet the needs of children and families at a more appropriate stage. Social workers will be available within the multi-disciplinary setting to provide safeguarding advice and to undertake assessments where they are required.

5. AN OVERVIEW OF CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE AND THE SYSTEMIC APPROACH

5.1 As referred to above, Children's Social Care Service has been on a transformation journey. At the time of the last inspection in May 2012, although deemed adequate, this was only just the case, with weaknesses in management and practice, and basic systems and business processes not working well, in particular the client information / recording system. Performance and outcomes were limited. The transformation journey undertaken has been based on the messages from the Munro review and research evidence concerning the key elements of effective social work practice. The organisational and practice model the Council set to introduce comprised the following elements:

- Relationship-based practice: effective engagement and relationships between social workers and families being the essential prerequisite of effective help.
- Social workers being the agents of change within families, applying evidence-based techniques of help.
- A clear conceptual framework underpinning assessment and direct help.
- Reflective practice and supervision.

These principles continue to underpin our improvement plans and are supported by the values referred to in Section 1.8.

5.2 In October 2013 the service adopted a new more user friendly electronic recording system from liquid Logic, the Children's Recording System CRS. The CRS system is a proven system operating in over 30 local authorities. The system is now live across the whole service and is aligned to the Early Help Module referred to in Paragraph 4.11 above. CRS gives managers and staff in Croydon Children's Social Care the increased ability to performance manage and quality assure services.

5.3 The main focus has been on practice development. By concentrating on the set of skills referred to in Section 5.1, we aim to:

- Improve outcomes and levels of satisfaction
- Build independence in our families and communities
- Meet needs at the appropriate stage, preventing escalation and demand on resources
- Grow confidence between our partner agencies

5.4 The Children's Social Care Service is divided up into a number of Delivery Areas, managed by Delivery Managers. Social workers are based in Units, managed by a Unit Manager. In the majority of Units, there will be a Consultant Practitioner. However, it has not been possible to achieve this in all Units. The Delivery areas are as follows with their main areas of work in brackets:

- Triage and Immediate Response (includes the MASH, Assessment Units and Emergency Duty Team)
- Care Planning Delivery Areas 1 and 2 (long term Children in Need, Child Protection cases)
- Children with Disabilities
- Permanence 1 (Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children)
- Permanence 2 (Local looked after children and court work)
- Leaving Care
- Fostering and Business Relationships (placements team for looked after children)
- Adoption

5.5 In addition, The Quality Assurance and Safeguarding Service includes the following services:

- Child Protection Co-ordinators
- Independent Reviewing Officers
- Learning and Development
- Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)
- Support for Safeguarding Children's Board
- Family and Systemic Psychotherapist

5.6 In common with the Division, Children's Social Care is committed to the development of a systemic approach to working with children and their families. A key part of this has been the commissioning of a three year training programme for social workers, key staff in Early Intervention Services and managers in Systemic Practice with Families training, building on systemic ways of working already introduced, such as Strengthening Families (see below). The 18 day Systemic Practice with Families training for social workers commenced in November 2013, to further equip social workers with the skills, knowledge and tools to engage and work with families. We have now completed training for four cohorts of social workers and early intervention staff. A further cohort is due to start. There is capacity to train 50 social workers and Early Intervention staff each year to an accredited level. In addition we have commissioned training in reflective supervision for line managers and Delivery Managers as well as training on the systemic approach. The senior management team received a tailored training course. As a senior

management team, we also use reflective supervision principles to look at key issues across the Division. This approach has enabled a much closer and more collaborative management style.

- 5.7 We have re-drafted the supervision policy to support this approach. Group supervision is expected across Children's Social Care and one to one supervision should also be reflective. A staff survey has been undertaken to look at the change in experience since the introduction of the policy. This has shown that staff have experienced a difference and that they particularly value the group supervision opportunities.
- 5.8 The systemic approach is overseen by a senior Governance Group. The work is supported through the appointment of a Family and Systemic Psychotherapist to assist staff across the Department. She supports group supervision in parts of the service where there is no allocated Consultant Practitioner. However, her most important role is in enabling the implementation across the Division through her professional expertise.
- 5.9 In October 2013 the service adopted a new more user friendly electronic recording system from liquid Logic, the Children's Recording System CRS. The CRS system is a proven system operating in over 30 local authorities. The system is now live across the whole service and is aligned to the Early Help Module referred to in Paragraph 4.11 above. CRS gives managers and staff in Croydon Children's Social Care the increased ability to performance manage and quality assure services. The audit framework is adapted to allow audits to look at whether there is evidence that our changes in approach are evidenced through the service that is received by children and their families.

6. PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

- 6.1 Managing performance and understanding the impact of the work that we do is vital for managers and for Council members. It is also vital for staff and for the wider public to have confidence in our services. Data is an important part of this performance management but it is also extremely important to work with qualitative feedback and information.
- 6.2 This part of the report demonstrates the information that I as the Director use to assure myself of the effective functioning of the Department.
- 6.3 CRS (Children's Record System)
 - 6.3.1 As referred to above, the Children's Record System was introduced in October 2013. There has been a very considerable change programme undertaken to extend and develop the Children's Record System and to improve the regularity and quality of the recording.
 - 6.3.2 The System comprises the child's electronic file but also forms the basis for the majority of our statistical information. We are therefore reliant on the system being up to date both in terms of being able to understand the progress of the

case and to give accurate aggregated performance information.

- 6.3.3 Some processes rely on a number of episodes being completed by different staff and this means that there will be a time lag on accuracy.
- 6.3.4 All managers receive a comprehensive weekly snapshot of performance information based on the live data from the system. The snapshot can be interrogated down to the level of individual cases. Managers are using this snapshot to improve team and individual performance against a range of key indicators. The intention of the snapshot is that it is a working document rather than a performance tool that will give fully ratified outputs.
- 6.3.5 A monthly dashboard with additional information is also provided to all managers. The Children's Record System aids our ability to understand the information that we hold and to drive up quality. Fundamentally, it maintains a record of our involvement with a child's life that gives a comprehensible and clear narrative account of the difference that services are making.
- 6.3.6 The People's Department DLT also receives information against a set of key indicators on a monthly basis, which allows oversight by the Executive Director.
- 6.3.7 On a quarterly basis, information is provided to the Children's Safeguarding Board as part of a multi-agency suite of indicators.

6.4 National Indicators

- 6.4.1 All local authorities are measured against a range of indicators. The data collection is undertaken through two major routes.
- 6.4.2 The Children in Need census covers information regarding the totality of children that the Social Care Service have come into contact with. The majority of the Indicators derived from this Census refer to children other than those looked after.
- 6.4.3 The LAC903 Return looks at a range of indicators for Children Looked After and Care leavers. The key indicators are shown below with comparisons to our group of statistical neighbours and the England average. Where possible figures are given over the past three years. These are now referring to last year's performance as they are only published prior to Christmas.
- 6.4.4 Croydon's Statistical neighbours are:

| | |
|------------|----------------|
| Birmingham | Hillingdon |
| Luton | Merton |
| Ealing | Redbridge |
| Enfield | Waltham Forest |
| Greenwich | Reading |

1. **Rate of children in need at 31 March 2014 (Per 10,000)**
- 2.

| | 2012-13 | 2013-14 | 2014-15 |
|----------------------|---------|---------|---------|
| Croydon | 412.2 | 410.3 | 400.8 |
| Stat Neighbour (Avg) | 379.8 | 394.2 | 377.7 |
| England | 332.2 | 346.4 | 337.3 |

This shows that the rate of children in need as a proportion of the population in Croydon is falling but remains higher than our statistical neighbours. Our Strategic Needs Analysis shows that the levels of deprivation are rising in Croydon and are expected to do so up to 2021.

3. Percentage of continuous assessments completed within 45 working days

| | 2013-14 | 2014-15 |
|----------------------|---------|---------|
| Croydon | 69.3 | 69.6 |
| Stat Neighbour (Avg) | 82.2 | 84.8 |
| England | 83.4 | 81.5 |

Our performance against this indicator is poor. It is likely to remain behind national averages in this year. There have been particular pressures on the Assessment Service in the past year. There have been issues with the recruitment of permanent staff and the stability of the interim staffing that has affected our performance. We have taken steps to address this and have reconfigured the service in October 2015. This has already led to a considerable improvement in performance that is further referred to in Paragraph 6.5 of this report.

4. Rate who were the subject of a child protection plan at 31 March per 10,000 children

| | 2011-12 | 2012-13 | 2013-14 | 2014-15 |
|----------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Croydon | 32.3 | 34.2 | 41.2 | 37.5 |
| Stat Neighbour (Avg) | 42.6 | 37.0 | 36.0 | 42.9 |
| England | 37.8 | 37.9 | 42.1 | 42.9 |

This shows that the number of children on a Child Protection Plan has fallen in Croydon over the past year and that we are lower than national average.

5. % of Children in Need who were subject of a Child Protection Plan for two years or more.

| | 2012-13 | 2013-14 | 2014-15 |
|----------------------|---------|---------|---------|
| Croydon | 4.2% | 2.4% | 4.9% |
| Stat Neighbour (Avg) | 4.6% | 5.1% | 2.9% |
| England | 3.2% | 2.6% | 2.3% |

Performance on this indicator has fallen in the past year. During the current year, we have reviewed all longstanding Child Protection cases, which will lead to a much better performance in the current year. The cohort for this indicator is relatively small, which means that one family can have a significant impact on the overall percentage. The current number of children with a Child Protection Plan over 24 months is 9 (26,02.16), which represents 2.4%.

6. % Child Protection Plans which lasted 2 years or more (former NI 64)

| | 2012-13 | 2013-14 | 2014-15 |
|----------------------|---------|---------|---------|
| Croydon | 5.5% | 5.2% | 4.3% |
| Stat Neighbour (Avg) | 6.0% | 4.9% | 5.8% |
| England | 5.2% | 4.5% | 3.7% |

The performance on this indicator is related to the one above. It is calculated in a different way, as a proportion of the number of Child Protection plans that have ceased during the year. Croydon is performing better than statistical neighbours..

