

Corporate Parenting Panel Agenda



To: Councillor Alisa Flemming (Chair)

Councillors Janet Campbell, Jerry Fitzpatrick, Maria Gatland,
Maddie Henson, Shafi Khan, Helen Redfern

Co-Optees:

Virtual School Head: Shelley Davies, Angela Griffiths, Sarah Bailey;

LAC Nurse/Doctor: Ian Johnstone, Simon Wilkinson, Sue Goode,
Lyn Glover;

Children in Care Council: Emily Collinsbeare, Julie Ralphs;

Care Leaver: Ashleigh Searle;

Foster Carers: Angela Christmas, Manny Kwamin and Martin William;

Health Commissioner: Fiona Simmons, Sally Wadsworth; Amanda Tuke and
Connie Ikhifa

A meeting of the **Corporate Parenting Panel** which you are hereby summoned to attend, will be held on **Wednesday, 6 March 2019** at **5.00 pm** in **F11, Town Hall, Katharine Street, Croydon, CR0 1NX**

JACQUELINE HARRIS BAKER
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Tuesday, 26 February 2019

Members of the public are welcome to attend this meeting. If you require any assistance, please contact the person detailed above, on the right-hand side.

N.B This meeting will be paperless. The agenda can be accessed online at www.croydon.gov.uk/meetings

AGENDA – PART A

1. Apologies for absence

To receive any apologies for absence from any members of the Panel.

2. Minutes of the previous meeting (Pages 5 - 16)

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 16 January 2019 as an accurate record.

3. Disclosures of interest

In accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct and the statutory provisions of the Localism Act, Members and co-opted Members of the Council are reminded that it is a requirement to register disclosable pecuniary interests (DPIs) and gifts and hospitality to the value of which exceeds £50 or multiple gifts and/or instances of hospitality with a cumulative value of £50 or more when received from a single donor within a rolling twelve month period. In addition, Members and co-opted Members are reminded that unless their disclosable pecuniary interest is registered on the register of interests or is the subject of a pending notification to the Monitoring Officer, they are required to disclose those disclosable pecuniary interests at the meeting. This should be done by completing the Disclosure of Interest form and handing it to the Democratic Services representative at the start of the meeting. The Chair will then invite Members to make their disclosure orally at the commencement of Agenda item 3. Completed disclosure forms will be provided to the Monitoring Officer for inclusion on the Register of Members' Interests.

4. Urgent Business (if any)

To receive notice of any business not on the agenda which in the opinion of the Chair, by reason of special circumstances, be considered as a matter of urgency.

5. Update on actions agreed at previous meeting(s)

6. Children in Care Performance Scorecard (Pages 17 - 20)

The Children in Care Performance Scorecard of January 2019 is attached.

7. Fostering (Pages 21 - 74)

The following reports is to notify the Panel of the progress in the recruitment and deregistration of foster carers, the Fostering Statement of Purpose, the fostering action plan and the Adoption Statement of Purpose.

8. How has the Panel helped Children in Care today?

For the panel to consider how its work at the meeting will improve services for children in care.

9. Work Programme (Pages 75 - 80)

To consider and approve the Panel's work programme for the municipal year 2018/19. Panel Members to discuss the work programme for the municipal year 2019/20.

10. Exclusion of the Press and Public

The following motion is to be moved and seconded where it is proposed to exclude the press and public from the remainder of a meeting:

“That, under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act, 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information falling within those paragraphs indicated in Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended.”

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Corporate Parenting Panel

Meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel held on Wednesday, 16 January 2019 at 5.00 pm in
F10 - Town Hall

MINUTES

Present: Councillor Alisa Flemming (Chair);

Councillors Janet Campbell, Jerry Fitzpatrick, Maria Gatland, Maddie Henson and Helen Redfern

Also Councillor Robert Ward

Present: Sarah Bailey, Head of the Virtual School
Shelley Davies, Head of Education Standards, Safeguarding & Inclusion
Spencer Duvwiama, Service Manager, Fostering. Alison Farmer, Head of Special Educational Needs 0 - 25
Robert Henderson, Executive Director, Children, Families and Schools
Nick Pendry, Director of Early Help and Children's Social Care
Fiona Simmons – Designated Nurse for Looked After Children
Vanessa Strang, Commissioning Placements Project Manager
Wendy Tomlinson, Head of Corporate Parenting
Amanda Tuke, Head of Children and Maternity Integrated Commissioning
Dr Simon Wilkinson, CAMHS Psychiatrist

Apologies: Councillor Shafi Khan (Vice-Chair)

PART A

1/19 **Minutes of the previous meeting**

The meeting was quorate at 5:15pm and started at 5:22pm (the start of the meeting was postponed in order that the young people attending the meeting could arrive).

Before the formal business began, Councillor Alisha Flemming informed the Panel that she was unable to stay for the entirety of the meeting. She proposed that Councillor Fitzpatrick takeover the Chair for the remainder of the meeting. This was seconded by Councillor Henson and agreed by the remainder of the Panel.

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed as a true and accurate record.

2/19 **Disclosures of interest**

There were no disclosures of interest.

3/19 **Urgent Business (if any)**

There was no urgent business.

4/19 **Update on actions agreed at previous meeting(s)**

There was no update on actions agreed at the previous meeting.

5/19 **Children in Care Performance Scorecard**

The Chair noted that the agenda would be reordered to accommodate the availability of the young people attending the meeting.

The Head of Service for Corporate Parenting provided an introduction to the item. She highlighted that the number of Looked After Children (LAC) was continuing to rise. It was hoped that numbers would have started to fall with the transfer to other Councils of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) through the National Transfer Scheme. However, this had reached a plateau and the National Transfer Scheme was not working as intended. This presented significant challenges for Croydon.

It was explained that Corporate Parenting performance was measured through two key indicators; the stability of placements (as few moves as possible) and the proximity of those to home.

Ensuring that every Looked After Child had a Personal Education Plan (PEP) was a key focus. A review had been conducted and it had been recognised that achieving this target was still an issue. This was being addressed by ensuring that all members of the service were working towards the target. A new Interim Head of the Virtual School, Sarah Bailey had recently started and had already met with the team; the objective was to make the PEP target high profile. The need to work in partnership and to target PEPs to meet the needs of children was being stressed.

Steady progress was being achieved in providing initial health assessments but it was acknowledged that there needed to be greater improvement. A LEAN review of the initial health assessment process had been undertaken and its suggestions put to the LAC Health Subgroup. The focus was on a simplification of the processes involved with some reassurance being taken that this was more of a process issue. It was emphasised that whilst not all Looked After Children were having their initial health assessments within the timescale required there were not large numbers of children having their initial health assessments fulfilled outside of this timeframe.

A Panel Member noted the Council's poor Corporate Parenting performance and the need for challenge to be provided. It was asked how it would be possible for the Panel to gain reassurance that the service was working well. It was agreed that this question would be answered in the substantive item.

Another Panel Member asked why there had been a rise in the number of Looked After Children during May and September 2018. Additionally, it was asked why there had been a decrease in the number of Looked After Children remaining in the same placement for more than two years (KPI20).

In response, the Head of Service for Corporate Parenting explained that it was not uncommon to have an increase in care proceedings during Ofsted intervention. This was being driven by an increase in the numbers of local children coming into care and not Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children. It was stressed that there was no evidence of the judiciary saying the authority was initiating care proceedings for children unnecessarily. This was indicative that the service was acting correctly. It was noted that with the availability of different services it might be possible to reduce numbers of Looked After Children; the right services would need to be in place to support children to return home. Reviews were being conducted with children that had been through the care proceedings process to provide reassurance that the right action had been taken.

The Director of Early Help and Children's Social Care added that a piece of work had been commissioned to look at recent care proceedings to see if it would be possible to streamline the process.

A Panel Member summarised that they were unsure of the implications that could be drawn from this; whether numbers were likely to continue to rise or gradually decline. The Director of Early Help and Children's Social Care noted that it was possible to look at the resources available through the Early Care team to prevent care proceeding being necessary. This was described as working with families more effectively early on. The Panel Member was encouraged that this continued to be a focus and stressed their keenness to see the number of Looked After Children reduced.

With regard to the decrease in the number of Looked After Children remaining in the same placement for more than two years (KPI 20), the Head of Service for Corporate Parenting noted that this measure could be influenced by many factors including that some children don't remain in the Council's care for very long. The correlation between the length of care and other measures of success (for example educational outcomes) was stressed.

A Panel Member voiced their concern regarding the length of placements decreasing. The Head of Service for Corporate Parenting noted that with the number of children in care going up this would have a statistical impact on the measure of stability of placements lasting over two years.

The Head of Education Standards, Safeguarding and Inclusion introduced the item by explaining it was a statutory requirement that the Council tracked the participation of all 16 and 17 year olds up until their 18th birthdays. It was required that those figures be reported monthly. For care leavers or those who remain in care, this tracking continues until their 21st birthdays. The objective was to identify those not participating and to offer appropriate support.

Young people in both the LAC and care leaver cohorts were more likely statistically to be in the *Not in Education, Employment or Training* (NEET) category. The overall rate of NEET in the borough was 2.5% compared to a NEET rate of 15% for LAC and care leavers. It was stressed that it was hard to understand this figure given no comparative data was available for 18 – 21 year olds. It was explained that if you were a local care leaver you were statistically more likely to be NEET than if you were UASC. Similarly you were more likely to progress to University if you were UASC. Typically those who were LAC or care leavers were more likely to attend colleges than school 6th forms. Whilst it was known that those in these cohorts were more likely to take vocational courses due to GCSE attainment, what was being studied wasn't tracked at this age.

A Panel Member highlighted the need for PEPs of local Looked After Children to be focused on attainment and aspiration. The Interim Head of the Virtual School stressed that this was being looked at with the switch to a more outcomes focused approach going forward. It was acknowledged that there was a need to focus on completing as well as starting plans well.

The Panel welcomed two young people who were members of EMPIRE (the new title for the Children in Care Council), and invited them to ask questions.

It was asked how it was possible to get good careers advice at school? The Interim Head of the Virtual School explained that every school was responsible for giving every student impartial careers advice from the age of 12. They could therefore ask any teacher who was a careers adviser; they were encouraged to go to them and speak to them about their aspirations so they could help them plan. Additionally, it was highlighted that LAC could talk to others to receive careers advice; their foster carer, social worker and virtual teacher. Every school had a Designated Teacher who was responsible for linking with and supporting the work of the Virtual School. Also, every Year 11 student must be provided with a post 16 prospectus which would provide advice and guidance on where go for more help.

A foster carer on the Panel highlighted the difficulty of Looked After Children being put in a position of having to go and ask for this support; it was hard for any Looked After Child to go and ask for this support. The PEP contains information on a child's aspirations. The Designated Teacher should be informed by this and use it as the basis for proactively offering support. It was noted that the Interim Head of the Virtual School would visit the Croydon Foster Carers Association to discuss this with them.

The Head of Service for Corporate Parenting explained to the young people that it was the role of their social workers to understand and support their wishes and feelings. As Head of Service she wanted to know what young people thought about the support being offered through the service. She asked the young people present to encourage and support other Looked After Children to come to the Panel to tell the influential people in the room what they wanted.

Another foster carer member of the Panel asked why it was not possible for the foster carer to get a copy of the PEP. The Executive Director of Children, Families and Education stated it was unacceptable that foster carers were not already receiving a copy of the PEP, that they should receive a copy and he would ensure that this would happen.

It was established that the careers offer in individual schools varied and was subject to review. The need for careers advice to be offered before GCSE selection was highlighted by the foster carers on the Panel. Whilst overall the quality of careers advice offered by schools was assessed as part of the Ofsted inspection framework, it was confirmed that careers advice for Looked After Children was part of the Virtual School offer. Work was happening to increase capacity. Also dedicated roles were being established in the Virtual School to offer targeted post 16 support. A Panel member highlighted the importance of consistency; offering a single point or place of access for this support to ensure it was happening.