7. % Re-registered on the Child Protection Register (former NI 65)

| | 2012-13 | 2013-14 | 2014-15 |
|----------------|---------|---------|---------|
| Croydon | 10.9% | 13.9% | 9.2% |
| Stat Neighbour | 16.6% | 16.4% | 15.6% |
| England | 14.9% | 15.8% | 16.6% |

Performance on this indicator is very positive and shows that the work undertaken while children are subject to a plan has a good degree of success in achieving longer term benefits.

8. % Child Protection Cases reviewed within required timescales (former NI 67)

| | 2012-13 | 2013-14 | 2014-15 |
|----------------|---------|---------|---------|
| Croydon | 99.5 | 99.6 | 99.6 |
| Stat Neighbour | 98.3 | 96.2 | 90.2 |
| England | 96.2 | 94.6 | 94.0 |

Performance against this indicator is very positive, although our target each year remains 100%.

Children Looked After Indicators are given below:

| | 2011-12 | 2012-13 | 2013-14 | 2014-15 | England Average 2014-15 | SN Average 2014-15 |
|--|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------------------|--------------------|
| No. of children looked after aged under 18 years, and Rates per 10,000 (as at 31 March) | 745 (84) | 730 (80) | 790 (86) | 798 (87) | (60) | (58.4) |

As with many of the overall statistics regarding numbers of Children Looked After, the unique position of Croydon regarding Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) has a distorting effect on our comparisons with our neighbours. If local children only were taken into account, the numbers of looked after children per 10,000 would be lower than the national average. In recent years the national figure of looked after children has tended to rise, whereas in London it has tended to fall. Further information regarding in-year trends will be presented later in the report.

9. Adoption - % of children looked after adopted during the yr. ending 31 March**

| | 2012-13 | 2013-14 | 2014-15 |
|----------------------|---------|---------|---------|
| Croydon | 7.0 | 7.0 | 8.0 |
| Stat Neighbour (Avg) | 8.8 | 11.0 | 8.8 |
| England | 14.0 | 17.0 | 17.0 |

In general, performance in Croydon expressed as a proportion of the total CLA population will tend to be low because UASCs are highly unlikely to be adopted. This proportion of our total population therefore represents very good performance. A separate section on adoption is included later in this document.

10. Stability of Placements - % with 3 or more placements in year (former NI 62)

| | 2012-13 | 2013-14 | 2014-15 |
|----------------------|---------|---------|---------|
| Croydon | 12.0 | 13.0 | 9.0 |
| Stat Neighbour (Avg) | 12.6 | 12.2 | 12.5 |
| England | 11.0 | 11.0 | 11.0 |

This indicator represents good performance and improving performance overall.

11. Stability of Placements - % looked after for at least 2.5 yrs. and in same placement for at least 2 yrs.

| 2012-13 | 2013-14 | 2014-15 |
|---------|---------|---------|
|---------|---------|---------|

| | | | |
|----------------------|------|------|------|
| Croydon | 82.0 | 82.0 | 67.0 |
| Stat Neighbour (Avg) | 70.8 | 67.5 | 67.1 |
| England | 68.0 | 67.0 | 67.0 |

The performance against this indicator may have been affected by the numbers of children adopted and leaving care through Special Guardianship in the past two years, which removes them from the cohort. We are still in line with statistical neighbours.

12. % of children looked after at 31 March, placed more than 20 miles from their homes, outside LA boundary

| | 2012-13 | 2013-14 | 2014-15 |
|----------------------|---------|---------|---------|
| Croydon | 8.0 | 8.0 | 8.0 |
| Stat Neighbour (Avg) | 18.1 | 18.9 | 19.6 |
| England | 12.0 | 13.0 | 14.0 |

Performance in keeping children more local to Croydon is very positive, which enables children to have continuity of relationships with family and friends as well as their local communities and schools.

13. % Care Leavers at 19 in Suitable Accommodation (former NI 147)

| | 2012-13 | 2013-14 | 2014-15 |
|----------------------|---------|---------|---------|
| Croydon | 75.0 | 73.6 | 88.0 |
| Stat Neighbour (Avg) | 90.5 | 82.4 | n/a |
| England | 88.0 | 77.8 | 81.0 |

Providing suitable accommodation for Care Leavers in Croydon remains a challenge due to the numbers of Care Leavers involved and the very low availability of social housing that is available. We work very closely with housing providers in the Council and in the private sector to address this issue. The drop in performance reflects the fact that the indicator is calculated differently in 2013-14 from previous years and now includes 20 and 21 year old young people. The description of suitable accommodation is set out in the Care Planning Regulations 2010. An assessment needs to be made that takes into account whether there is sufficient room, whether there is adequate furnishing and the nature of the tenancy. Examples of inadequate accommodation would be bed and breakfast or custody.

14. %Care Leavers at 19 in Education, Employment or Training (former NI 148)

| | 2012-13 | 2013-14 | 2014-15 |
|----------------------|---------|---------|---------|
| Croydon | 57.0 | 47.0 | 54.0 |
| Stat Neighbour (Avg) | 65.2 | 56.3 | n/a |
| England | 58.0 | 45.0 | 48.0 |

The service is working with a new partner agency and this is being effective in identifying employment and training opportunities within Croydon. The current performance is far short of our ambitions for our Care Leavers.

15. % of young people age 19, who were Looked After when 16 years old who were in higher education

| | 2012-13 | 2013-14 | 2014-15 |
|----------------------|---------|---------|---------|
| Croydon | 9.0 | 7.0 | 7.0 |
| Stat Neighbour (Avg) | 10.7 | 11.0 | n/a |
| England | 6.0 | 6.0 | 6.0 |

Performance on attendance in Higher Education is positive in terms of our overall numbers given the very high number of care leavers in Croydon. Many UASC have been very attracted to attending higher education.

6.5 Local Indicators

6.5.1 In addition to the National Indicators, a range of local indicators are monitored. It is possible to give in-year information on these, which will offer the Committee greater oversight of the in-year pressures and performance. Key information is shown below. This is a small proportion of the range of information and indicators that are collated.

6.5.2 The total number of cases open to the service at 10.02.12 was as follows:

| Case Type | Number |
|---|----------------------------------|
| Currently under assessment | 665 |
| Child Protection Plans | 356 |
| Children Looked After | 809 (384 local CLA and 425 UASC) |
| Children on long term child in need plans | 722 |
| Care Leavers | 712 |
| Children with disabilities | 338 |
| Privately Fostered Children | 20 |

6.5.3 The table below gives information on the number of contacts that are received into Children’s Social Care on a monthly basis. It can be seen that this is a very busy service.

CONTACTS TO MASH April – Dec 2014

| | APR | MAY | JUN | JUL | AUG | SEP | OCT | NOV | DEC | YTD |
|---|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| # contacts relating to previously unknown or closed cases | 1231 | 1385 | 1526 | 1405 | 1031 | 1432 | 1418 | 1354 | 1221 | 12003 |
| # contacts that led to assessments | 494 | 541 | 568 | 532 | 365 | 535 | 533 | 554 | 368 | 4490 |

6.5.4 A key figure is the number of assessments as these are the number of cases that enter the service after being considered through the MASH. The numbers remain high and the number of contacts is higher than at this stage last year.

Timeliness of Assessments April – Dec 2014

| | APR | MAY | JUN | JUL | AUG | SEP | OCT | NOV | DEC | YTD |
|--|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| # of completed assessments | 269 | 296 | 277 | 330 | 465 | 407 | 322 | 381 | 430 | 3177 |
| % completed within 45 days- Month | 67 | 57 | 66 | 67 | 63 | 60 | 60 | 66 | 82 | 67% |

6.5.5 The service has gone through a period of difficulty in maintaining staffing and in recruiting sufficient staff of the quality we expect. The service has been reconfigured in October and this has seen a considerable improvement in performance, as can be seen from the number of assessments completed within timescale in December and the reduction in the number of open overdue assessments in the table below.

| | July | Aug | Sept | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|-------------------------------|-------------|------------|-------------|------------|------------|------------|
| No of open assessments | 819 | 559 | 625 | 536 | 500 | 459 |
| Overdue assessments | 171 | 167 | 133 | 56 | 42 | 23 |

VISITS TO CHILDREN WITH A CHILD PROTECTION PLAN Apr-Dec 2014

| | APR | MAY | JUN | JUL | AUG | SEP | OCT |
|--|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| No. of children currently subject to a CPP | 365 | 374 | 361 | 357 | 364 | 350 | 340 |
| % visited and seen within 28 days | 87 | 87 | 89 | 97 | 84 | 87 | 87 |

6.5.6 Performance on completion of visits to children on Child Protection plans has improved compared to this stage last year. As this figure is taken from live information, the figures are given up to October as later months require ratification.

No: CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER Apr-Dec 2014

| | APR | MAY | JUN | JUL | AUG | SEP | OCT | NOV | DEC |
|---------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| No. LAC local | 402 | 401 | 406 | 412 | 411 | 401 | 398 | 393 | 388 |
| No. LAC UASC | 405 | 411 | 418 | 440 | 452 | 451 | 451 | 453 | 447 |
| Total no. LAC | 807 | 812 | 824 | 852 | 863 | 852 | 849 | 846 | 835 |

6.5.7 The number of local looked after children rose slightly during the early part of the year and has now reduced to lower than at the start of the year. The number of UASC rose sharply in the early part of the year but has now reduced again, largely through existing young people reaching their 18th birthday.