7/19

Annual Report of the Virtual School

The Head of Education Standards, Safeguarding and Inclusion introduced the item explaining that whilst improvements were being made, the service was not complacent. At Key Stage 2 there had been a 19% improvement in those achieving the expected standard. Similarly there had been improvements in the phonics assessment and in Key Stage 4.

It was acknowledged that the Virtual School had not previously been set-up to reflect the structure of a school. As a result, a restructure had been undertaken which was focused on outcomes. This aimed to provide support over and above that provided by school to our Looked After Children. It was noted that there was still work to do on standards. Two quality assurance interim posts had been established. The focus on quality standards was impacting on the time being taken to put PEPs in place. However, it was important to make sure that PEPs had the right targets and impact was being monitored through schools.

It was described how the service was on an improvement journey and in its early stages. This was why there was an improvement plan in place. It was highlighted that the service was holding itself to account and that it was important to raise the profile of the Virtual School. The need for the rapid pace of the improvement journey was acknowledged.

Invited to again question the Panel, the young people asked why so few Looked After Children and care leavers are engaged with further or higher education.

The Interim Head of the Virtual School explained that this was the result of a lot of factors. It was acknowledged that officers were not as good at communicating with children as they needed to be. This meant that Looked After Children and care leavers were not aware of the support available. Looked After Children and care leavers needed to know who the people were who would help them. The Virtual School hadn't operated in the way it would if it were an actual school.

Through the following discussion, it was identified that:

1. It was important to work with Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) to provide therapeutic solutions to overcome the traumatic start in life experienced by LAC and care leavers. How challenges in early childhood put Looked After Children and care leavers on the back foot in terms of life chances was described;
2. The lack of communication and information being provided to Looked After Children and care leavers was an issue and that it was the role of the Designated Teacher to overcome this;
3. Care leavers often don't progress to University simply because they have nowhere to stay during University holidays. This was in part being addressed by the holiday provision provided by the Council but this wasn't known about by foster carers and wasn't included in the *Moving On Course*;
4. It was important to celebrate the success of Looked After Children and care leavers. This might be judged in different ways and not using traditional measures. LAC and care leavers might not be following traditional pathways. It was suggested there needed to be more ways to celebrate success. The example of a letter home highlighting and celebrating success was provided;
5. It should be possible to provide PEPs in a range of languages to better support those who speak English as an additional language;
6. Any learning needs should be identified as early as possible to ensure support was accessed to help achieve potential. It was noted that diagnosis was increasingly happening in Key Stages 3 and 4. It was emphasised that this should be addressed through PEPs and that the Deputy Head of the Virtual School was undertaking SENCO training;
7. There are more boys than girls in the cohort of Looked After Children and care leavers but there are very few differences in terms of ethnicity from the wider population of young people who are NEET. Those who were lower achieving were typically boys and came into care at a later age. It was explained that those coming into care at the age of 13+ would have experienced chaotic lives, with the service having to repair this at the same time as achieving education success. This put the emphasis on earlier work to prevent breakdown or the need to act decisively earlier; and

8. Colleges were looking at putting on more suitable provision for LAC/care leavers. Officers were hopeful as the traditional offer had not typically been suitable.

RESOLVED: the Corporate Parenting Panel resolved to recommend:

1. The Health and Wellbeing Board look at the link between the Virtual School and CAMHS to ensure adequate access to therapeutic therapies for Looked After Children and care leavers following traumatic early years experiences; and
2. For all Looked After Children to receive the support of a mentor.

8/19

Health of Looked After Children

The Head of Children and Maternity Integrated Commissioning introduced the item highlighting the timeliness of health assessments was a statutory requirement. This had been subject to review with processes and pathways examined leading to improved communications across teams.

Additional resource had also been provided (two nurses) meaning that the completion of annual health assessments was moving towards the required level. However, it was emphasised that the service was not complacent. The role of social care colleagues to provide notification within the first three working days of a child becoming Looked After was emphasised as crucial in achieving an initial health assessment in the first 20 days as required.

Dr Simon Wilkinson described how there was a low threshold for referrals with a no decline policy. It was explained that LAC were at high risk of mental health issues and therefore referrals were prioritised. The identification of need was key and linked with the training and awareness of all professionals involved in caring for Looked After Children.

Through the following discussion, it was identified that:

1. Anything identified at the initial health assessment for follow-up should be progressed. The assessment should identify who would provide this follow-up. Any referral in the initial health assessment should be sufficient to ensure this happens. Specific issues experienced by a foster carer member of the Panel would be picked-up by officers outside of the meeting;
2. There had been an improvement in the speed of initial health assessments but foster carers were still experiencing incidents where nurses were not being informed that a child is in care. Communication needed to improve. Assessments were happening on Saturdays and after school which was the preference;
3. It was established that where there was any difference in opinion between professionals on the approach being taken to addressing a child's health, a network meeting could be requested for this to be discussed. This could explicitly be requested by a foster carer. It was also highlighted that foster carers could request a drop in meeting with a CAMHS professional if they

are unsure what to do. CAHMS practitioners would always see if the foster carer had attended with the child whether or not the social worker was in attendance;

4. The myth about there being a nine month CAMHS referral time was untrue. This was something the service was trying to dispel;
5. The ongoing need for clear protocols and steps in order to escalate concerns were once again identified. The Head of Service for Corporate Parenting shared that there had been work done across Children's Social Care to develop a policy on escalation where there was a disagreement. A version suitable for foster carers would be devised.
6. Foster carers were concerned about making a complaint. It was agreed that it was unacceptable that making complaint should be noted in the foster carer's annual review. It was agreed that the Director of Early Help and Children's Social Care would be in touch with the foster carer network to better understand concerns and provide reassurance.

RESOLVED: the Corporate Parenting Panel resolved to recommend that it receive the escalation policy paper for sign-off. Prior to this, the policy should go to the Foster Carer Association to ensure it meets needs.

9/19

Placement, Stability, Sufficiency; Performance and Population

Before the start of this item, Councillor Alisa Flemming left and Councillor Fitzpatrick assumed the Chair. Councillors Gatland and Henson left the meeting.

The Head of Service for Corporate Parenting explained it was a statutory requirement under the Children Act that the Council have a sufficient number of placements. This means that there had to be enough of the right kind of placements. The Council published a plan that sets out that the authority knows its children, their needs and could meet those through the right placements. The report included the updated plan which had been subject to consultation, scrutiny and sign-off.

The Commissioning Placements Project Manager described how this was a three year strategy with an annual update based on numbers as of 31 March 2018. There was a positive story to tell on sufficiency. The majority of Croydon's foster carers were approved by the Council's fostering service. There was a framework in place for the selection and approval of independent foster carer agencies. To support the management of foster carer recruitment a new contract had been put in place with Coram. Whilst the 232 Croydon registered foster carer households represented a healthy position the aim was to achieve an ongoing increase so that more Looked After Children could be placed locally. The target was an additional 30 households a year. This target was also to address the number of foster carers reaching retirement age. The relationship with the external market was also described as good with 37 placements in children's homes. This was a low percentage compared to other authorities.

Through the following discussion, it was identified that:

1. It was hard to determine the precise number of new foster carers required given this was influenced by the number of Looked After Children which could not be predicted;
2. The conversion rate on enquiries to become foster carers in Croydon was 5%;
3. Foster carer recruitment had been benchmarked against that of other authorities with 15 new foster carers the annual average;
4. Croydon was hosting the South London Commissioning Programme. This was being set-up to jointly commission residential placements for all 10 of the boroughs involved. The Department for Education had provided £1m of innovation funding for the development. This aimed to support commissioning on a larger scale to get higher quality provision. However, placements would continue to be as local as possible dependent on needs. It was hoped this would decrease the use of independent agencies. The joint commissioning programme would provide the opportunity to be clearer with the market about placements need across South London;
5. Croydon was fortunate to have a large, committed group of foster carers. Those were the reason why stability was such a feature of the Looked After Children offer;
6. The target for foster carer recruitment also had to accommodate Looked After Children with complex needs;
7. The way in which Coram was following-up initial expressions of interest would be checked to ensure that those were being dealt with adequately. It was noted that the contract includes mentoring and training for new foster carers and that the focus was on growing the skills of the service rather than simply replacing those that had retired. Given issues with the previous provider, there was a real focus on the quality of the service being provided by Coram;
8. After two years, recruitment of foster carers would return in house. Part of the contract with Coram was therefore to support the development of the in-house service;
9. Approximately 19% of Looked After Children were placed outside of the borough and potentially up to 20 miles away. However, in practice they could be significantly closer than this. Unfortunately, the statutory measure is crude. Placement outside of the borough had to be with the approval of the Director. Those placed in adjacent boroughs could be with the approval of the Head of Service for Corporate Parenting or the Director of Early Help and Children's Social Care;
10. The 37 Looked After Children currently in residential care were being reviewed. The service was considering what provision for them would look like if they were placed in Croydon; was it possible for them to be in Croydon or at least a lot closer? It was emphasised that sometimes placements needed to be away from the borough for safety; and
11. Highlighted the importance of identifying the right placements for Looked After Children with complex issues. The difficulty of this was stressed. It was explained that the initial presentation may change and develop over

time and that sufficiency of provision was about quality and not just numbers.

Having previously vacated the Chair, Councillor Alisa Flemming left the meeting towards the end of this item.

RESOLVED: the Corporate Parenting Panel resolved to:

1. Agree the report and note the recommendations;
2. Recommend the report on the 37 children placed in residential care be shared with the Corporate Parenting Panel; and
3. Recommend further information on the work of the South London Commissioning Programme be shared with the Corporate Parenting Panel.

10/19 **Review of the Fostering Allowances**

The Head of Service for Corporate Parenting introduced the item. It was explained that getting and keeping good foster carers was a key element of the improvement plan. As a result, work had started to review the weekly foster carer allowance. The report to the Panel was to seek its permission to progress this work.

It had been established that most authorities would apply an annual uplift to the allowance at least in line with the rate of inflation. Typically, authorities would review the allowance in more detail at regular intervals. The allowance had not been reviewed in Croydon for four years. Therefore it had been judged appropriate to undertake a more in-depth review. This was focused on whether or not the allowance would help achieve the sufficiency plan by attracting foster carers. The allowance needed to be competitive but the current rate was at the bottom end of London average.

The proposal being made was to link the level of allowance paid to the skills of the foster carer. Whilst most would continue to receive a basic payment, it was thought that a smaller group of around 10% of foster carers would receive a higher payment based on their skill at caring for the most challenging/vulnerable.

A foster carer member of the Panel highlighted that the proposed structure of allowances may place foster carers in a difficult position. Where a child with special needs requires lots of support it was often better for them not to be placed with another child with the same level of need. However, this structure of payments may mitigate against the way that those decisions were made. The Head of Service for Corporate Parenting thanked the foster carer for this very valuable contribution and reinforced that the intention was to develop a structure of allowances that worked in the best interests of Looked After Children.

RESOLVED: the Corporate Parenting Panel resolved to agree the recommendations in the report. The Panel noted it looked forward to receiving further information about the allowance structure at a future meeting.

11/19 **How has the Panel helped Children in Care today?**

Those present were invited by the Chair to comment on how their attendance at the Panel had helped Children in Care:

- A lot had been learnt by observing the meeting that would be applied at scrutiny. Poor communications with children themselves was noted. This needed to be improved along with delivering careers guidance. There was a need to concentrate on the support being offered because of the speed at which children go through the system;
- Valued the contribution of Looked After Children at the panel. The questions they had raised needed to be answered and their concerns addressed;
- The Panel had highlighted the need to strengthened the role of the Designated Teacher;
- The Panel had demonstrated its continued support for foster carers. This was illustrated by it being agreed foster carers should have a copy of the PEP. The meeting had also demonstrate the importance of developing aspirations in Looked After Children. This was especially the case for those aged under 10. Doing this would really improve their life chances;
- The Panel was advocating for foster carers and making sure they have a voice. That foster carers could escalate issues was important; it was right that they were advocating for their children;
- The Panel brought together a beneficial range of professionals and organisations to be jointly consulted. It was providing challenge and questions on a whole range of topics. This drew on the collective responsibility for Looked After Children. The voice of foster carers was especially important. They provided the closest thing to the lived experience of the child in the room. All care processes need to be informed by that experience. Disappointed by the treatment experienced by some foster carers. Highlighted the clarity of response given to this by the new Directors who had attended the meeting. Stressed the need to improve the quality of communications;
- The gap between what should happen and the lived reality had been exposed. Hoping that those that could change this would do so. Disappointed that the Panel keeps exposing this gap;
- The value of mentoring had been highlighted; and
- It was very positive that the new directors were at the meeting. Value in exposing issues early in their careers at Croydon.

12/19 **Work Programme**

RESOLVED: the Corporate Parenting Panel resolved to receive reports on the South London Commissioning Programme, the escalation policy, mentoring and careers guidance for Looked After Children/care leavers, the 37 children in residential care, and the review of foster carer allowances. These items were to be added to the Panel's work programme.

13/19 **Exclusion of the Press and Public**

This item was not required.

The meeting ended at 8.30 pm

Signed:

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Date:

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OUR
FOCUS

Childrens Performance Dashboard

January 2019

Produced by
Performance Intelligence and Data Quality Team



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Indicator Number	Indicator Title	Polarity	2018/19													Comparative Data							
			Apr-18	May-18	Jun-18	Jul-18	Aug-18	Sep-18	Oct-18	Nov-18	Dec-18	Jan-19	RO	2018-19 Target	RAG	2018-19 YTD or latest	Croydon 2017-18	Croydon 2016-17	England 2016-17	Stats Nbr Average 2016-17	Croydon 2015-16	England 2015-16	Stats Nbr Average 2015-16
LAC 1	Number of LAC at the end of the month		789	794	779	780	771	784	799	813	818	821	WT	NA	Grey	821	783	785	478.09 (Average)	507 (Average)	800	Average 463	517 (Average)
LAC 2	Rate of LAC per 10,000 under 18 population		83.2	83.8	82.2	82.3	81.4	82.7	84.3	85.8	86.3	86.6	WT	NA	Grey	86.6	83.0	83.0	62.0	54.1% (average)	86.0	60.0	59 (Average Rate)
LAC 2a	Rate of LAC per 10,000 under 18 population excluding UASC		50.9	52.1	52.5	53.1	52.7	53.1	54.9	55.3	56.2	58.1	WT	NA	Grey	58.1	52.0	42	42	48			
LAC 3	Number of LAC at the end of the month who are Local LAC (Non-UASC)		482	494	498	503	499	503	520	524	533	551	WT	NA	Grey	551	484	396	448	457	370	Average 436	468
LAC 4	Number of LAC at the end of the month who are UASC		307	300	281	277	272	281	279	289	285	270	WT	NA	Grey	270	309	390	4560 (Total) 30 (Average)	51 (Average)	430	4300 - average 28	395
LAC 5	Number of new LAC in month (total)		36	51	34	33	40	52	59	40	37	45	WT	NA	Grey	427	426	445	216	243 (average)	36 (Average)	38.6	43.1
LAC 6	Number of new LAC in month who are UASC		14	10	10	12	16	19	22	20	11	18	WT	NA	Grey	152	88		NA	NA	19 (Average)	N/A	N/A
LAC 10	Percentage of LAC for whom a visit has taken place within statutory timescales (6 weekly)	BIB	90%	92%	90%	86%	88%	89%	88%	91%	89%	91%	WT	95%	Amber	90%	88%				90%		
LAC 11	Percentage of LAC children with an up to date review	BIB	61%	77%	78%	82%	84%	95%	95%	95%	96%	95%	AFS	95%	Green	86%	68%				80%		
LAC 12	Percentage of LAC who have participated in Reviews (aged 4+) in the month	BIB	80%	78%	76%	76%	76%	73%	70%	82%	70%	75%	AFS	80%	Amber	75%	78%	Need to establish			91%	78%	
LAC 13	Percentage of LAC with a Personal Education Plan (PEP) reviewed in the last 6 months (Need	BIB	25%	23%	23%	22%	18%	15%	17%	15%	36%	34%	WT	85%	Red	20%	66%				70%		
LAC 14	Percentage of eligible LAC with an up-to-date Care Plan	BIB	95%	95%	89%	87%	84%	96%	85%	84%	85%	85%	WT	95%	Amber	85%	92%				n/a		
LAC 15	Percentage of eligible LAC with an up-to-date Pathway Plan	BIB	49%	48%	50%	49%	51%	60%	60%	58%	51%	53%	WT	80%	Red	53%	48%				52%		
LAC 16	% of children in care for at least 12 months for whom health assessments are up to date.	BIB	62%	67%	71%	67%	74%	82%	81%	85%	85%	85%	AT/W T	75%	Green	85%	80%	66.5%	89.4%	94.2%	86%	90%	93%
LAC 17	% initial health assessments requested for health service within 3 working days of date	BIB	10%	16%	4%	8%	11%	12%	21%	27%	28%	49%	AT/W T		Grey	19%	18%						
LAC 18	% initial health assessments delivered within 20 working days of date child became looked after.	BIB	23%	17%	26%	14%	27%	15%	25%	24%	50%	Awaiting Data	AT/W T		Grey	25%	15%						
LAC 19	Percentage of LAC that have been in care for 12+ months, that have had same social worker	BIB	62%	61%	64%	65%	70%	68%	58%	55%	60%	60%	WT	60%	Green	60%	65%						
LAC 20	Percentage of LAC under 16 in care for more than 2.5 years: in the same placement for 2+	BIB	82%	80%	80%	77%	80%	76%	73%	70%	82%	72%	WT	75%	Amber	72%	73%				71%		
LAC 21	Percentage of LAC at end of month with 3 or more placements during the year	SIB	9%	9%	9%	9%	8%	9%	7%	7%	8%	7%	WT	8%	Green	7%	9%	9%	10% (average -	11.6% (average -	8% (2015)	10% (2015)	
LAC 22	Percentage of LAC placed <20 miles from home	BIB	81%	81%	83%	81%	83%	82%	83%	83%	82%	83%	WT	90%	Amber	83%	81%	42%	74.2%	68.4%	92% (2015)	86% (2015)	
MC 8	Number of missing episodes started in month - LAC missing from placement	SIB	162	177	176	148	179	203	178	212	176	179	HD		Grey	1,440	871	525 (all missing)	399.5 (average)	543 (average)	105	57 (Average)	59
MC 9	Number of found episodes in the month (missing episodes only) - LAC missing from placement		169	170	179	151	173	200	180	210	167	197	HD		Grey	1,425	638						
MC 10	% of found episodes in month (missing episodes only) where RHI was offered to child - LAC missing from placement	SIB	99%	98%	96%	98%	98%	91%	95%	93%	72%	85%	HD	NA	Grey	94%	72%						
MC 11	% of Total found episodes in month (missing episodes only) where RHI was offered and accepted (RHI DONE) - LAC missing from placement	SIB	55%	53%	55%	47%	61%	58%	69%	67%	51%	54%	HD	NA	Grey	62%	44%						
F 1	Total number of foster carer households	BIB	236	235	229	228	230	233	236	236	235	235	WT	NA	Grey	235	239	260 Households (2016/17)	288 (average 2016/17)	152 (average 2016/17)	390 (total number of approved foster carers). 295 were approved households	292 (average 2016)	170 (average 2016)
F 3	Percentage of Annual Reviews of Foster Carers completed on time	BIB	87%	92%	93%	92%	87%	86%	85%	81%	85%	95%	WT	95%	Green	95%	81%						

Indicator Number	Indicator Title	Polarity	2018/19										Comparative Data										
			Apr-18	May-18	Jun-18	Jul-18	Aug-18	Sep-18	Oct-18	Nov-18	Dec-18	Jan-19	RO	2018-19 Target	RAG	2018-19 YTD or latest	Croydon 2017-18	Croydon 2016-17	England 2016-17	Stats Nbr Average 2016-17	Croydon 2015-16	England 2015-16	Stats Nbr Average 2015-16
F 4	Percentage of Foster Carers' most recent announced visit within timescales	BIB	80%	76%	78%	75%	64%	73%	72%	72%	56%	76%	WT	85%	Amber	76%	77%						

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Agenda Item 7

REPORT TO:	Corporate Parenting Panel 6th March 2019
SUBJECT:	Recruitment and Deregistration of Foster Carers
LEAD OFFICER:	Robert Henderson, Executive Director for Children, Families and Education Nick Pendry, Director of Early Help and Children's Social Care
CABINET MEMBER:	Cllr Alisa Flemming, Lead Member for Children, Young People and Learning
WARDS:	ALL
CORPORATE PRIORITY/POLICY CONTEXT/AMBITIOUS FOR CROYDON: This supports Croydon's Corporate Plan for "our children and young people to thrive and reach their full potential" in accordance with its statutory duty under the Children Act 1989.	
FINANCIAL IMPACT Although it has no direct financial implications, the delivery of the plan will promote efficient use of Council resources.	

1. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Corporate Parenting Panel to note the report which is an update on our recruitment of foster carers and provide details of foster carer deregistration's since April 2019.

2. **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This report is to notify panel of progress in our recruitment and deregistration of foster carers.

3. **DETAIL OF YOUR REPORT**

Recruitment of Foster Carers

The Recruitment of Foster Carers is a statutory task of the Council's duty to ensure the availability of good quality foster homes for children in care. Due to the retirement, resignation and de-registration of foster carers, there is constant movement in the numbers of registered households and placements available for looked after children. The ongoing recruitment of new foster carers is essential to ensure there the Council is able to meet its sufficiency duty.

In June 2015, the Council commissioned the recruitment of foster carers to an independent provider, Network Recruitment Solutions (NRS) for 3 years. This contract ended on 31st October 2018 during which a total of 54 foster carers were recruited. The contract target was not achieved in full.

The Council made the decision not to renew the contract with NRS. On 1st November 2018, the Council commissioned Coram I for two years to deliver its recruitment of foster carers function.

Coram I has a proven track record in both successful recruitment of new foster carers and the supporting local authorities to build internal teams. The terms of the contract states that the first year is devoted to the recruitment of 30 Foster Carers while the second year is for building an in-house Fostering Recruitment Team. Coram's operation is based in the Fostering Service in Bernard Wetherill House with a close working relationship with the fostering service to enable a smooth transition for new carers from the assessment to registered carer stage. The first applicant recruited by Coram is scheduled to be presented to the Fostering Panel on 5th March 2019.

Coram staff have access to Croydon CRS, for the recruitment of carers function only.

Early indications demonstrate interest in the new recruitment materials with follow up processes in place.

Coram attended Croydon Foster Carers Association monthly forum on 4th February 2019 and they offered a £250 voucher to anyone who recommends an applicant.

In January, Coram received 35 enquiries, same as November and December combined. 69% of all enquiries are received by telephone. 16% of all enquiries received have been referrals from Croydon foster carers.

Monthly performance data will be supplied by Coram I to the Head of Service for Corporate Parenting, the Fostering Service Manager and the Commissioning Contract Manager. Monthly monitoring meetings are scheduled and formal contract monitoring meetings are held quarterly, with senior representation from Coram and the Head of Service for Corporate Parenting, the Fostering Service Manager and the Commissioning Contract Manager

Coram are working with Croydon's marketing and communication team to ensure good quality marketing materials, published information and the website provide good quality information for people wanting to know more about fostering for Croydon.