VISITS TO CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER Apr-Dec 2014

| | APR | MAY | JUN | JUL | AUG | SEP | OCT |
|------------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| % LAC visited within 6 weeks | 93% | 96% | 94% | 94% | 92% | 91% | 93% |

6.5.8 Performance on compliance with visiting looked after children has been maintained through the year.

6.6 Audit Information

6.6.1 The service undertakes and commissions audits in the following ways.

- Independent audits undertaken through the Safeguarding Children's Board
- Independent audits commissioned directly by Children's Social Care
- Thematic audits undertaken through the Quality Assurance service
- Monthly management audits

In the past year, we have undertaken the following independent audits:

6.6.2 **Under Ones Audit.** 12 cases were examined by a multi-agency group on behalf of the Quality Assurance Policy and Procedures (QAPP) Sub-group of the Safeguarding Board. The process was overseen by an independent

manager. The cases chosen were those where the parents had issues with mental ill-health, substance or alcohol misuse or Domestic Violence. Some positive aspects of the cases were identified: Support & empowerment to mothers to recognise DV; Good supervision; Clear action plans; Improved educational outcomes for children. However, there were also a number of concerns regarding the partnership work on this very vulnerable group: Poor communication between agencies; Gaps in safeguarding supervision across all agencies; Assessment guidance must include pre-birth guidance & protocol; Risk assessment and engagement of fathers a priority; Consideration of parental factors impact on well-being of child. An Action Plan has been overseen by QAPP and a follow up independent audit will take place in February 2016 to analyse whether there has been an improvement in practice.

- 6.6.3 **Audit on Peer on Peer Abuse**. This was undertaken on behalf of the Safeguarding Board by an independent organization, MsUnderstood. The audit made a number of recommendations regarding the support required for children who are the victims of such abuse and for the provision of services for young people who are the perpetrators.
- 6.6.4 **Children with Disabilities Audit**. This was an independent chaired multi-agency audit of 12 cases commissioned by the Safeguarding Children's Board. The audit found that there were ongoing problems in the multi-agency identification of safeguarding issues and that there was some insufficiencies in considering all of the children within the family. This audit reported to the Safeguarding Board in January 2016. As will be referred to below, Children's Social Care had undertaken their own internal audit. The actions suggested by the multi-agency audit have been incorporated into a single Action Plan.
- 6.6.5 Three separate audits have been carried out by the Quality Assurance and Safeguarding Service. As mentioned above, the first of these looked at cases within the Children with Disabilities Service and safeguarding practices within that team. The audit identified a number of gaps in our practice. A comprehensive Action Plan has been put into place to address these issues and the management team are working very closely with QA to take this forward.
- 6.6.6 The second audit looked at the practice of Child Protection Case Conferences and the quality of the Child Protection Plans. The audit identified a number of aspects of good practice. There are still outstanding issues in ensuring that Child Protection plans are SMART and that parents clearly understand what is expected of them.
- 6.6.7 Lastly, an audit has been undertaken looking at the reasons for the Police taking Police Protection on children. This is a power conferred on the Police through the Children Act 1989 and the audit was generated by a concern regarding the number of these being taken. The audit has provided a detailed analysis of the reasons for such action and the outcomes for the children concerned. We will be able to use this audit collectively to look at practice and identify alternatives where this is possible.
- 6.6.8 All managers are expected to undertake a monthly audit of a case from another

team from their own up to November 2015. The process will be adapted in 2016 to enable more thematic audits on a smaller number of cases. The Head of Service for Quality Assurance and Safeguarding provided a qualitative analysis of these audits that was presented to the Management Team. This gave the following summary findings:

- The findings from the audit indicate that we are a Children Social Care Service that requires improvement. This audit identified some high standards of social work and management practice in Croydon Children Social Care however practice remains inconsistent.
- There is evidence of continued improvement in the quality of practice year on year.
- There is evidence that practice could be further improved if there was greater stability of the social workforce, if the quality of the IT could be improved, if a culture of recording could be developed if procedural compliance could be maintained and if supervision was provided on more cases more often.
- Working with partners in assessments and interventions needs to be better evidenced. In turn interventions need to be based on a multi-agency plan and team around the child approach.
- We discovered that outcomes for children are often good but this is difficult to evidence from the child's case file as often the quality of recording needs to improve. Indeed a great deal of good work is being undertaken by social workers but it is not being evidenced.
- Where cases had an Early Help intervention referrals were of better quality and interventions improved outcomes. Where an early help assessment had been completed the quality of that intervention was graded as Good although only a small number of cases audited had received an early intervention.
- The quality of strategy meetings needs to be improved.
- The turnover of social workers and managers is impacting on the consistency of practice especially in child protection planning.
- Improvement is needed in the consistency of the quality of case recording.
- We need to identify, engage and work with fathers and paternal extended families
- Child Protection Plans and Children Looked After Plans need to be SMART.
- Managers are not recording their decisions enough or evidencing reflective supervision. Consultant practitioners are not evidencing the process or outcomes of group consultations.
- There has been an observable improvement in the quality of practice for Children Looked After.
- There is delay in initiating care proceedings and delay in the transfer of children's cases from one team to another.
- The missing children procedures are not being followed in every case.

101 of these cases were graded against the Ofsted inspection ratings, giving the following results:

| Rating | Percentage |
|----------------------|------------|
| Outstanding | 2% |
| Good | 57% |
| Requires Improvement | 40% |
| Inadequate | 1% |

6.6.9 The above processes demonstrate that there is considerable information available on large numbers of cases to give managers and staff feedback on progress. This is helpful for an overall understanding of the progress of the service and the effectiveness of the improvement plans. It also offers objective feedback on individual cases to the workers involved with the child. Offering constructive advice is a key function of the audit process. Workers are encouraged to explain their work with children and how they understand the impact of the services in making improvements in their lives.

6.7 Recruitment and Retention

6.7.1 Maintaining a stable and well-supported workforce is a key feature of improvement. The overall position in the recruitment of social workers remains challenging and is generally more difficult for outer London authorities.

6.7.2 Overall, the number of permanent social work staff has improved as is shown in the tables below.

6.7.3 The most recent nationally available information was published in February 2015 regarding the National Minimum Data Set submitted by all authorities pertaining to the staffing situation on 30th September 2014. The 2015 figures for Croydon are available to us but the national comparative figures are not available until February 2016.

| | Vacancy Rate (percentage) | Turnover Rate (percentage) |
|-----------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Croydon 30.09.14 | 28 | 14 |
| Croydon 30.09.15 | 25 | 11 |
| Outer London 30.09.14 | 27 | 22 |
| Inner London 30.09.14 | 16 | 21 |
| London 30.09.14 | 22 | 21 |
| England 30.09.14 | 15 | 17 |

6.7.4 In Outer London, the vacancy rate varied very widely. The lowest is Barnet at 4%, with the highest being Barking and Dagenham at 56%.

6.7.5 Croydon is therefore performing at around the mean and median range in Outer London in terms of vacancies, with the caution that these figures are relatively out of date.

6.7.6 Croydon is performing well in comparison in turnover of permanent staff. These

figures do not capture the turnover in agency staffing.

- 6.7.7 Our particular recruitment issue remains within the Assessment Service, which is a common feature for local authorities.
- 6.7.8 Croydon has also engaged in the Frontline project. This programme is sponsored by the Department of Education and aims to encourage high performing graduates into the profession. Croydon contracted with 12 trainee social workers, who started in September 2014 and have now all graduated and have been offered contracts. A second cohort of 12 commences in September 2015.
- 6.7.9 We have a strong record of employing and supporting Newly Qualified Social Workers (NQSW). Our retention rate of NQSWs who have started since 2012 is 71%, which is very positive. We are now specifically targeting NQSWs in future campaigns.
- 6.7.10 We will continue with a range of recruitment activity as it is to our advantage to recruit as many permanent staff as possible. However, it is also important to point out that many agency staff are providing a very good service to the children and families that they serve.

6.8 Feedback from Service Users

- 6.8.1 Gaining feedback from service users is an important source of quality assurance and performance management.
- 6.8.2 The authority listens to the experience of children and young people in a range of ways:
- The Children in Care Council worked with Officers in 2014 to review the Council Pledge to Looked After Children, which was approved at the Corporate Parenting Panel. The Council has recently been supported by the Council Youth Service, which has been instrumental in bringing in some younger children. A report was presented on their work to Corporate Parenting Panel on 13.10.15 , along with a group of young people, adopters and foster carers. More recently, responsibility for supporting the Children in Care Council has been moved to the Leaving Care Service.
 - The Leaving Care service already hosts a number of support groups and preparation groups. Young people were closely involved in the production of the new Guidance for Care Leavers . There is a specific support group for Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers.
 - The Council commissions an independent advocacy service through Coram Voice, for Children Looked After and those subject to a Child Protection Plan.
 - The Council supports an Independent Visitor Service, which supports more than 40 children at any one time.
 - The annual Complaints report gives further information on action taken following complaints throughout the service.

- The Children with Disabilities Service has worked closely with parents' groups in the implementation of EHC plans in line with the Children and Families Act 2014.
- Members model this process, for example the October 2015 Corporate Parenting Panel was entirely given over to listening to the experiences of a wide range of looked after children and care leavers, foster carers and adopters, which was a very heartening experience. Following this, the Panel has redesigned its business model and the January meeting was mainly devoted to hearing the views of Care Leavers and of children talking about their educational experiences.

6.9 Staff Feedback and Communication

- 6.9.1 Staff have a range of opportunities to raise their views at different levels of the organisation. There are regular team and service meetings. A Staff Day for the whole service was undertaken in January 2015, with the systemic approach as its theme.
- 6.9.2 There is a Social Work Forum that meets on a six weekly basis. The representatives then meet with the Director of Children's Social Care and discuss the outcome of their discussions. This has now been supplemented by a similar forum for staff in Early Intervention Services and Special Educational Needs.
- 6.9.3 The Supervision Policy has been updated and revised in line with the systemic approach. Staff are expected to attend group supervision in addition to the one to one supervision with their line managers. We have undertaken a survey of social work staff and managers to understand the impact that the policy has had. This showed that there had been some improvement in the experience of supervision but that both supervisors and supervisees recognized that further improvements were achievable.
- 6.9.4 We have introduced a Caseload Weighting scheme (1.06) to Children in Need services, which is being adapted for other parts of the service, based on ensuring that social worker's caseloads allow them the time required in order for them to be able to complete the minimum best practice standards on their allocated cases. Managers regularly review social work caseloads to ensure that appropriate caseload levels remain.
- 6.9.5 Whilst the service is busy and caseloads do fluctuate at times, where caseloads increase above levels that allow for the minimum statutory duties to be undertaken, the service has responded by increasing resourcing; this resulted in the creation of a fourth assessment team and a sixth care planning team in 2013.
- 6.9.6 Caseloads are the subject of a weekly performance report that is shared with all managers. This gives the indicative average caseload in each unit across Children's Social Care. This report is also shared with

the LSCB on a quarterly basis. In September 2015 the caseload average was 17 (see 1.04).