De Registration of Foster Carers

From April 2018 to date, a total of 31 fostering households were deregistered for variety of reasons detailed in the table below:

	Change in foster family circumstances	Foster care granted SGO	Health Reason	Connected foster carers child turned 18	Allegations	Resignation	Foster to Adopt	Family Breakdown	Career /FTE Employment	Housing	Moved to IFA
Households	5	6	2	4	2	3	2	2	2	2	1

4. CONSULTATION

N/A

5. FINANCIAL AND RISK ASSESSMENT CONSIDERATIONS

There are no financial implications.

6. FUTURE SAVINGS/EFFICIENCIES

As per the Council's Sufficiency Plan, it is hoped that the ongoing and increasing use of in-house foster carers will support the cost effective use of council resources.

7. COMMENTS OF THE COUNCIL SOLICITOR AND MONITORING OFFICER

N/A

8. HUMAN RESOURCES IMPACT

N/A

CONTACT OFFICER: Spencer Duvwiama, Service Manager, Fostering Service.

APPENDICES: None

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Fostering Service Statement of Purpose

April 2019 to March 2020

Date of review January 2020

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The Fostering Services Regulations 2011 Part 2 state that a fostering service must compile a written statement of purpose which sets out the aims and objectives of the service as a whole, and the services, and facilities which are provided. The following is Croydon Council's Statement of Purpose.

The Statement of Purpose is a significant document that sets a framework for all of the business of the fostering service. It must be consistent with relevant legislation, Regulations, National Minimum Standards (NMS) and statutory guidance. The statement must be child focused and show how the fostering service will help children achieve positive outcomes. The manager of the fostering service must ensure that the service is at all times conducted in a manner consistent with the Statement of Purpose. This document will be reviewed at least once annually. Any amendments due to changes in legislation or guidance will be incorporated into a new statement of purpose.

The Statement of Purpose makes reference to the Croydon Foster Carer Charter. Croydon Foster Carer Charter has been jointly produced by Croydon Foster Carers and London Borough of Croydon Fostering Service. It is a shared agreement setting out the mutual expectations and responsibilities of both Foster Carers and Croydon Council. The charter confirms The Corporate Parenting commitment to provide the best care for the children we look after. The Charter is a statement of Croydon's commitment to ensuring that, unless the child's needs require otherwise, the children in our care will be looked after in a family environment which is safe and nurturing and which supports them to achieve their full potential as individuals. The Charter is our recognition of the crucial daily role that foster carers have in the lives of the children they have welcomed into their homes and families. The Charter is attached to this report.

Fostering Service Statement of Purpose 2019/2020

This Statement of Purpose sets out the aims and objectives of Croydon Council Fostering Service. The Fostering Services [England] Regulations 2011 require all Fostering Services to provide a written annual Statement of Purpose setting out the aims and objectives of the service and the services and facilities provided. The information to be contained in the Statement of Purpose is prescribed in the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 and the National Minimum Standards. The Statement of Purpose is to be regularly reviewed and formally updated every twelve months. This document is made available, upon request, to foster carers and prospective foster carers, any child placed by the service, the parent of any child looked after and staff. It is also available on Croydon Council website.

The Statement is informed by:

- **Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations, Volume 4: Fostering Services**
- **Fostering Services [England] Regulations 2011.**
- **The Fostering National Minimum Standards 2011**

1.1 Values, Aims and Objectives

1.1.1 Croydon Council Fostering Service is committed to providing safe, excellent and

Professional foster care for every Croydon child that needs this service in compliance with the Fostering National Minimum Standards, and the paramountcy principles of the Children Act 1989.

The most significant themes that run through the latest Standards and Regulations are:

- The Foster carer as a parental figure.
- The child as an active agent of change.
- The importance of relationships.

Values - Children:

- In line with the values and priorities set by the Council, the fostering teams aim to work in partnership with children in care, parents & colleagues across the Council & with other agencies to ensure that children in care have the same opportunities as all children within the borough.
- This is achieved by offering placement choices so that children are matched to a carer who can then be supported in meeting their needs.
- Positive experiences in the foster home contribute to the achievement of all of the five outcomes identified in the Every Child Matters agenda: be healthy, stay safe, enjoy and achieve, make a positive contribution, and achieve economic well-being.
- Croydon Fostering Service is committed to reducing the number of children placed with independent fostering agencies and continues to invest resources in increasing placement choices and quality in-house provisions. The service works closely with children's services within social care to meet the needs of children and with foster carers to continuously improve and develop the service.
- The service is committed to recruiting, maintaining, supporting and training foster carers from wide range of diverse backgrounds. The diverse needs of Croydon's children and young people in terms of sexuality, ethnicity and disability require the service to address these issues with foster carers during the assessment process and after approval and to be supported to meet these needs and feel supported in relation to their own identity.

The Aims of the Croydon Fostering Service are:

- To ensure that the right Placement is made for the child at the right time and without delay, with clear action plans agreed to ensure the earliest achievement of desired outcomes for each child.
- To have a robust, transparent and efficient process of recruiting foster carers.
- To recruit, assess, and approve more than sufficient foster carers, within the nationally proscribed time-scales, who can meet most, if not all, of the needs of every child referred to the fostering service.

- To ensure that a good match is achieved in all placements, and that any obstacles or potential delays are identified and dealt with at every step of the matching process.
- To provide children, young people fostered, and foster carers with handbooks which are a guide to foster care.
- To provide fostering support service to foster carers to enable a child to remain with a foster family and to ensure that the child reaches their full potential.
- To provide support, supervision and staff care for all those engaged by the Fostering Service.
- To provide opportunities for foster carers to increase their skills and knowledge in fostering through the provision of training and development.

1.2 Named Person:

Registered Person: Robert Henderson, Executive Director, Children, Families and Education Department.

The **Registered Manager** Spencer Duvwiana, Service Manager, Fostering Service.

The **Fostering Agency Decision Maker** (ADM) is Nick Pendry, Director, Children & Families, Early Intervention and Children Social Care and the ADM role for fostering decisions is delegated to the Head of Service for Corporate Parenting, Vanessa Strang ,

1.3 Qualifications and Experience

All senior and middle managers are qualified social workers and are registered with the Health & Care Professionals Council (HCPC)

1.4 Organisation and Structure

The Fostering Service is part of Croydon's People's Department. The Head of Service Corporate Parenting is responsible for the Fostering Service.

The Fostering Service and social workers are responsible for fostering placements and management of the assessment, recruitment, support, supervision and development of applicants and approved foster carers.

The current structure of the Fostering Service is designed to meet the requirements of the Fostering Services' National Minimum Standards and the Children Act 1989 and associated regulations and guidance relating to the delivery of Fostering Services. There are three Fostering Teams within the Fostering Service that are part of the Corporate Parenting Service.

The Fostering Service is led by the Fostering Service Manager. Teams 1, 2 & 3 are led by Team Managers.

All three teams provide a support , supervision and development service to Croydon's approved foster carers with managers taking lead responsibility for key practice areas for example, foster carers' support groups, continuous professional development training, Staying Put

The Fostering Service has a staffing establishment of:

- Service Manager: 1
- Team Managers: 3
- Advanced Social Workers: 10
- Supervising Social Workers: 9
- External Sessional Assessors: 7
- Business Support Officers: 3

Relevant qualifications and experiences of staff.

All Social Work Managers and Social Workers hold social work qualifications and are registered with the HCPC and have relevant experiences working with children and families.

1.5 Services provided

The fostering teams provide a range of fostering services:

- **Task focused or short term foster carers** who provide placements for children and young people at the point of need and in accordance with their Care Plan, s either to return to birth family or to move to a permanent placement.
- **Permanent or long-term foster carers** who make a commitment to care for a child or young person until they reach independence.
- **Connected persons carers, often known as family and friend's carers** are foster carers approved to look after a specific child or children. These carers are family members or friends who knew the family, child or children before they became looked after by Croydon.
- **Foster to Adopt foster carers** who are approved adopters, temporarily approved as foster carers for a named child, where the intention and Local Authority care plan is that the child will be adopted by this family
- **Parent and Child Foster Carers**

1.6 The Fostering Task

The task of securing high quality foster care includes:

- advertising for and recruiting prospective foster carers;
- Quality assuring the assessment of prospective carers under Regulation 26 (The Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011) for approval by the Fostering Panel or, in the case of family and friends carers or connected persons conducting planned assessments for temporary approvals in accordance with Regulation 24 (The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010) assessments;

- Consultation with other professionals, foster carers and families around making appropriate placements for children and ‘matching’ children with carers who can meet their needs;
- Family-finding for children needing permanent placements, support and supervision of foster carers in their work with children, children’s families, departmental social workers and other professionals;
- Attendance at various professional meetings to ensure that foster carers are actively supported in carrying out a child’s individual care plan;
- Completion of annual reviews on foster carers;
- Delivering a programme of on-going training for foster carers;
- Support & training in completing the Children Workforce Development Council standards for foster carers (TSD);
- Contributing to investigations into complaints and allegations made against carers and supporting them through the process;
- Providing daily Fostering Duty Service from 9am-5pm, Mon-Fri;
- An out of hours support service for Foster Carers requiring advice about a child in their care during evenings and at weekends;
- An out of hours Rota of Supervising Social Workers providing advice and support to foster carers during evenings and at weekends;
- Working in partnership with the Croydon Foster Carers Association

Procedures and processes for recruiting, approving and reviewing Foster Carers

From 1st November 2018, the Local Authority commissioned Coram BAAF on a two year contract to undertake the recruitment and assessment of foster carers. The first year is devoted to the recruitment and assessment of foster carers. Coram are responsible for the complete process from marketing to approval, with a clear handover procedure in place to ensure that newly approved foster carers experience a seamless transition from the assessment service to the the supervision and support they will receive form Croydon fostering service . Supervising social workers are allocated and meet applicants before panel.

The contract aim is to achieve the approval of 30 new fostering households.

The second year is to support the service to build an in-house fostering recruitment service which will be transferred to the Council at the end of the second year.

1.7 Recruitment of foster carers

There is a clear two staged approach, known as Stage One and Stage Two , is followed to support applicants to find out more about fostering and to assess their suitability to care for looked after children and become registered foster carers. To ensure a smooth and timely approach .Croydon fostering service, through the commissioned Coram service have agreed that Stage One and Two will run simultaneously.

Stage One

Includes undertaking a range of statutory and reference checks and offering preparation training

Stage Two

Involves the in-depth assessment, also known as the Home Study.

Interested applicants can find out about fostering by telephone, completion of an on line application form, visit Bernard Wetherill House or attend one of the frequently held information sessions held at the Town Hall

Details of this process are described in the Croydon Information Pack for Foster Carer Applicants which is available online on the Croydon Website, www.croydon.gov.uk/fostering. The Croydon Fostering Service also has a dedicated free phone number (**0800 112 3644**) and an email address: iwanttofoster@croydon.gov.uk.

The aim is to provide applicants ongoing support, advice and information at each stage of the preparation process, whilst also assessing in a transparent way their suitability to become registered foster carers and provide safe and quality care to Croydon's looked after children and young people

1.7.1 Information Meeting

All enquirers are invited to attend an information meeting run by Fostering Social Workers and current foster carers who can discuss their fostering experiences. This is not required although applicants are encouraged to attend these valuable sessions.

The purpose of these sessions is to provide people with basic information about fostering, explain what Croydon Council is looking for and outline the preparation and assessment process. At the meeting, details of attendees are recorded and feedback is sought to support continued development of the service and to help evaluate the effectiveness of recruitment methods.

1.7.2 Initial Telephone Assessment

This is completed by one of the assessment social workers to gather more details from applicants, establish their current circumstances and to provide them with more information about fostering for Croydon

When there is the potential to progress further, an assessing social worker will undertake an initial home visit to gather more information about the applicant and to provide them with further details. If this is possible or the service and the applicants, they are invited to submit their application which triggers the start of Stage One

1.7.3 Skills to Foster Group Training

The main purpose of the groups is for training and to provide more details about the role and tasks of fostering. Direct information is provided by way of presentations and DVDs, there are small and large group discussions and exercises, and applicants are encouraged to participate fully in the discussions through case studies.