6.9.7 Caseloads for ASYEs are maintained at the agreed level of a maximum of 12 children, or 80% of an experienced social worker caseload. Managers receive regular information on workloads through the weekly performance snapshot.

6.9.8 Social workers and other staff have a good range of learning and development opportunities. They are able to access such opportunities both through Council provided training and through that provided through the Safeguarding Children's Board. Feedback from training courses is generally very positive.

6.10 Feedback from Partner Agencies

6.10.1 Safeguarding children cannot be achieved through a single agency approach. It is essential to have good communication with partner agencies both at an individual case level as well as at a strategic level.

6.10.2 We continue to work to foster a culture of constructive challenge across agencies at all levels. Hearing from partners is an additional source of information on our progress and the quality of our work.

6.10.3 The main strategic body across the Partnership is the Safeguarding Children's Board and its sub-groups. The sub-groups are an excellent forum for bringing together managers and staff across agencies.

6.10.4 Children's Social Care are represented on the Children and Families Partnership. The Director is also a member of the Safer Croydon Partnership.

6.10.5 The Early Help Board brings together statutory and voluntary partners across the Council.

6.10.6 In addition, there are formal groups for meeting with managers across Health providers and commissioners. There is a Children Looked After Strategic Partnership working to improve the multi-agency arrangements to support Children Looked After and Care Leavers. We have established a working group with local judiciary, private law firms and CAFCASS to look at the work of Care Proceedings. Regular meetings take place with designated teachers from primary and secondary schools. We have close working relationships with the Borough Police and with the Police Child Abuse Investigation Team (CAIT). Meetings with other agencies take place as needed.

6.10.7 There continue to be differences. Most acutely, these are experienced around decisions regarding threshold. We also hear concerns from partners about the accessibility of staff and difficulties in making contact, particularly by telephone. However, the majority of the feedback that we receive is that generally their experience of working with Children's Social Care is improving and that there is good communication.

6.11 Quarterly Reporting by Delivery Managers

6.11.1 From April 2014 each Delivery Manager has provided a quarterly report on their delivery area looking at the quality of work from both quantitative and qualitative data. These reports offer both Delivery Managers and the Director additional information and assurance that they can answer the question on how they know what is taking place across their area of work. Delivery Managers use the reports to share the position of their area of work and any arising issues with colleagues at the Leadership Meeting. On an annual basis they present their report to the Children's Leadership Team and this ensures that all senior managers have a good understanding of performance across the Division.

6.12 Quality Assurance Unit

6.12.1 The Quality Assurance Unit comprises a number of functions. These include the Child Protection Chairs for Child Protection Case Conferences and the Independent Reviewing Officers for Children Looked After. These roles are taken up by experienced staff, many of whom will have been in managerial positions.

6.12.2 The Annual Report of the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) service is attached as an additional report to this. It is a very significant report as it offers additional objective analysis of the progress of Children Looked After.

6.12.3 The Quality Assurance staff are available to offer advice and guidance to social workers and managers and offer a useful objective view of cases. They are responsible for overseeing that plans are being taken forward that have been agreed at either the Conference or the Review.

6.12.4 Quality Assurance staff have a vital oversight of casework across the Children's Social Care Service as well as the partnership. As Director, I meet with this service on a quarterly basis in order to receive feedback on what trends they are observing.

6.12.5 Where there are differences of opinion, or where the plan is not being effectively carried out, the QA officers are empowered to raise a Dispute Resolution Protocol. This can be raised throughout all levels of the Council if it is not satisfactorily resolved, although in practice this happens very rarely.

7. GENDER AND ETHNICITY

7.1 The figures below will give a brief outline of the comparisons between the general population of children and the breakdown by gender and ethnicity of the two most high need groups within Children's Social Care:

Gender

| Gender | General Population | Children on Child Protection Plans | Children Looked After (Local) | Children Looked After (UASC) |
|---------------|---------------------------|---|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Male | 50.80% | 54% | 53% | 91% |
| Female | 49.20% | 44% | 47% | 9% |

7.2 This shows that the proportion of boys and girls on Child Protection Plans is roughly in line with the general population. Boys are slightly more likely to become looked after than girls. For UASC there is a very marked difference.

7.3 For ethnicity, only local Children Looked After figures are shown, to compare them with the local population.

| Ethnicity | General Population | Children on Child Protection Plans | Children Looked After (Local) |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------|---|--------------------------------------|
| White | 42.60% | 40.0% | 43% |
| Black African and Black Caribbean | 26.10% | 24% | 33% |
| Mixed Parentage | 13.30% | 22% | 17.9% |
| Asian | 15.30% | 13% | 4% |
| Chinese and Other | 2.50% | 1% | 1% |

7.4 The figures show some disparities. White children are slightly over-represented in the Child Protection figures. Black children are much more highly represented in the local Children Looked After figures than they are in the Child Protection figures. The numbers of Asian children on Child Protection plans is much more in proportion than is the number of Children Looked After.

7.5 We have also undertaken an equalities analysis of our social work staff group. This shows that there is a slight over-representation of social workers from Black African and Black Caribbean backgrounds in comparison with the general population. There is an under-representation of White UK staff and Asian staff. The workforce is 78% female, which is relatively common for this profession.

8. OFSTED INSPECTION PREPARATION

8.1 In November 2013, Ofsted radically transformed its Framework for Inspection of Local Authority Children's Social Care Services. It implemented the Single Inspection Framework. This amalgamated some areas that had previously been individually inspected, such as Adoption, Fostering and Private Fostering.

8.2 The service will be inspected on the following areas:

- The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection
- The experiences and progress of children looked after and achieving permanence
- Leadership, Management and Governance

8.3 In addition, the Inspectors will also review the effectiveness of the Local Safeguarding Children's Board.

8.4 There are two graded judgement areas in addition to those above, on the experiences of Care Leavers and on Adoption Services.

8.5 Each of the elements will be graded against the following outcomes:

1. Outstanding
2. Good
3. Requires Improvement
4. Inadequate

This will lead to an overall grading on the above scale.

8.6 An Inadequate grading against any of the main three categories would result in an Inadequate grading overall. Ofsted have been clear that the expectations have been raised to achieve a Good or Outstanding rating. In their words, the bar has been raised.

8.7 Children's Social Care was most recently inspected in May 2012, at which point it was graded as Adequate overall. As can be seen, this grading has been removed and replaced with Requires Improvement, to make clear that Good should be the new benchmark.

8.8 In preparation for the Inspection, the Service has undertaken a rigorous Self-Assessment against the published framework, which is known as the Annex M, and assembled documentary evidence to support our position. We continue to address issues where we understand that we need to improve. There is a regular Inspection Preparation Meeting where senior managers meet with colleagues from performance and commissioning to drive forward improvements.

8.9 Briefing meetings have taken place with staff, with partner agencies and Council members.

- 8.10 Authorities receive 24 hours' notice of the commencement of the Inspection, which will then take place over the following four weeks.
- 8.11 All authorities in England will be inspected under this Framework by the end of 2017. Member oversight of the service will form part of the judgement against Leadership, Management and Governance.
- 8.12 From February 2016, Ofsted will have two further Inspection frameworks, a single agency targeted inspection and a multi-agency targeted inspection. These will look at specific areas of work, either the assessment service or services for children at risk of Child Sexual Exploitation.
- 8.13 From April 2016, a further Inspection framework will come into force on Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND). This will incorporate issues for Children's Social Care in addition to those educational services for Special Educational Needs.

9. CROYDON SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN'S BOARD

- 9.1 Safeguarding Children's Boards are established under the Children Act 2004. The Croydon Board is chaired independently by Catherine Doran. She took over the role in August 2014.
- 9.2 Regulation 5 of the Local Safeguarding Children Boards Regulations 2006 sets out that the functions of the LSCB, are as follows:
- (a) Developing policies and procedures for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children in the area of the authority, including policies and procedures in relation to:
 - (i) The action to be taken where there are concerns about a child's safety or welfare, including thresholds for intervention;
 - (ii) Training of persons who work with children or in services affecting the safety and welfare of children;
 - (iii) Recruitment and supervision of persons who work with children;
 - (iv) Investigation of allegations concerning persons who work with children;
 - (v) Safety and welfare of children who are privately fostered;
 - (vi) Cooperation with neighbouring children's services authorities and their Board partners;
 - (b) Communicating to persons and bodies in the area of the authority the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, raising their awareness of how this can best be done and encouraging them to do so;
 - (c) Monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of what is done by the authority and their Board partners individually and collectively to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and advising them on ways to improve;

- (d) Participating in the planning of services for children in the area of the authority; and
 - (e) Undertaking reviews of serious cases and advising the authority and their Board partners on lessons to be learned.
- 9.3 The Annual Report of the Safeguarding Children's Board has already been presented to the Scrutiny Committee on 13th October 2015.
- 9.4 The work of the Safeguarding Board in holding the Children's Social Care service to account in its discharge of the above functions forms an additional and vital role in ensuring that we are effective as a single agency but also that we are working collectively with our partner agencies.