The training and groups are co-led by a Social Worker from the fostering team and experienced foster carers. An important secondary purpose is evaluation and applicants are informed at the beginning that the facilitators' observations will form part of the assessment process. Applicants may also be counselled out at this stage as the groups will encourage them to explore their own motivation, strengths, and abilities to foster, helping them to decide whether fostering is right for them.

1.7.4 Statutory Checks and References

The Fostering Service provides administrative support in managing all statutory checks; Medicals and DBS. The Service will take appropriate action on DBS disclosures as soon as possible and before they are presented to the Fostering Panel.

Written references are required from three personal referees who must be interviewed by the assessing Social Worker. A report attached to the Form F should give details of these interviews, including the workers' assessment of the references

Other checks include:

- The applicants' employer (continuity of employment must be addressed and any gaps investigated)
- Previous partners
- The applicants' children's school
- A full medical history
- Evaluation of financial stability

Criminal Records (DBS checks).

Regulation 26(5) prohibits the approval of any person as a prospective foster carer where they or any member of their household is known to have a conviction or caution for specific offences. All offences must be brought to the attention of the Panel chairperson and the Fostering Service Manager who will decide whether or not to proceed with the assessment. This also concludes stage 1 of the assessment process.

1.7.5 The Assessment of Foster Carer applicants using objective, robust, fair, and transparent criteria.

All applicants are assessed by an individual process to establish their suitability to be registered as a foster carer, in accordance with Regulation 26 and 27. The Foster Carers' Report (Form F or Form C for connected persons) will be used to record the assessment and the format for assessment interviews will normally follow the guidelines. Applicants are encouraged to engage fully in the preparation of the assessment, including providing evidence and completing certain sections themselves where possible.

As well as the general areas covered in the Form F guidelines, all assessments must cover the following specific issues:

- Health, including use of alcohol and tobacco.
- The applicant's own background and attitude to issues of race, culture, religion, sexual orientation and disability.
- Any issues of concern identified from statutory checks or referee interviews.

Under the Fostering National Minimum Standards 2011, the expectation is that prospective foster carers' completed reports will be presented to the Fostering Panel within eight months of application. However, within Croydon the aim is to achieve this within a three month timescale.

The completed Foster Carers' Report (Form F/Form C) is shared with the applicant(s), who will retain a copy. If applicants are unhappy with any of the content of the report, the assessing worker should seek first to deal with this by negotiation. If this is not possible, the applicants are invited to submit their own comments in writing for presentation to the Fostering Panel. All applicants are expected to attend Panel in person.

All Prospective Foster Carers' Report (Form F/Form C) are quality assured by the assessment manager. The Form F/Form C must also be signed by the assessing worker and the applicant(s).

1.8 The Fostering Panel

The Fostering Panel is chaired by an independent person, who ensures that the panel is able to fulfil its quality assurance function free of undue influence. The Panel is constituted from a central list in line with fostering Regulations and the requirements of the National Minimum Standards. The Panel meets three times a month or, as and when required and is supported by a Panel Adviser and Administrator.

1.8.1 The statutory functions of the panel are:

- To consider applications for approval & to recommend whether a person is suitable or not to become a foster carer & to recommend the number & age to be placed.
- To consider the first annual review of the foster carer & other subsequent annual reviews that is referred to it.
- To ensure the assessments undertaken by the assessor is balanced and of sufficient quality.
- To advise & monitor the effectiveness of procedures. To offer advice & make recommendations on any other matter or cases referred to panel by the Fostering Service.
- Consider Standard of Care issues and make recommendations as necessary.
- Consider matching of children with foster carers where the plan is for children to remain in long term foster care.
- Decisions are made by Croydon's Agency Decision Maker after considering the recommendations of the panel.

1.8.2 Presentation of Assessment Report to the Fostering Panel

The Assessing Social Worker must attend the Fostering Panel in person to present the Prospective Foster Carers Report. Applicants are expected to attend the Panel. The Panel will make one of three recommendations:

- Recommend to the Agency Decision Maker approval of the applicant as a foster carer.
- Recommend to the Agency Decision Maker that the applicant is not approved as a foster carer.
- Defer - Ask for further information on any relevant matter.

Foster carer applicants are given written information explaining the panel process and are positively encouraged to attend. Their feedback is sought as Croydon and the Panel is a learning organisation and seeks to continually consider any developments and improvements they may need to make. The feedback is collated and considered by the service and panel at bi annual

1.8.3 Connected Persons Assessment.

Regulation 24 of the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) 2010 provides for the temporary placement of a child with a relative or friend who is not an approved Carer for a period of up to sixteen weeks. If the child is to remain beyond sixteen weeks, a further 8 weeks extension can be agreed by the Head of Service for Corporate Parenting. Before the temporary approval expires the carer must be approved under Regulation 26 of the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011. Immediate placements under Regulation 24 may only be made provided that prior to placement;

- the Carer and all other persons in the household over 18, have been interviewed;
- the accommodation has been inspected;
- information has been obtained about all other members of the household;
- the Carer is a relative or friend or other person connected to the child (a friend being normally defined as someone previously known to the child and a connected person someone who knows the child in a more professional capacity);
- notification in writing setting out the terms of the approval, followed by a written agreement made between the Carer and the Local Authority covering the matters set out in schedule 5 to the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011; and
- The authority is satisfied that the placement is the most suitable way of performing their duty under Section 22(3) of the Children Act 1989. The child's Social Worker will complete a referral form, initiate DBS and other checks; and refer the matter to the Fostering Service. The Manager leading on recruitment and assessment will then allocate a Social Worker to carry out a Regulation 24 assessment of the friend and family carer with a view to seeking specific approval at the Fostering Panel within sixteen weeks. In exceptional circumstances temporary approvals can be extended for up to twenty four weeks.

1.8.4 Applicants Not Approved By Panel

The Agency Decision Maker will write to all applicants whose applications were not recommended for approval by the Panel and will advise the applicants of their Qualified Determination

The letter will give the reasons for this and advise the applicants of the various appeals routes available including the **Independent Review Mechanism (IRM)**

1.9 An equal opportunities policy that covers all aspects of fostering:

The Croydon Council Fostering Service works to the Council's Equality and Diversity Strategy, which is available to all staff via the Council's Intranet service.

The Fostering Service will treat all service users fairly, openly and with respect throughout the assessment and recruitment process. Applicants wishing to be approved as foster carers will be considered irrespective of age, ethnicity, religion, class, gender, sexual orientation or disability and on the basis of being able to parent and to meet the needs of looked after children.

1.10 Foster Carer Annual Reviews

1.10.1 The Fostering Services (England) Regulation 2011, Regulation 28 requires that carers be reviewed at least once a year. A review can be held at other times if there has been a significant change in circumstances or if concerns arise.

The review considers the foster carer's previous year of fostering and makes a recommendation about their continued fostering registration
Reviews are carried out in the carer's home, the meeting is chaired by a fostering reviewing officer who will consider the recommendation of the social worker and will make their own recommendation based on the evidence in written reports and the discussion held in the review meeting. All registered foster carers in the household must attend the review meeting

1.10.2 The views of children, their social workers, independent reviewing officer, birth parents and the fostering family will be sought in the annual review. Health and safety checks will be completed annually and police and medical references updated every second or third year.

1.10.4 The Local Authority is working to improve the quality and timeliness of all annual reviews. Two Fostering Reviewing Officers were appointed in October 2018.

1.10.5 The first review is presented to the Fostering Panel and then every three years thereafter

1.11 Continuous Professional Development

1.11.1 A comprehensive training programme is provided for all carers which is reviewed annually
Foster carers have access to LSCB and online line training available to borough staff

1.11.2 **The Training Support and Development Standards for Foster Carers (TSD).**

All carers are expected to complete the Standards within the first year of registration. Ongoing workshops are delivered throughout the year supporting the foster carers in completing the Training and Development Standards for Foster Carers.

Carers are expected to complete a minimum of 30 hours training in their first year of approval and a minimum of 20 in subsequent years. A Personal Development Plan (PDP) will be completed annually with all Croydon foster carers and reviewed at their annual review meeting

1.12 Support, Supervision and Development of Croydon Foster Carers

1.12.1 All registered Carers will have an allocated Supervising Social Worker who is responsible for ensuring that Carers receive an appropriate level of support and supervision to successfully undertake their work in supporting, meeting the needs and improving the outcomes for children in their care.

1.12.2 Supervising Social Workers will ensure that Carers have access to necessary support, advice and training to carry out their roles and responsibilities. This will vary from Carer to Carer, but will include all of the following:

- Complete a Foster Care Agreement with all Carers (Regulation 27 (5) Schedule 5 of Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011).
- Ensure the Carer has an adequate supply of equipment.
- Ensure that carers have an up-to-date copy of the Croydon Foster Carers' Handbook.
- Ensure that Carers are provided with up-to-date details of procedures and policies, including the Complaints and Suggestions Procedure, payment procedures and the service's insurance policy for Carers.
- Carers automatically become members of the Fostering Network and the Croydon Foster Care Association
- Visit the Carers on a six weekly basis and whenever reasonably requested by Carers or as deemed necessary by the agency to support and supervise a carer.
- Make at least one unannounced visit per annum.
- Carry out an annual health and safety inspection of the carer's home, or when the carer moves or has major work carried out on their home, and this is considered at each annual review.
- Ensure that the carer is recording placement details as stipulated by Croydon fostering service
- Carry out an annual review of the Carer's approval.
- Identify, in conjunction with the Carer, any training needs/core requirements and identify for training profile purposes ways in which these may be met.

- Attend reviews, case conferences and other planning meetings in respect of children placed when requested by the carer or the IRO.
- Investigate any complaint by or against Carers' standards of care in accordance with relevant procedures.
- Ensure that lines of communication between the Carer and the child's Social Worker are open and effective.
- Respond promptly to telephone calls and correspondence from the Carer.
- Keep a record of their visits, share these with foster carers and record these on CRS.

1.12.3 Supervising Social Workers ensure that visits are arranged in such a way that there is adequate time to address the Carer's own role and development in addition to any visits which may be necessary in respect of individual placements. Carers' children are also provided with opportunities to discuss their experiences of fostering.

1.13 **Foster Carer Charter**

Croydon Council has drawn up an agreed Croydon Foster Carer Charter that sets out the expectations and responsibilities of the Croydon Fostering Service, Croydon Foster Carers and other people involved in the care of looked after children. This is available to on the website

1.14 **Financial Allowance Policy**

Approved Croydon foster carers are paid a weekly amount which is made up of a fee and a maintenance element. The fee element is paid to the carers as recognition of the skills, responsibilities and experience that they bring to the fostering task. The maintenance element covers the costs of caring for the child/children in their care.

Upon approval all foster carers are eligible for a setting up grant of up to £500 [subject to the provision of receipts]. In addition to the normal payments for caring for foster children, foster carers are paid an annual holiday payment. All children in placement receive birthday, festival and holiday allowances.

Connected Persons

Foster carers approved as Connected Persons (family and friends carers) receive a weekly maintenance allowance. However, the Council also pays the remuneration element to all Connected Persons carers who have been approved and have completed the full preparation training. Connected Persons are also entitled to the setting up grant.

1.15 **Equipment**

Equipment e.g. pushchair or buggy, sheets, latex gloves, wardrobes, beds etc., can be ordered and delivered direct to the foster carer's home.

1.16 **Services for Children**

Children's Guide

A guide to being looked after, called ***Living Away From Home***, is produced by the Independent Reviewing Officers and supplied to all Looked After children and young people. A copy is also supplied, in electronic form, to all foster carers together with the *Foster Carers' Handbook*. The Council publishes a *Children's Guide* giving information to children and young people in an easily understandable form. The *Children's Guide* also contains a pre stamped and addressed confidential postcard which can be sent direct to the Councils user complaints officer.

1.17 Newsletter

A Newsletter, edited by members of the Fostering Team, is produced on a regular basis to keep carers informed of:

- Advice on practice
- Changes to policy
- General information on fostering
- Staff movements within the fostering team

1.17.1 Croydon Foster Carers Association

There is an established Croydon Foster Carers Association that is run and managed by the foster carers through a management committee. The Fostering Service Manager and other team managers attend meetings with the association approximately four times a year and the annual general meeting

1.18. Support Group

A monthly foster carer support group is held, funded and supported with fostering team managers in attendance

1.19 Complaints & Allegations against Foster Carers

Where there are complaints about the standards of care provided by a foster carer these are managed by the service. If there are allegations of inappropriate behaviour by foster carers, these are managed through the procedures for allegations agreed by Croydon Safeguarding Children Board. These procedures are in line with the Department of Education guidance outlined in "Handling Allegations of Abuse made against Adults who Work with Children and Young People". The Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) process is also involved in the management of allegations against foster carers.

1.20 Complaints from Foster Carers

Complaints about the service are dealt with under the Corporate Services Complaints procedure which can be accessed via Croydon Council website or by calling Tel: 020 8726 6000 ext 62753 or at complaints@croydon.gov.uk

1.21 Registration Authority

The address & contact telephone number for the OFSTED Registration Authority is:

Ofsted
Royal Exchange Buildings
St Anne's Sq.
Manchester M2 7LA
Tel: 08456 404040
www.ofsted.gov.uk

1.22 The system for reviewing the Statement of Purpose

The Statement of Purpose will be reviewed annually.

Please contact:
Croydon Council Fostering Service:
CFL, London Borough of Croydon
4th Floor Annex, Bernard Weatherill House,
8 Mint Walk.
Croydon.
CR0 1EA.

By Freephone: 0800 389 0129
By Telephone: 0207 760 6000.
By Fax: 0208 667 9317.
By e-mail: www.croydon.gov.uk/fostering

The Statement of Purpose is available to anyone working for the purposes of the fostering service, with children who may be in our care including families, professionals and legal guardians, and anyone wishing to become a foster carer.

The Statement of Purpose is available on the Croydon website.

The system for reviewing the Statement of Purpose

The Statement of Purpose will be reviewed annually. The information contained in this Statement of Purpose can be made available in alternative formats: Large print, Braille, audio tape or disk. We can also translate the information into other languages.

Please contact:
Croydon Council
Fostering Service
Children's Social Care
People Department,
London Borough of Croydon
4TH Floor, Bernard Weatherill House
8 Mint Walk
Croydon
CR0 1EA

By telephone: 020 8726 6000
By fax: 020 8760 5665

By email: fosteringenquiries@croydon.gov.uk

AfC Recommendations 2019

Fostering Plan

	Recommendations	Activity	Lead	Complete by	RAG	Progress
A	Review all Safer Caring Agreements to ensure they are specific to each child in the foster care placement and that they contain all necessary information relevant to the safe care of the individual child.	Evidence of a reviewed and updated child specific Safer Caring agreement on file.	SSW/TM	15/11/2018		Completed
B	Develop and implement management guidance about the expectations of supervising social workers when they are on duty in the fostering service; in particular, provide clarity on the level of support they should be providing to foster carers when their allocated supervising social worker is absent from work.	Email guidance to every SSW and copy on the duty desk.	SM	14/05/2018		
C	Provide support to supervising social workers and managers in the fostering service to understand their role in ensuring appropriate and timely permanency planning for all children and young people in care, including those in connected person placements; strengthen management oversight of permanency planning for individual children in the fostering service through regular tracking during casework supervision.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing task group to strengthen LA practice & procedures. Appointment of BS to collate, track and allocate cases for Matching Panel and monitoring of Permanency Planning. Targets for Matching Reports for children in placement over 8 months. 	<p>HOS/Massey/Adam</p> <p>Business Case to HOS/Director</p> <p>TM</p>	<p>31/07/2018</p> <p>30/06/2018</p> <p>31/07/2018</p>		<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Completed</p> <p>Ongoing</p>

D	Develop and maintain profiles for all foster carers to support and improve the matching process; ensure that matching decisions are clearly recorded and evidence the rationale for the placement, as well the risk assessment and support plan for the foster carer(s).	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review of all foster carers profiles. 2. Discussions and approval of all matching criteria. 	<p>UM to identify names of outstanding Foster carers</p> <p>SSW/Duty UM</p>	<p>31/07/2018</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Completed</p> <p>Ongoing</p>
E	Consider revising the supervision template used by the fostering service to reflect the approach of the Strengthening Families practice framework, and to cover the 12 child-focused domains in the National Minimum Standards, so that there is a clear focus on the impact that the fostering service is making on improved outcomes for the child; ensure that supervision and annual appraisal has an appropriate focus on the learning and development needs of supervising social workers and managers.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Supervision Template updated and reflects Strengthening Families module. 2. Supervision to reflect NMS standards. 3. Training on NMS and Fostering Regulations 	<p>CRS</p> <p>TM</p> <p>SM/CORAMBAAF</p>	<p>Completed</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>03/07/2018</p>	<p>Completed</p> <p>Completed</p> <p>Completed by CoramBAAF</p>
F	Ensure that all foster carers have a training, support and development Plan that is developed at the point of their approval, reviewed during supervision, and updated annually as part of their annual foster home review; ensure that the training offered to foster carers is tailored to their identified needs, including the provision of specialist training for those carers supporting children and young people with more complex needs.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review of TSD and Training Plan in supervision. 2. Foster carers and SSWs to have joint training on NMS 	<p>TM to review training during annual review.</p> <p>Safeguarding Training/Nikki Shaw</p>	<p>15/08/2018</p> <p>2019/2020</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Commencing April 2019</p>
G	Review all foster care placements to ensure that foster carers have been provided with information about delegated authority and that formal agreements are in place for them to have authority to make everyday decisions about the children and	Ongoing review of all Delegated Authority to ensure they are specific to the child.	SSW/UM	15/08/2018	Ongoing with 80% Completed

	young people in their care, including overnight stays and going in school trips.					
H	Develop recording guidance for supervising social workers and managers that sets out the standards for case recording so that information and key documents are recorded in the correct section of the case record; ensure that recording is reflective, analytical and demonstrates impact; and ensure that the guidance makes clear the expectation that managers record their oversight, direction and decision-making as a separate case note.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Development of guidance on case recording. 2. Review of Matching Criteria and Management Oversight 	<p>TMs/SM</p> <p>SSW and Duty UM. Hale Longpet</p>	<p>31/07/2018</p> <p>31/07/2018</p>		<p>Strengthening families model</p> <p>Completed</p>
I	Review the current policy on allowances for connected person carers to provide the assurance that these allowances are equal with those for mainstream foster carers and comply with regulations and the National Minimum Standards.	Connected Carers not receiving full allowances to be supported to complete TSDs.	SSW/UM	30/06/2018		Completed
J	Ensure that annual foster care reviews are completed within timescale; consider whether reviews should be completed independently of the allocated supervising social worker, and whether they should be considered by the Fostering Panel beyond the first and third reviews to provide additional scrutiny.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Complete all outstanding ARs. 2. Recruitment of Fostering Reviewing Officers 	<p>SSW/TM</p> <p>SM/Director</p>	<p>31/07/2018</p> <p>30/09/2018</p>		<p>Currently 94.9%.</p> <p>Completed</p>
K	Support supervising social workers to develop a clear understanding of the regulations governing fostering services, as well as local policies and practice guidance; ensure that there is appropriate induction for new supervising social workers in the fostering service (including agency social workers); and ensure that managers have opportunities to meet and work	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Training on Fostering Regulations/NMS. 2. Staff Induction Pack. 3. Collaborative and consistent 	<p>SM/CORAMBAAF</p> <p>Joan JM</p>	<p>31/08/2018</p> <p>31/05/2018</p> <p>31/07/2018</p>		<p>Completed</p> <p>Completed</p> <p>Ongoing</p>

	collaboratively so that there is consistent application of practice across the fostering service.	management approach.	Fostering Management/360 Feedback			
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Adoption Service Statement of Purpose

April 2019 to March 2020

Author: Ian Forbes
Version
Date of next review April 2020

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1. Introduction

The National Minimum Standards for Adoption set out the requirements for adoption agencies to compile a statement detailing what services are provided, the governing principles and who manages and provides the services.

The statement of purpose is for:

- Children and young people
- Birth relatives
- Prospective and approved adoptive families
- Social workers working within Croydon and in other authorities
- Councillors
- Adoption and permanence panel members
- Ofsted
- Members of the public

Croydon Borough Council acts as an Adoption Agency. Croydon's statement of purpose is reviewed regularly and updated at least annually to include changes in the agency.

The Statement of Purpose is available to anyone working for the purposes of the adoption service, to children who may be adopted and their parents and legal guardians, to anyone wishing to adopt and to adopted persons and their families.

The Statement of Purpose is also available on the Croydon website at:

<https://www.croydon.gov.uk/healthsocial/falaservices/adopt>

This Statement of Purpose sets out the aims and objectives of Croydon Council Adoption Agency. The information in this Statement of Purpose is prescribed in the Adoption Services National Minimum Standards. The Statement of Purpose is reviewed regularly and formally updated every twelve months.

The statement is informed by:

- Adoption and Children Act 2002
- Adoption Agencies Regulations 2005 (as amended)
- Adoptions with a Foreign Element Regulations 2005
- The Children and Adoption Act 2006 and associated regulations
- The Statutory Guidance on Adoption 2011 (as amended)
- Care Standards Act 2000
- Adoption National Minimum Standards 2014
- The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Care Planning, Placement and Case Review 2010

2. Values, Aims and Objectives

Croydon Council Adoption Agency provides a service that is underpinned by the following values statements as described in the Adoption National Minimum Standards (NMS):

Values- Children

The child's welfare, safety and needs are kept at the centre of the adoption process.

Adopted children should have an enjoyable childhood, and benefit from excellent parenting and education, enjoying a wide range of opportunities to develop their talents and skills leading to a successful adult life.

Children are entitled to grow up as part of a loving family that can meet their developmental needs during childhood and beyond.

Children's wishes and feelings are important and will be actively sought and fully taken into account at all stages of the adoption process.

Delays should be avoided as they can have a severe impact on the health and development of the children waiting to be adopted.

A sense of identity is important to a child's well-being. To help children develop this, their ethnic origin, cultural background, religion, language and sexuality need to be properly recognised and positively valued and promoted.

The particular needs of disabled children and children with complex needs will be fully recognised and taken into account.

Where a child cannot be cared for in a suitable manner in their own country, inter-country adoption may be considered as an alternative means of providing a permanent family.

Children, birth parents/guardians and families and adoptive parents and families will be valued and respected.

A genuine partnership between all those involved in adoption is essential for the NMS to deliver the best outcomes for children; this includes the Government, local government, other statutory agencies, Voluntary Adoption Agencies and Adoption Support Agencies.

Values - adopted adults and birth relatives

Adoption is an evolving life-long process for all those involved - adopted adults, and birth and adoptive relatives. The fundamental issues raised by adoption may reverberate and resurface at different times and stages throughout an individual's life.

Adopted people should have access to information and services to enable them to address adoption related matters throughout their life.

Agencies have a duty to provide services that considers the welfare of all parties involved and should consider the implications of decisions and actions for everyone involved.

Agencies should seek to work in partnership with all parties involved, taking account of their views and wishes in decision-making.

Agencies should acknowledge differences in people's circumstances and establish policies that provide non-discriminatory services.

Adopted adults have their adoptive identity safeguarded and the right to decide whether to be involved in contact or communication with birth family members.

The Aims of Croydon Council Adoption Agency

To ensure a permanency plan is agreed for all Croydon's Looked After Children five and over, no later than by the second Looked After Review (four months) except if they are part of a sibling group aged zero to four+.