10. MASH

- 10.1 The Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub became fully operational in January 2014.
- 10.2 The MASH is a process whereby all agencies share information regarding children who have been referred to Children's Social Care but there is insufficient information available to make a clear decision about what the next steps should be.
- 10.3 Not all contacts to Children's Social Care are subject to the MASH process. For example, where the contact clearly indicates that it is a request for information, or where the needs would be better met through an Early Help service, this decision can be taken.
- 10.4 Where there is clear evidence that the referral meets or is likely to meet the threshold for a Child Protection investigation, then this will be passed directly to the Assessment Teams, who will be responsible for bringing together the multi-agency information.
- 10.5 The MASH service and process has been a successful multi-agency project and the results of the MASH audit referred to above demonstrate that they are able to make consistent decisions regarding the appropriate threshold.
- 10.6 The figures do demonstrate that the service manages considerable numbers of Contacts and Referrals, as set out in Section 7 of this report. The external audits have given assurance that the service is managing well with this demand. However, the aim must be to reduce these numbers and to provide services to children and families at earlier stages of need.
- 10.7 As part of phase 2 of the Children in Need Project referred to in Paragraph 4.13 of this report we will be scoping whether bringing the MASH and Early Help Hub together will aid access to partners and to the public and assist in a more effective way of ensuring that children and families receive the level of service most appropriate to their needs.

11. PRIVATE FOSTERING

- 11.1 Private Fostering are arrangements made by parents or guardians for a person who is not a close relative to care for their child for longer than 28 days.
- 11.2 By law, the parent or guardian should inform the local authority of the arrangement and the local authority must undertake an assessment of the arrangement. The child is not looked after by the local authority as this is a private arrangement.
- 11.3 Private fostering came under much greater scrutiny following the death of Victoria Climbié.
- 11.4 Private fostering is typically under-reported in most local authorities. Croydon has undertaken a number of awareness raising events, particularly with schools and with GPs to ensure that as many children as possible are referred. There is a dedicated social worker in the Locality Child in Need Service. This post is responsible for the assessment process and ongoing support to the child.
- 11.5 In January 2014, we were aware of 6 Private Fostering arrangements in Croydon. We are currently aware of 20 such arrangements, which is a considerable improvement in performance in the past two years. The numbers do tend to fluctuate, particularly with some temporary residents attending local language schools. There remains an overall under-reporting of private fostering.

12. CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

- 12.1 The Children with Disabilities social work service is based within the Children in Need Service area.
- 12.2 The aim of the People's Department is to develop a Disability service for all people aged 0-65. As a first stage of this work we will be bringing together the Children with Disability Service, the SEN Service and the Transitions Team, which is currently based within Adult Social Care and works with young people aged 18-25. The 0-25 service is due to commence in April 2016. The consultation has now been completed. The reasons for bringing together adults and children care is that the arrangements for the transition between children's services and those for adults has been a consistent issue. Families require this continuity of planning in their lives. The Children and Families Act 2014 also changed the landscape for SEN services and it is required that plans for children are properly co-ordinated. The Delivery Manager for Children with Disabilities will receive professional supervision from the Head of Service for Children in Need. Once this service has been established it will be of assistance to the Panel to have updated information on how it has improved the experience of children, young adults and their families.
- 12.3 The threshold for Children with Disabilities differs from the other parts of Children's Social Care in that Section 17 of the Children Act 1989 gives one definition of a child in need as 'being disabled.'

12.4 This is further defined in the Act as:

‘a child is disabled if he is blind, deaf or dumb or suffers from mental disorder of any kind or is substantially and permanently handicapped by illness, injury or congenital deformity or such other disability as may be prescribed; and in this Part—

- “development” means physical, intellectual, emotional, social or behavioural development; and
- “health” means physical or mental health. ‘

12.5 The Children with Disabilities Service comprises two teams, the Care Planning Team, which works with cases that require an ongoing allocation of a social worker, and the Assessment and Review Team, which works with children where a package of service has been agreed, or where a Direct Payment arrangement is in place. This will be changed within the new service. Teams will be arranged by the age of the child and all social workers will hold both cases that only require review and those that require an ongoing allocation.

12.6 The findings of the Children with Disabilities audits have been set out in Section 7 of this report.

12.7 Recommissioning arrangements for CWD services are being progressed which include the following:-

- Completion of an internal review of options to develop residential and community based short breaks. The next steps are to undertake full consultation with parents and children on their views around short break provision jointly with the SEN Service and Parents in Partnership to provide further personalisation of service delivery support through Personal Budgets.
- A detailed policy on Personal Budgets is being developed and will be submitted to the SEN Reform Board for approval. The take up of Direct Payments for social care provision continues to be popular with parents and is now the most single preferred delivery arrangement for over 50% of short break plans. We are currently reviewing all existing Direct Payments arrangements to ensure that they are still required.

12.8 The service also manages the Calleydown unit, which offers both residential and day facilities to offer short breaks for children with disabilities. The most recent Ofsted Inspection for the Unit rated the service as Good. This was confirmed following a recent unannounced visit on 10th February 2016. The Unit is based in New Addington. Demand for Calleydown services remains high and the short break review has confirmed that the unit operates at near to full occupancy rate at a unit cost which compares favourably with other providers. Feedback from parents is generally very favourable about the service offered. It has also been established that other local authorities provide a less generous short break package and this information will be used as a base line for the development of a resource allocation system for short breaks linked to revised eligibility criteria.

13. CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

13.1 The quality and impact of referral, assessment and planning

We have been improving our understanding, practice and services towards children at risk of or subject to CSE, including how we are intervening with children at risk. In July 2014 we completed a multi-agency audit of vulnerable adolescents where CSE was identified as a factor. This activity provided us with a benchmark as to current practice and understanding in relation to referral, assessment and planning, and made further improvements. We have developed training, awareness raising and a practice improvement plan which has seen improvements in referral, assessment and planning. For example, we have seen a steady and continuous increase in the numbers of children and young people identified as at risk of or subject to CSE and referred to Multi Agency Sexual Exploitation Panel (MASE). We have received independent feedback to indicate our MASE process protects children by coordinating interventions and supporting multi-agency planning to disrupt and protect as well as prevent. We have 'partnered' in specific police operations. For example, in Operation Raptor we intervened with twenty of our most vulnerable young women and developed protection plans for each allowing us to disrupt their exploitation. This operation also led to a specialist police investigation. Operations such as Raptor and Makesafe, are informed by our work at MASE and the Missing Panel.

Other examples of improvements in referral, assessment and planning are:

- Our social workers have been specifically trained to assess for CSE.
- We have established in CRS a specific CSE workflow and a set of KPIs to inform and measure practice in relation to CSE.
- The CSCB coordinates a CSE training programme throughout 2015 and plan to continue this in 2016.
- The Empower Project, in partnership with Youth Offending, continues to assess and intervene with young people affected by CSE (which we described later in this paper).
- The Missing and CSE Team, in partnership with Children Social Care, continues to assess and intervene with young people affected by Missing and CSE. This team are also role modelling good practice, training social workers and working in schools as well as supporting the implementation of preventative work in schools.
- The MsUnderstood Project is supporting Children Services in developing early intervention and assessment in schools as well as improving intervention and planning across CSC for children and young people affected by CSE. Services have been developed based on audit work, which had a particular focus on young people experiencing multiple peer abuse.
- The NSPCC are working in partnership with CSC and providing a wealth of clinical interventions to children and young people affected by CSE.

- We updated our Child Sexual Exploitation Protocol and our Child Sexual Exploitation Guidance in May 2015 in response to the MsUnderstood Audit.
- We plan to undertake a single agency audit and quality assurance exercise in 2016 of MASE and the quality of practice and plan for a CSCB funded and coordinated quality assurance multi-agency audit in 2017.

13.2 The effectiveness of direct work with children and families and of services to support children

13.2.1 Our multi-agency audit of at risk adolescents in July 2014 gave evidence of good communication across agencies managing this vulnerable group. There was evidence of collaborative working across agencies, and the capacity to think critically together about children's needs.

13.3 In relation to the children who go missing our quality assurance mechanisms indicate a clear link between children who go missing and child sexual exploitation, particularly for girls. Our audit findings also raise concerns about boys being coerced into accepting and enacting brutalising sexual behavior but we have found no evidence, to date, that girls are being sexually exploited by organised networks of older men.

- From our quality assurance activity we have identified: six '*need groups*' as follows: need to improve relationships with parents; need to reduce impact of traumatic experiences; need to reduce the impact of neglect/abuse experienced at home; need for dependable adult support and a consistent relationship for refugee children; need to reduce impact of being rejected or abandoned by parents; and need for child and parents to understand, manage and change child's behaviour.
- We can demonstrate effectiveness in our interventions through the work of MASE and our partnerships with the third sector, who we commission to provide interventions to children and young people affected by CSE. The MASE panel functions effectively to bring multi-agency support to bear on cases requiring protection and support.
- In respect of third sector support, in Croydon Safer London have operated their EMPOWER Project for the past three years where they deliver young women's 1:1 intensive support, a young men's group programme, Empower Young People's Advocates, parenting workshops, a young women's group programme and training events for professionals. This has led to the following activity and services for children and families affected by CSE in 2014/15:
 - Intensive 1:1 advocacy and support provided to 42 young women experiencing or at significant risk of sexual violence and exploitation.
 - 2 x young women's Group work education programmes delivered in secondary schools

- 2 x young men's Group work education programmes delivered in secondary schools
 - Specialist training delivered to over 180 professionals & 22 foster carers
 - 14 awareness raising presentations delivered to a variety of multi-agency practitioners across London
- 13.4 Outcomes from the programme have included: 100% initial engagement with the programme, 83% engagement at 3 month point, 100% found the Empower programme useful or very useful, 89% have improved safety, 84% have an increased ability to cope, 88% have an increased understanding of healthy relationships, 87% have an increased ability to manage risk and 83% have increased self-worth.
- 13.5 The level of awareness among professional staff, including their willingness and effectiveness to listen and receive feedback from children and young people
- 13.5.1 There has been a significant investment in communicating and awareness raising in relation to CSE in Croydon some of which has been targeted based on intelligence. For example; Operation Raptor identified that young people were recruiting other young people in Croydon Pupil Referral Units (PRU). We located a specialist CSE worker in each of the PRUs, trained all PRUs and ensured Operation Makesafe focused an intervention into PRUs.
- 13.6 Levels of professional awareness are high, given the high profile of work by the authority and its partners on sexual exploitation, for example this was a strand of the July 2015 highly praised LSCB Conference on Vulnerable Adolescence. Missing and CSE has remained a priority for the LSCB throughout 2014/5 and is present at the LSCB Education, QAPP and Missing and CSE sub-groups.
- 13.7 A workshop was provided to over 60 professionals explaining context and the details of the operation and the learning surrounding CSE which we generated. We have also provided regular feedback from the learning from Operation Makesafe and ensure Missing and CSE featured in the LSCB's newsletters. We are currently investing in an e-learning package for CSE. In addition we have provided a number of traditional trainings for the multi-disciplinary network.
- 13.8 The arrangements to protect care leavers who are at risk of or who have been sexually exploited
- Following Operation Raptor, (where a care leaver was subject to CSE), we developed the practice of monitoring all care leavers at risk of or subject to CSE via MASE until the age of 21. We also agreed transfer and referral protocols with colleagues in Adult Safeguarding and provided training to all social workers and Personal Advisors in the Leaving Care Service who have also been invited to attend MASE. We also monitor all patterns and hot spots

to ensure no specific group such as care leavers or unaccompanied minors are being exploited.

- 13.9 What is known about the authority culture in terms of:
listening to children, hearing what they say and acting appropriately
- The authority's culture in relation to CSE is one of openness, a willingness to confront the challenge 'head on' and a commitment to support and resource professionals in order to Prevent CSE, Protect Children and Disrupt the perpetrators.
- 13.10 As part of our audit into 72 vulnerable adolescents in autumn 2014 some young people provided feedback on the quality of service they received.
- 13.11 We also listened to the views of young women subject to Operation Raptor, which is included in the inspection evidence (Operation Raptor and the multi-agency response to identify patterns and behaviours of CSE in Croydon, Nov 14-March 2015, 1.09).
- 13.12 We commissioned a report from Safer London Foundation that gives the views of young people who are at risk of CSE in Croydon We received feedback from current and former service users of Safer London and NSPCC who were interviewed, and we arranged focus groups with young people in mainstream schools and received hundreds of completed young people's questionnaires. 84% had heard about CSE in the media, 29% knew someone who had experienced CSE and 46% had spoken to an adult about CSE. The views of young people from Croydon were compiled into a report which was widely circulated. We used this feedback to plan our responses (see above).
- 13.13 Hearing from staff at the frontline and engaging with what they say
- 13.13.1 Professionals' reported that the development of Croydon's MASE panel has been positive in regards to Croydon's statutory response to CSE. Professionals felt that MASE is now working more effectively, and better aligns with the recommendations of the Pan London CSE Operating Protocol. Professionals felt that there needs to be mandatory training for statutory services in regards to CSE and supporting affected young people to promote a more consistent response. This finding has informed CSC and CSCB learning and development curriculum for 2015 / 16.
- 13.14 Elected member engagement with the local community
- Elected members have shown strong interest and have been rigorous in the assurance they have sought on child sexual exploitation. A report was taken to full Council, Cabinet and Scrutiny in autumn 2014
 - The Lead Member has observed MASE and supported additional funding in the council's response to CSE.

- 13.15 Croydon Council presented and had their work scrutinised by to MOPAC in May 2015. The elected member of Croydon Council who sits on MOPAC was very proud of Croydon's contributions.
- 13.16 The Leader of the Council used a Local Strategic Partnership Congress (major conference) meeting in November 2015 to strengthen the profile of child sexual exploitation with the local community (Cabinet report: of Sept 2015: Croydon Congress November 2015 – Working with our communities to tackle CSE, 6.5)).
- 13.17 The quality of work with partners to disrupt offenders or preventative work.
- 13.17.1 The local authority has engaged well with partners in preventative work. Our multi-agency preventative work can be evidenced through the following activities:
- 13.18 The CSCB Strategic Response to CSE in Croydon and the work of the Missing and CSE sub-group of the CSCB which has led on the strategy to Prevent, Protect and Disrupt CSE in Croydon.
- 13.19 The CSCB Conference in Sept 2015 dedicated to our multi-agency response to vulnerability in adolescence where there were specific plenaries on CSE and the high take up of training spaces across the multi-agency network on issues relating to CSE.
- 13.20 Croydon's work with the Police in Operation Raptor (an operation to disrupt potential offenders in spring 2015) has been adopted by the Metropolitan Police as a model for rolling out across other boroughs and police authorities. Operation Raptor was a ground-breaking piece of joint work with the MET Police, and Croydon Council is working with the MET and the National Crime Agency to profile the development of this good practice at a national conference. Operation Raptor has given us very good intelligence on the young people identified as being at the highest risk and the alleged perpetrators. As a result four arrests were made.

14. CHILDREN PLACED FROM OTHER AUTHORITIES

- 14.1 The number of children placed by other local authorities within Croydon is the highest in London by a considerable margin.
- 14.2 These children are mainly from within London and mainly from neighbouring authorities.
- 14.3 All authorities are obliged to inform us when they are placing a child within our border, but the compliance with this process can be erratic, which means that exact figures are difficult to verify. The latest verified figure from the DfE is 550.
- 14.4 These placements are placing additional stress on the resources of our

partners and on local schools. Although the Corporate Parenting responsibility remains with the placing authority, the responsibility for health, for education and for youth offending services rests with Croydon as the host authority. We estimate that two members of staff in the Youth Offending Service are occupied by looked after children placed from outside Croydon.

- 14.5 Where there are individual children causing concern, for example by repeatedly being reported missing, the Head of Quality Assurance and Safeguarding will write to the placing authority with a view to them reviewing the placement.
- 14.6 The Chief Executive and the Chair of the Safeguarding Board wrote last year to their peers in those authorities where we are aware that they have placed at least eight children. Authorities are being asked to review their arrangements for placing children but are also being asked to consider the joint commissioning of additional resources to support the young people in placement.
- 14.7 We have hosted a number of meetings with representatives from neighbouring authorities to address this issue. We have agreed that those authorities will commission sufficient capacity to undertake their own return home interviews for missing children. There are regular meetings with CSE and Missing Co-ordinators to ensure that intelligence is shared across boundaries.

15. MISSING CHILDREN

- 15.1 Croydon has a very large number of children reported missing. Some of this is caused by the large number of children who are looked after who are living in Croydon, either from our own population or those placed by other authorities.
- 15.2 A daily report is provided by Croydon police of all children resident or looked after by the home authority or Other Local Authorities to the Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Service of Croydon Children Social Care. In reviewing the last quarter's data Croydon consistently scores as the borough with the highest numbers of missing children: at 831 (June to Sept 2015), however only 19.24% were identified as unauthorised absence. The daily police report is reviewed by the lead officer for Missing Children and Child Sexual Exploitation. This lead officer then circulates a daily missing report to the director of Children Social Care, all heads of service and all managers in Children Social Care. This report includes demographic data, LAC status and identifies whether there are outstanding procedural and practice actions on each case. Managers use these reports to ensure that appropriate actions are taken: evidence indicates the interest shown by the divisional director has the pact of emphasising the urgency of some actions. The daily report is also used as part of the intelligence gathering process to identify 'hot spots' and key themes for missing children and CSE.
- 15.3 The lead officer for Missing and CSE works closely with the Croydon Police Missing Person Unit and Single Point of Contact for CSE to ensure urgent action is taken on all children missing. As Missing

children is a priority area for the CSCB and Council Police and CSC undertook a self-evaluation of practice by reviewing the police intervention on all children who went missing in February 2015. We identified from this audit that we needed a greater understand of authorised absence and practice in this circumstance whilst police identified they needed to improve the recording of searches.

- 15.4 All Missing Children are reviewed at the Missing Children's Panel and may also be reviewed at MASE (Multi-Agency Sexual Exploitation) Panel and possibly at the new High Risk Panel ensure oversight of our most vulnerable. Some missing children will also have either a Children looked After Plan, a Child Protection Plan or a Child in Need Plan and will be subject to Multi-Agency reviews. In reviewing our practice there is very little difference in social work practice when children go missing from home or care if they are open to Children Social Care.
- 15.5 A report is provided every six weeks to senior leaders and to the Lead Member that provides more qualitative information and analysis.
- 15.6 All Croydon Children who go missing are offered a Return Home Interview (this includes children who may not be allocated in CSC or EH). Croydon commission the NSPCC who provide a Return Home Interview worker who is co-located in Children Social Care, Croydon Police and the NSPCC offices and works jointly with the Missing Project; a Railway Children funded project provided by Safer London and offered to all young people who may go missing regularly and may be at risk of CSE.

16. CHILDREN AT RISK OF RADICALISATION

- 16.1 There are increasing national concerns regarding children at risk of radicalization. Children's Social Care are expected to play a leading role in protecting such children. This applies to all extreme ideologies.
- 16.2 Risks come from two main sources. The first is parental or family influence, where there are concerns that the child is being exposed to extremism and encouraged to develop views and behaviours that could lead to them becoming involved in terrorism. The second is children who are exposed to influences from outside the family, for example through the internet.
- 16.3 The Safer Croydon Partnership works with the security services and the community to try and reduce the risks presented by those from within our community who might engage in an act of extreme violence, endangering every person in Croydon as well as themselves.
- 16.4 Croydon Council's engagement with counter-terrorism takes place within the parameters of the Prevent Strategy. Croydon is not designated a priority borough, but this situation is regularly reviewed by central government and could change. The Prevent Strategy has the following main objectives: respond to the ideological challenge of terrorism and the threat we face from those who

promote it, to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism and ensure that they are given appropriate advice and support work with sectors and institutions where there are risks of radicalisation that we need to address.