For children aged under five, a permanency plan should be agreed by the tenth day of becoming Looked After.

To ensure that as early as possible, clear action plans are agreed to achieve legal permanence, and where appropriate adoption is the permanence plan.

To ensure that when adoption is the plan, appropriate actions to implement the plan is progressed without delay and effective tracking and monitoring ensures that any obstacle or potential drift is identified and addressed in a timely manner.

To recruit sufficient adopters, who can meet most, if not all, of the needs of child referred to the adoption agency.

To assess and approve applicants within the statutory prescribed timescale of six months.

To provide prospective applicants with information of the adoption process, as well as information of the number and demographics of children available for adoption.

To provide an adoption support service that assists and enables children remain with their adoptive family and to enable children reach their full potential.

To provide prospective applicant's wishing to adopt a child from overseas, with information on inter-country adoption.

To provide information on the process of adoption for those people who wish to adopt a related child, e.g. step-parent and relative adoptions.

To provide support and access to case records to those people wishing to obtain information from their adoption files.

To provide information, help and support for all those who have been affected by adoption whether prior to, or after, the making of an adoption order.

To provide support, supervision and staff care for all those employed by Croydon Adoption Agency.

To provide the agency's adoption social workers with positive learning opportunities to increase their skills, knowledge and experience, especially in the areas of new research, training and professional development.

3. Organisation and Structure of Croydon Adoption Agency

Name	Designation
Nick Pendry	Director Children's Services - ADM
Wendy Tomlinson	Head of Service - Looked After Children - ADM
Ian Forbes	Interim Service Manager and Panel Advisor
Esther Phillips	Adoption Team Manager – Recruitment and Matching
Audrey Bouazizi	Adoption Team Manager – Post Order Support

The Adoption Service is based in Bernard Weatherill House 8 Mint Walk, Croydon CR0 1EA. All of the Adoption Social Workers based in the team are qualified and very experienced in their field of social work. They are also qualified under the Restriction on the Preparation of Adoption Reports Regulations 2005, as they have all been qualified for at least 3 years and have the required experience in adoption work.

Name	Designation
Shauna Lineham	Deputy Team Manager – Family Finding
Evie Royle	Adoption Social Worker – Recruitment and Assessments
Emelda Knuckles	Adoption Social Worker – Recruitment and Assessments
Rebecca Smith	Adoption Social Worker – Recruitment and Assessments
Marie Fletcher	Adoption Social Worker – Recruitment and Assessments
Louise Johnson	Adoption Social Worker – Recruitment and Assessment
Cvetomira Andreeva	Adoption Social Worker – Recruitment and Assessment – Early Permanence
Nadia Tulip	Adoption Social Worker – Family Finding
Mary Ogunbowale-Thomas	Adoption Social Worker – Family Finding
Natasha Vitalis	Adoption Social Worker – Post Adoption Support
Sharon Garner	Adoption Social Worker – Post Adoption Support
Gloria Bedeau	Adoption Social Worker – Post Adoption Support, DDP and Theraplay Therapist
Anna Hart	Adoption Social Worker – Access to records
Patricia Adams	Adoption Social Worker – Post Adoption Support and Systemic Family Therapist
Grace Dartey	Special Guardianship Support

In line with Croydon's policy and guidelines all staff receive regular supervision and as the team is accommodated in an open plan office, the managers are available for consultation and advice in between planned supervision sessions. Staff have annual appraisals and their training needs are regularly reviewed and they are actively encouraged to seek further training both internally and externally. Staff are expected to share learning outcomes to benefit the service and when relevant with social workers in the wider service. Most of the Adoption Social Workers hold Post Qualifying Awards.

The Adoption Agency Decision Makers are:

- Nick Pendry, Director of Children & Family Early Intervention and Children's Social Care. He is based on 4th floor, Zone E, Bernard Weatherill House, 8 Mint Walk Croydon CR0 1EA
- Wendy Tomlinson, Head of Service, Corporate Parenting, she is based on 4th floor, Zone E, Bernard Weatherill House, 8 Mint Walk Croydon CR0 1EA.

The Responsible Individual is: Robert Henderson, Executive Director, Children Families and Learning is responsible for the overall Management of Croydon's Adoption Agency. She is based on the 7th floor, Zone D, Bernard Weatherill House 8 Mint Walk Croydon CR0 1EA.

The Appointed Manager: The day-to-day management responsibility for the delivery of Adoption Services rests with the Delivery Manager, Ian Forbes. He is based in the Annex 4TH floor, Bernard Weatherill House, 8 Mint Walk Croydon CR0 1EA.

The Adoption Team structure is designed to provide a seamless service within the People's Department combining specialist knowledge and skills in permanency work and ensuring timely and effective provision of services to service users. The Adoption Delivery Manager works closely with the Fostering Delivery Manager and the Delivery Managers in the Children's Social Care teams to ensure that services are provided in a coherent and flexible way, and consistent with keeping the child at the centre of the adoption process.

Organisation and structure

The Adoption Service is part of Croydon's People Department Children's Social Care. The Head of Service, Looked After Children, has overall strategic responsibility for the Fostering Service, the Adoption Service, the Business Relations Team (placements) the Looked After Children Permanence Teams and the Leaving Care Team.

The Adoption Service is responsible for securing families for Looked After Children with an adoption plan. It is also responsible for the assessment, recruitment and support of prospective and approved adopters. The Service also have primary responsibility for the provision of adoption support services.

The structure and personal details, relevant qualifications and experience of current staff can be made available to Ofsted upon request.

4. The Adoption Services provides as advised in the NMS:**4.1 Effective publication of adoption services, accessibility and including information about services provided by other agencies:**

Croydon Council Adoption Agency has a dedicated Freephonenummer for recruitment. This is widely publicised through literatures and on the Croydon website.

Initial enquirers can be provided with information over the telephone and they have access to a comprehensive adopter's information pack on the Agency's web page. The recruitment of prospective adopters is based on the needs of children being referred to the team. A tracking and monitoring system is in place to ensure that the number and needs of children referred informs the recruitment strategy.

Information is available on the Croydon Council website.

<http://www.croydon.gov.uk/healthsocial/falaservices/adopt>

There are hyperlinks on the website to other adoption organisations. The adoption service information leaflets also include details of useful organisations.

The South London Adoption Consortium, of which Croydon is a member, also has a consortium website with information for prospective applicants and approved adopters. <http://www.thesouthlondonadoptionconsortium.org.uk>

4.2 The recruitment process, including effective arrangements to advise, assess, counsel and support those who become approved adopters and those who do not:

Croydon Council Adoption Agency has implemented the new Adopter recruitment process as stipulated by legislation and Adoption Statutory Guidance with effective from 1st July 2013. The details of this process are described in our Information Pack for prospective adopters; this is also available in PDF on the Councils website. Prospective Adopters are provided with information for access to the national gateway website 'first4adoption'. <http://www.first4adoption.org.uk>

Enquiry Stage – Prospective applicants complete an online expression of interest form via the Agency webpage <https://www.croydon.gov.uk/healthsocial/falaserVICES/adopt> Once the form has been completed and submitted by the prospective applicant, an acknowledgement email with date the next information meeting is sent to the enquirer within 48 hours.

Croydon holds information meetings monthly to which prospective applicants are invited. These meetings provide an overall picture of adopting in Croydon and nationally, and will include information about children needing adoptive homes. This also provides an opportunity to talk to experienced adoption workers and adoptive parents.

If a prospective applicant attends the information meeting, they will be provided with a blank Registration of Interest (ROI) form at the end of the session to complete and return to the Agency.

If the Agency receives a completed ROI form from a prospective applicant, a duty social worker will contact the prospective applicant within 2 working days of receiving the completed ROI to clarify any required information.

Within 2-3 working days of receiving the ROI form, the agency will allocate the case to a social worker and write to the prospective applicant informing them that the Agency has accepted their ROI form.

If the decision is not to accept the prospective applicants ROI, the Agency will write to them giving clear reasons for this decision. This letter will also have details of other agencies they can approach or sign post to the National Gateway for Adoption. It will contain details of who they can write to, to make a formal complaint. Formal complaints should be made to:

The Service Delivery Manager
Adoption & Permanence
Children's Social Care
People Department,
London Borough of Croydon
4TH Floor, Bernard Weatherill House
8 Mint Walk, Croydon. CR0 1EA

The allocated social worker begins the stage 1 process by meeting the applicant within two working days of being allocated the case to draw up a Stage 1 plan and agreement form. This sets out expectations of the Agency and the applicant as well as timescales for completing Stage 1, details of how the applicant will manage any disagreements or complaints should also be detailed in the plan and agreement form.

Stage 1 is a two months process. This is an '**adopter led**' period of information gathering. An allocated social worker will complete a Stage 1 Plan & Agreement with the Adopters. Group sessions will be provided to support the adopters with this process.

Stage 1 is completed when the applicant and social worker can provide physical evidence of the applicants learning through the production of a portfolio which contains details of all the work and research the applicant has undertaken in the two months. The portfolio should contain a list of readings undertaken by the applicant, any training undertaken with certificates. Checks and references undertaken (social workers responsible for these) A written reflection of the applicants learning and meetings with the social worker. Evidence of attending the Stage 1 learning group. Copy of the applicants completed eco map, chronology, and genogram. Any other relevant information such as written commentary of child care observation or experience as well as notes from network support meetings.

A Unit Manager will review the portfolio in order to enable them make a decision whether the applicant has sufficiently done enough learning to enable the applicant move on to Stage 2. Thereafter, a manager will write to the applicant advising them they have successfully completed Stage 1 and accepted into Stage 2.

Stage 2 takes four months. It is social work led assessment. A manager will allocate the case to a social worker preferably to the same social worker who completed Stage 1. The allocated social worker will complete a Stage 2 Plan & Agreement with the applicant. The social worker will also ensure that the applicant is booked to attend a preparatory training. A proposed panel date will be booked at this stage to avoid drift and delay. However, if there are unforeseen issues that could potentially have implications for the Adoption panel making an informed decision, a purposeful delay will be agreed by the Service Delivery Manager.

Where the Agency does not agree that an applicant should move into Stage 2, the prospective adopters will be provided with clear written reasons for this decision. They will also be sign posted to Croydon's on line complaints procedure if they wish to utilise this.

Second time adopters and foster carers who wish to adopt children in their care, will not be required to complete Stage 1. They will be allocated to proceed to Stage 2. Specialist preparation groups are run for second time adopters by our partner agencies within South London Adoption Consortium.

4.3 The assessment of prospective adopters using objective, thorough, fair and transparent criteria

In Stage 2, prospective adopters are assessed by a qualified social worker. Information about the applicant will be collated using the Prospective Adoption Report (PAR) produced by the British Association for Adoption and Fostering.

Applicants will be visited in their own home as well as asked to attend meeting in the Council Offices. In the case of a couple, they will be seen together as well as separately. Applicants will be invited to make their own written and verbal contributions to their assessment. The applicant's children who are part of their household will be seen alone if deemed appropriate by the social worker. Any other adult member of the household apart from the applicants will be interviewed. Children who do not live in the household will be contacted and interviewed. Significant relatives and referees are seen at this stage. At the end of the assessment, the assessing adoption social worker will make a recommendation about the suitability of the applicants to be adopters.

The adoption social worker will give a copy of the written report to the applicant's 10 working days prior to Panel, and offer them the opportunity to discuss or make comments on the report. Prospective adopters are invited to attend the adoption panel when their application is being considered.

Adopters are assessed on their capacity to provide a home and to meet, most if not all, of the lifelong needs of children they then go on to adopt. They are matched on the basis that they may reflect and/or promote the child's race, culture, language and religion.

4.4 Inter-country adopters:

Applicants for inter-country adoption are assessed by the Inter-country Adoption Centre (IAC) which is commissioned to provide a service to all Croydon's prospective and approved inter-country adopters. IAC is a registered Voluntary Adoption Agency which is registered with and reports separately to Ofsted. IAC provides a full and comprehensive service to prospective adopters, from initial enquiry through to support on return to the UK with a child.