- 16.5 There have been further changes to this strategy with the introduction of The Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015 that came into force on 1st July 2015. This Act created a duty whereby Prevent activity has to become part of the mainstream work of all local authority and other public bodies. Croydon now has a duty to:
- establish an understanding of the risk of radicalisation
 - ensure that staff understand the risk and build the capabilities to deal with it
 - communicate and promote the importance of the duty
 - ensure staff implement the duty effectively.
- 16.6 The Channel process is part of Prevent. Channel interventions can take place anywhere, regardless of whether or not a borough has been designated as a priority area. Channel is essentially as safeguarding process, which means that partner agencies cooperate on multi-disciplinary work to minimise and manage risks to people who have been identified as being vulnerable. Children's Social Care are represented on the Channel Panel.
- 16.7 They are likely to have been identified as holding extreme yet legitimate ideas but have been assessed as being at risk of moving from that position into one of criminality. It is always good safeguarding practice to involve the vulnerable person in any support activity and offer them as much choice as possible in the intervention process. Channel is no different in this.
- 16.8 The Safeguarding Children's Board has established new threshold criteria that relate to risks of radicalisation and has shared these with Board members. We have also established a referral process that ensures that all Prevent or Channel referrals relating to children or parents are referred to MASH and considered against the safeguarding thresholds.

17. CORPORATE PARENTING

- 17.1 As stated above, the Corporate Parenting Panel is formally constituted by the Council to scrutinise the services offered to children looked after and care leavers.
- 17.2 A range of performance information has been provided earlier in the report regarding the numbers of Children Looked After and Care Leavers and some key performance.
- 17.3 As part of the Corporate Parenting function we work closely with partners across Education, Health (including mental health), Housing and other agencies to ensure that all the needs of the child are met.
- 17.4 The Children Looked After Strategic Partnership brings together all these agencies and develops an overarching plan.

- 17.5 The Virtual School for Children Looked After is based within the School Improvement Service but works very closely with staff from the Children's Social Care, with social workers, personal advisers and foster carers. The School do not provide direct teaching but work with schools and colleges to develop Personal Education Plans for all Children Looked After, to oversee their progress in school and to assist in ensuring that the child's educational needs are met. This should not detract from the fact that the key role in ensuring that a child is supported in their educational achievement by their primary carers.
- 17.6 There has been considerable national concern about the relatively poor performance of Children Looked After compared with their peers.
- 17.7 Responsibility to promote the educational achievement of looked after children has been a statutory duty placed upon Local Authorities since the Children Act 1989 ("the 1989 Act") (as amended by the Children and Families Act 2014). The Children and Families Act 2014 amended the Children Act 1989 to require local authorities in England to appoint at least one person for the purpose of discharging the local authority's duty to promote the educational achievements of its Children Looked After, wherever they live or are educated. That person (the VSH) must be an officer employed by the authority or another local authority in England.
- 17.8 In July 2014, the department for education produced an amended statutory guidance for local authorities on the promotion of the educational achievement of looked after children which replaced the version published in March 2010.
- 17.9 The key points highlighted in this guidance include a responsibility on social workers, Virtual School Heads and Independent Reviewing Officers, school admissions officers and SEN departments to work together to ensure that except in an emergency – appropriate education provision for a child is arranged at the same time as a care placement. This is in line with the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations 2010 as amended by the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations 2013 and the Adoption and Care Planning Regulations 2014 outlining how local authorities should seek to ensure, as an integral part of care planning, that all looked after children are supported to achieve educational outcomes that are comparable to those of their peers.
- 17.10 In Croydon, the number of school aged Children Looked After from Reception to Year 11 increased from 371 in September 2013 to 526 in July 2014. This was an 8% increase on the previous year with the increase intake over the year of 29%, which was in line with the figures published for 2012/13 academic year.
- 17.11 Almost 40% of those were unaccompanied minors (a 10% increase on the previous year's figure) and approximately one third were educated outside of Croydon (in line with the previous year). Over two thirds of the statutory school age Children Looked After population were of secondary school age (in line with the previous year).
- 17.12 Since 2012 the percentage of children looked after under the care of Croydon

who have been in care continuously for 12 months achieving the expected level in reading and maths at the end of Key Stage 2 has improved or been maintained.

| End of KS2 Results | 2012/13 (14 CLA) | | 2013/14 (19 CLA) | | 2014/15 (15 CLA) |
|---|--------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| | DfE Validated data | VS data | DfE Validated data | VS data | VS data |
| Achieved Level 4 or above in reading | 60% | 57% (exceeded target) | 72% | 68% (exceeded target) | 80% (exceeded target) |
| Achieved Level 4 or above in writing | 53% | 57% (exceeded target) | 56% | 58% (exceeded target) | 47% (target not met) |
| Achieved Level 4 or above in maths | 53% | 57% (exceeded target) | 61% | 63% (exceeded target) | 53% (exceeded target) |
| Achieved Level 4 or above in reading, writing and maths | 47% | 57% (exceeded target) | 50% | 53% (exceeded target) | 47% (target not met) |

17.13 The Key Stage 3 cohort consists of 67 CLA, however only 21 have been in continuous care for 12 months or more, 5 of who are UASC. Of the 21, 6 have statements of SEN (one working at P-Levels), 6 are on additional support packages and 6 of the 12 with SEN attend either special schools or independent alternative provisions. The 5 UASC entered the country during KS3 and therefore we do not hold prior attainment data. Due to the fact that NC levels have been phased out and many schools are starting GCSE courses in year 9 gauging progress and attainment for this cohort in relation to expectation has been problematic.

17.14 The table below outlines the percentage of children looked after under the care of Croydon who have been in care continuously for 12 months achieving 5 A*-C including English and maths at the end of Key Stage 4 as recorded by the DfE (validated data – national indicator 101) and Croydon Virtual School.

| End of KS4 Results | 2011/12 | | 2012/13 | | 2013/14 | | 2014/15 |
|--------------------|--------------------|---------|--------------------|---------------------------|--------------------|---|--|
| | DfE Validated data | VS data | DfE Validated data | VS data | DfE Validated data | VS data | VS data 86 CLA |
| Achieved 5 A*-C EM | 16% | 14.6% | 17.5% | 12% (below target of 16%) | 9.5% | 10.6% (marginally below target of 11.1%) but above 14% target at 14.3% if correct discounts are applied | 5.8% (below target of 10.5%) 3/28 10.7% Indigenous, 2/58 3.4% UASC |

Although on paper the outcomes look low and are below those targeted, it is important to highlight that we set ourselves very ambitious targets for this cohort and there were considerable challenges faced by a number of young people during their final year, which subsequently impacted on their attainment. Of the 86 in the NI 101 cohort only 6 were targeted and on track to achieve 5 A*-C EM at the start of year 11, with a further 3 targeted but not on track. Of the 86, only 46 were sitting 5 or more GCSE's and hence would contribute positively to the statistics.

Half the cohort had been in care less than 2 years, with the majority being UASC who entered the UK from a non-English speaking country. Hence, if we were able to apply the same discounts as schools the cohort size would be 51 with 4 achieving 5 A*-C EM (8%). In respect of CLA with SEN in the cohort, 9 have statements or EHCP's, with 5 attending special schools and a further 13 are on additional support packages. 4 of the 6 CLA on track achieved 5 A*-C EM and the other 2 young people achieved 5 A*-C E (case study F) and 5 A*-C M, achieving a D in the other subject.

The Virtual School also supported a further 4 young people (3 targeted but not on track and a further one who was targeted 5 A*-G). The outcome of this work was that one achieved 5 A*-C EM (case study D), and 2 achieved 5 A*-C E (case study E) and 9 A*-G (4 A*-C M) respectively (case study H). For the UASC undertaking ESOL qualifications, all passed at their respective levels and were assessed by their educational provision as having made good in year progress. If you also consider length of time in care and identify those who have been in care for 5 years or more, the cohort size is 15. Of this 3 achieved 5 A*-C EM, 1 achieved 5 A*-C, 7 achieved 5 A*-G and 1 achieved 1 A*-G. 3 didn't achieve any GCSE qualification; however, 2 of these had statements and were in special schools working at P levels.

17.15 A full report on educational progress was presented to the Corporate Parenting Panel on 13.01.16.

17.16 With regard to the Health of Children Looked After, the position is variable. The position with regard to immunisations and dental checks is very positive. However, the timeliness of regular medical checks is not as good as it should be.

| | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 |
|--|------|------|------|------|
| Average SDQ Score | 11.5 | 12.6 | 10.7 | 10.9 |
| % LAC with up to date Health Assessments | 92.3 | 71.6 | 87.0 | 76.9 |
| % LAC with up to date Dental Checks | 57.3 | 83.2 | 93.3 | 95.3 |
| % LAC with up to date Immunisations | 83.5 | 64.2 | 68.1 | 92.5 |

17.17 All Children Looked After should have an initial health check within 20 days of becoming looked after. Thereafter, they should have an annual health check or once every six months for children aged 0-5.

- 17.18 It is clearly important to maintain up to date immunisations for Children Looked After. There are some difficulties in gaining accurate information about the historical immunisation status of children, especially when they have moved. There are also particular issues for Croydon regarding the immunisation status of UASC.
- 17.19 The last comparative figure given is regarding the SDQ (Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire) outcomes. SDQs are undertaken by carers and give a useful indication of the emotional welfare of children. This is an evidence based questionnaire and will give a score. Higher scores indicate a greater level of emotional difficulties for the child. The performance for Croydon on the average score is relatively positive.
- 17.20 In conjunction with the Integrated Commissioning Unit and with the Designated Doctor and Designated Nurse for Children Looked After, we have developed a CLA Health Strategy to address the performance issues. Some of the difficulties are operational, regarding the efficient arrangements of medicals and exchanges of information between services. Some are related to the commissioning arrangements and ensuring that there are sufficient resources available to meet the needs of the population.
- 17.21 The Health of Children Looked After is one of the key priorities for the Children and Families Partnership.
- 17.22 With regard to the mental health of children looked after, research is clear that this population is very vulnerable to emotional wellbeing and mental health issues. The Service specifically commissions a dedicated Child Mental Health Service from SLAM. They are based within the local CAMHS office but have regular contact with the social work service.
- 17.23 In addition, counselling services are available for adolescent CLA and Care Leavers through Off the Record, a voluntary agency. This service was originally funded through the Big Lottery. It has been very highly used and valued by young people who are dealing with the emotional costs of displacement and the experiences that they have been subject to in their country of origin.
- 17.24 We are currently re-commissioning services across Croydon for the Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health of children and this will include services for Children Looked After.

18. UNACCOMPANIED ASYLUM SEEKERS

- 18.1 As referred to in several sections of this report, by virtue of having Lunar House based within the authority, Croydon is the first port of call for the majority of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children.
- 18.2 We have established a specialist service area to work with them as Children Looked After. A separate duty service has been arranged to address their needs for placement on presentation. They also form a large contingent of the Leaving Care population. During this year, they have become the greater

proportion of the overall Looked After Children population.

- 18.3 Croydon has developed a considerable expertise in working with this population.
- 18.4 Applicants are given an initial screening at Lunar House and will only be formally referred to the Duty Service referred to above.
- 18.5 Where young people have presented as under 16, they will be accommodated by Croydon.
- 18.6 Where they have presented as aged 16 or 17, there is a London wide agreement for all authorities to accept young people on a rota basis and they are then distributed across London.

18.7 The most numerous countries of origin are:

| | |
|-------------|-----|
| Albania | 213 |
| Afghanistan | 78 |
| Eritrea | 40 |
| Vietnam | 26 |

18.8 There are currently children from 32 countries accommodated by the service. We work closely with the Home Office on a number of initiatives to ensure that where it is possible to return children to their country of origin safely, we are able to do so. The service went on a joint visit to Albania in October with the Home Office to observe the facilities that would be available if children were returned to that country. Although there are positive signs that Albania wishes to develop these facilities, as it stands, the infrastructure is not ready to take back larger numbers.

19. PLACEMENTS

19.1 Children Looked After are placed in a number of legal settings:

- Local authority foster care
- Independent Agency foster care
- Residential care
- Semi-independent accommodation
- Placed for Adoption
- Secure accommodation
- Placed at home with parents

19.2 Where children have been placed in foster care with a relative, this is classed as being placed in local authority foster care as they will be approved as foster carers.

19.3 The authority has a Sufficiency Strategy which seeks to commission placements within Croydon or as close as possible.

19.4 In some circumstances it may be in the child's best interests to place them at

some distance from Croydon. For example, the best possible permanent placement might be at some distance. The child may need a specialist placement for their individual needs. Some children who are engaged in very risky behaviour may be placed at some distance from Croydon in their best interests. Where such placements are required, agreement is needed from the Director of Children's Services.

- 19.5 As shown earlier in the report, Croydon's performance on placing children away from their local authority is very positive.
- 19.6 We have re-tendered in the current financial year for Independent Fostering Agencies and will have achieved better value for money and a reduced overall spend.
- 19.7 Croydon will generally only place children in providers rated either Good or Outstanding by Ofsted unless there are exceptional reasons to step outside this.

20. FOSTERING

- 20.1 Croydon is itself a provider of foster care and has one of the largest foster populations in London.
- 20.2 The service was last individually inspected by Ofsted in 2011 and achieved a Good rating.
- 20.3 The overall numbers of foster carers is shown below.

| | APR | MAY | JUN | JUL | AUG | SEP | OCT | NOV |
|--|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| No. Of Croydon Foster Carers | 215 | 218 | 221 | 220 | 224 | 220 | 221 | 225 |
| % Of Carers With Up-To-Date Annual Review | 76 | 67 | 76 | 80 | 78 | 82 | 87 | 84 |
| % Of Foster Carers With A Child In Placement | 80 | 80 | 79 | 79 | 86 | 80 | 80 | 80 |

- 20.4 The timeliness of Reviews has improved through this year but still needs to improve further. Reviews are undertaken on an annual basis.
- 20.5 Croydon supports foster carers through a comprehensive training and development programme.
- 20.6 Regulation 24 refers to foster carers who are temporarily approved to care for children within their extended family or friends network. This will often be the best immediate solution for the child as it places them with someone that they have a relationship with. The carer is then subject to a full assessment and will be presented to the Fostering Panel for a recommendation to approve.

20.7 The Fostering Service has been the subject of a Croydon Challenge Project that has now concluded. Although the service has performed well in recruiting new carers, we still believed that there was room for improvement. NRS have been appointed as the recruitment agency and are responsible for the recruitment and assessment of new carers. To date in this financial year, an additional 40 carers have been recruited, which is positive performance. It is aimed to increase the proportion of children placed within our own resources as this will be more cost-effective. The unit cost of in-house provision is substantially lower than using the independent sector.

21. ADOPTION

21.1 Adoption services in Croydon have also been on a journey of improvement. The Adoption Service was last inspected by Ofsted in 2012 and achieved a Good rating. However, the previous inspection regime did not measure performance in the same way as the Government have been doing more recently.

21.2 Given the national concerns about adoption results, the Government introduced the Adoption Scorecard to measure relative performance against a range of indicators. These are developed over an average of the past three years.

21.3 Our figures are given below:

In 2014-15, 29 children were adopted from care in Croydon

Percentage of Children adopted (compared to population of CLA)

| | 2012-13 | 2013-14 | 2014-15 |
|----------------------|---------|---------|---------|
| Croydon | 7 | 7 | 8 |
| Stat Neighbour (Avg) | 8.78 | 11 | 8.8 |
| England | 14 | 17 | 17 |

Given that our total population includes a large number of UASC, none of whom would be appropriate for adoption, this represents very good performance. The number is likely to be reduced in this year. We are expecting that 20-21 children will be adopted. There is a national reduction in the number of children being adopted and Croydon is following this trend. The National Adoption Board is investigating what the reasons for this reduction may be.

Timeliness Indicators

| | 2010-13 | 2011-14 | This year to date |
|---|---------|---------|-------------------|
| Time between court decision and child match with adopter | 346 | 332 | 311 |
| Time between child entering care and moving in with adoptive family | 941 | 849 | 647 |

Our performance remains above the national averages but performance is improving. We continue to deal with cases where there have been historical delays and this has had an impact on our current outcomes.

Adopters

| | Number of approved adoptive families as at 31 December 2015 | Proportion of adoptive families who were matched to a child during 2013-14 who waited more than 3 months from approval to being matched to a child (%) |
|------------|---|--|
| Croydon | 27 | 43 |
| SN Average | | 50 |
| England | | 42 |

21.4 The numbers of adopters is positive for Croydon and we have a good record of recruitment. The length of time that we are taking to assess and approve adopters has significantly reduced. We currently have 10 families in the process of assessment, but we have reduced our recruitment activity as there is a national surplus of approved adopters.

21.5 Given the concerns about our performance, the Government Adoption Adviser, Sir Martin Narey visited Croydon to review our plans for improvement in 2014. We were able to demonstrate that we had taken actions to address the issues regarding timeliness. We are currently performing better than our predictions at the time of that meeting.

22. LEAVING CARE

22.1 Local authorities retain responsibilities for children who have left their care beyond their 18th birthday. This responsibility continues until the young person becomes 21 or up to the age of 25 in the case of young people who remain in full-time education.

- 22.2 There are particular responsibilities to ensure that care leavers have adequate accommodation and that they are assisted to ensure that they are engaged in education, employment or training (EET).
- 22.3 Each Care Leaver is appointed a personal adviser. A Pathway Plan that looks at all aspects of their development and their support needs should be prepared prior to their 16th birthday and maintained and reviewed until our responsibilities to them under the Children (Leaving Care) Act cease.
- 22.4 Croydon has a high number of Care Leavers due to our large Looked After population. Those young people who were previously UASC have additional pressures and concerns regarding their immigration status and their right to remain in the United Kingdom. This also has an impact on their rights to secure a tenancy or seek employment. For young people who have not been granted leave to remain and who have exhausted their rights to appeal this decision, they have No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF). However, the local authority remains responsible for them as care leavers.
- 22.5 The large number of Care Leavers and the lack of available social housing in Croydon causes a particular problem and means that many young people are living in Housing of Multiple Occupancy (HMO). In many cases this has a positive aspect as young people give each other support, but there is a limited choice given the financial pressures and the need to ensure that accommodation is affordable.
- 22.6 National statistical comparisons were given regarding Care Leavers in Section 7 of this report. Local statistics as at October 2015 are given below:

| | |
|-------------------------------|-------------|
| No. of Care Leavers | 740 |
| No. in EET | 516 (69.7%) |
| No. in Higher Education | 91 (12.2%) |
| No. in Suitable Accommodation | 701 (94.7%) |
| No. in HMO | 472 (63.7%) |

These are generally positive statistics in comparison with national indicators, other than the number in HMO, which is higher for reasons given above. We have a range of interventions in place to encourage a greater proportion of young people to engage in education and employment and to ensure that all opportunities are open to them, but the figure is impacted by numbers of UASC and NRPF.

23. CONCLUSION

- 23.1 The overall position of the Division is one where performance is overall improving but where this is in the context of very considerable and rising demand, as well as additional expectations from the Government.

23.2 Our self-assessment against Ofsted gradings is that the service Requires Improvement. We continue to strive to achieve Good or Outstanding outcomes and have plans in train to achieve this.

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FINANCE COMMENTS:

Children’s Social Care and Early Help

The financial performance, in comparison to 2014/15 and budget is detailed in the tables below, where it can be seen that the projected year end position has reduced by £0.8m from that in 2014/15.

| | 2014/15 Controllable Budget | 2015/16 Controllable Budget | 2016/17 Controllable Budget |
|-----------------|--|--|--|
| CSC | £43.808m | £43.700m | £44.495m |
| Movement | | (£0.108m) | £0.795m |

| | 2014/15 Overspend | 2015/16 Projected Overspend |
|-----------------|------------------------------|--|
| CSC | £2.226m | £1.356m |
| Movement | | (£0.870m) |

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:

Annual report of The Independent Reviewing Officer Service