A summary by IAC of their service to inter-country adopters is as follows:

"Information and initial counselling, which includes written information and an interview with the Assessment Team Manager. Prior to the interview we always suggest that you attend an IAC Information Day, as this ensures that you have access to full information at an early stage about both the process and the potential challenges of inter-country adoption.

If you satisfy the overseas country requirements and the Agency eligibility criteria you would then be invited to make a formal application to be assessed as prospective adopter(s).

Preparation – all IAC applicants are asked to attend either a three day general preparation course or a two day kinship preparation course at Barnet. These courses are run in small groups, led by two experienced social workers one of whom is generally an adoptive parent. In very exceptional circumstances, bespoke preparation is arranged.

Statutory checks – as part of our duties we are asked to undertake checks upon any applicant, including Enhanced Criminal Record Bureau Checks and Health checks.

Assessment report – you will be allocated a social worker who will interview you in depth in order to prepare a report about yourself and your adoption plans, including recommendations as to your suitability as a prospective adoptive parent.

Adoption Panel – IAC’s Adoption Panel meets regularly to hear adoption applications and to make recommendations as to applicants; suitability to adopt.

Collating and forwarding of paperwork to the Department of Children, Schools and Families is undertaken by IAC’s Assessment Team Manager and Assessment Team Administrator.

Annual review of suitability to ensure that your approval remain valid.

Opportunity to attend a workshop for inter-country adopters whose application documents are in the overseas country and who are awaiting a child match.

Support at the time you are matched with a child, including a counselling meeting with a social worker and a medical opinion from the Agency Medical Advisor on the health of the child (as indicated in the medical reports from the overseas country).

One post placement visit from a social worker following the child’s arrival.

An opportunity to attend an IAC Adoption Support workshop within the first two years of placement. “

The Inter-country Adoption Centre has established good links with Friends Linked by Inter-country Adoption (FLICA) as well as other Inter-country organisations.

After approval, Croydon Adoption Agency is responsible for post placement monitoring once the approved adopter have been matched with a child. IAC will send Croydon Adoption Agency copies of all paper work relating to the adopter and the child. Croydon Adoption Agency is also responsible for post placement reviews of the child until an adoption order is made. A social worker will be allocated to monitor the placement and this worker will also be responsible for supporting the family through the application and granting of the adoption order.

4.5 Non-agency adoptions

Enquirers approaching the team for a service are provided with verbal information and sent written information about non-agency adoption within 5 working days.

Prospective applicants are offered an initial visit by a social worker to further discuss their application and the process of non-agency adoption.

Prospective applicants are asked to confirm in writing their ‘Notification of intention to apply to adopt’ and send to the Delivery Manager.

Prospective applicants are asked to complete an application form that will also enable the Agency complete statutory prescribes checks.

A social worker is allocated to complete the assessment through home visits.

After 3 months of submitting a notification of intention to adopt the applicants can submit their application to court.

The social worker completes an "Annex A" report for court, and attends any court hearings they are required to until the adoption order is granted.

4.6 Birth parents - Support, information and counselling:

Many birth parents will find it difficult to accept that they can no longer parent their children and that adoption is decided by the court to be the best outcome for their child. Others will accept that this decision and very few will relinquish a child for adoption.

Croydon Adoption Agency fully accepts and supports the principle in the National Adoption Standards that birth parents and birth families are entitled to services which recognise the lifelong implications of adoption.

The child's social worker and adoption social worker have discreet but complementary roles in providing services to birth families affected by adoption.

Adoption and childcare social workers work together with birth parents to enable the implementation of effective plans for children. They also ensure that birth parents views about the adoption plan and contact are sought, recorded and that birth parents are supported throughout the adoption process.

Where necessary and appropriate, a parent will be provided with information and supported to access support from other agencies and organisations.

It is the responsibility of the child's social worker to explain the adoption process, and obtain written information from the child's birth parents' their views about adoption. This should include wishes and feelings about the type of family, religion and contact. The child's social worker will explain the importance for the child, of obtaining a full medical history not only of the birth parents but also of the wider related family. The child's social worker, with support from an adoption social worker, is responsible for providing the birth family with information about local and national support groups and helping them to fulfil agreed plans for contact.

Birth parents are entitled to see information written about them before the child's permanence report is presented to the Adoption Panel for a matching recommendation and to make representation to the ADM and Adoption Panel if they choose to.

All birth parents will be encouraged to provide information, and contribute to their child's Life Story Book and Letter for Later Life.

The adoption team will provide birth parents, via the childcare social worker, with an information leaflets explaining the adoption process and where appropriate counsels the parent's, or refer to another agency to complete this work.

Following the making of an Adoption Order birth parents can access services directly from the adoption team.

4.7 Adoption Panel

Croydon's Adoption Panel is chaired by an independent chair. The panel is constituted from a Central List in line with Adoption Agencies Regulations and the requirements of the National Minimum Standards. The panel meets twice a month or as and when required and is supported by a panel administrator.

Panel members have annual training, which updates Panel members on changes in legislation, practice and research. In addition every panel members role is reviewed annually.

Whilst it is now a requirement that prospective adopters be invited to attend the panel when their application is being considered, Croydon has followed this practice for several years and positively encourages applicants to attend.

Prospective adopters are provided with a leaflet explaining the panel process and are also asked to complete an evaluation form after the meeting. Their comments are fed back to the panel and the Adoption Panel Advisor retains a copy of all evaluation forms. This feedback informs service development.

5. Preparation of prospective adopters for the placement of a child, including the provision of appropriate support post-placement and post-adoption

Prospective adopters receive preparation for the placement of children through attendance at their Preparation Groups and during their assessments as adopters as well as in the Stage 1 information gathering regarding the realities of adoption.

When prospective adopters are identified as meeting a particular child or children's needs the adoption worker and child's social worker will provide the prospective adopters with verbal and written information about the child.

If the prospective adopters wishes to proceed, they will receive further detailed information which will include written information about a child and their background. In all cases the leave of the court will be sought to disclose relevant court papers to the adoption panel and to prospective adopters and will be visited by the child's social worker, and family finding social workers with the adopter's social worker in attendance to support them throughout the matching process. The Adopters will also meet with the child's Foster Carer. All adoptive parents have the opportunity to meet with the Medical Adviser prior to the adoption panel.

If following a period of reflection all parties wish to proceed, an Adoption Placement Report, and an Adoption Support Plan is prepared in consultation and partnership with the adopters. The Adoption Panel will recommend whether or not the match should proceed. As well as seeking the prospective adopters' views about the placement, children's views are sought where they old enough to express these.

In order to plan introductions and placement of a child, an adoption manager chairs a Placement Planning Meeting and an Adoption Placement Plan is agreed with the adopters.

Following placement, the child and prospective adopters will be visited within one week of the placement and thereafter at least once a week until the first review and thereafter at such frequency as the agency decided at each review until the Adoption Order is granted.

Once placed, the child's needs are reviewed by an Independent Reviewing Officer who will continue to regularly review the placement up to the making of an Adoption Order.

Croydon provides Post Adoption Support Services. The services, that are available to prospective families before the granting of an Adoption Order, are also available to families post Order. However services provided are based on the assessed needs of the child and the assessed capacity of the adopters to meet this level of need.

Support can be accessed from independent, local and national organisations via application to the Adoption Support Fund. These include but not exhaustive, the Post Adoption Centre (PAC), CoramBAAF, Adoption UK and After adoption. Croydon Council subscribes to CoramBAAF, PAC, and Adoption UK. These organisations operate a telephone advice line, which Croydon adopters can access directly. Workshops and training can also be accessed by the prospective and approved adopters at a reduced rate.

Croydon Council is a member of the South London Adoption Consortium with six neighbouring local authorities and four voluntary agencies. The aim of the consortium is to increase the choice of adoptive placements regionally by circulating details of children and approved adopters who have not been linked by their own agency. The consortium also strives to share resources and commission services and to achieve consistent high practice standards. Croydon aims to learn from best practice of other boroughs, primarily in the Consortium but not restricted to the Consortium.

6. Preparation of children for placement with prospective adopters, including the provision of appropriate support post-placement and post-adoption

Every effort will be made to find a placement which meets the child's emotional and developmental needs taking into consideration their ethnicity, religion, language, culture, gender and disability. However no child should have to wait indefinitely for the 'perfect placement' and Croydon seeks adopters who can meet all or most of the child's needs and can reflect or actively promote the child's identity race and culture.

For every child should have a Life Story Book, a Letter for Later Life and a written guide to adoption. This work in most cases is undertaken by the child's social worker with help and advice from the adoption worker. Every effort is made to provide the child with the fullest possible family history and help maintain their heritage. The Letter for Later Life includes information about the child's birth and early life, and provides up to date information about themselves and their situation. Croydon aims to provide adopted children with high quality Life Story work in a form and style which will be of most assistance to the child in relation to their journey towards adoption. The initial Life Story Book is provided by second adoption review and the final version with input from the adopters no later than a week after Adoption Order by when the Letter for Later Life must also have been provided.

Work is undertaken with children by their social worker to ascertain their wishes and feeling about adoption and the kind of family they would ideally like to live with, taking account of their age and understanding.

Once a family has been identified, children are given appropriate information, depending on their age. The Placement Planning Meeting co-ordinates an age appropriate introduction timetable. This is reviewed during introductions to assess progress and whether the timescale for the child's move needs to be adjusted in accordance with their needs.

Post placement, the social worker continues to support the child in placement but where more in depth work is identified the child and prospective adopters can be referred to the Post Adoption Team or other appropriate post placement/adoption support services, e.g. Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services and services related to education, special needs and managing contact with birth families. See Section on Post Adoption Services below for more detail.

Clear criteria for adoption financial support and other payments, and the arrangements for review, are made available to adopters.

The Croydon Council Adoption Service will support adopters financially with introductory expenses, and settling in costs for essential equipment where matched with a Croydon child. Croydon will meet the cost of reasonable legal expenses where the adoption is contested or particularly complex.

At the point of matching all children must have an Adoption Support Plan, which details the child's needs and how these will be met. Adoption Support is a continuum of universal services available to all children, and those provided by the Adoption Agency. The Support Plan will confirm any financial support. The Plan and on-going financial support are to be reviewed annually. The Adoption Support Plan is agreed with the adoptive family before being presented to the Adoption Panel.

Where it is not possible to place a child with Croydon adopters, the Adoption Service has access to a dedicated inter-agency budget.

The process for establishing, maintaining, monitoring and reviewing contact arrangements for each adopted child is usually by voluntary agreement with all parties.

The Adoption Service recognises the importance of children and young people having suitable contact with their birth families and other significant people. Such contact is entirely governed by the best interests of the children. Contact can vary from the annual exchange of written information to face-to-face contact with members of the birth family, at intervals appropriate for the child and agreed by the adopters.

The Adoption Service operates a well-established Letterbox contact arrangement for the exchange of information between adoptive families and birth families. Birth families are also supported in arrangements for direct face-to-face contact.

The Adoption Service always considers at least one meeting between a child's birth parent and adoptive parents because of the long term benefits of this for the child. Other significant birth relatives may also be involved.

Contact plans are first considered at the Looked After Children reviews, and included in the child's Care Plan. Croydon Adoption Panel reviews and comments on contact plans. Identified work to ensure that these plans are viable may take place at any time between the Adoption Agency Decision that a child should be placed with adopters and the placement of the child with prospective adopters. Children's needs change over time and contact plans should evolve to reflect the child's changing circumstances and needs.

Post placement, contact arrangements continue to be reviewed at each adoptive placement review. The Service does not formally review contact arrangements after the Adoption Order is made, but if issues arise these are addressed and supported through the Croydon Adoption Service.

7. The review of disrupted placements, ascertaining the causes for the breakdown to aid future planning for the child

Following a disruption the Croydon Council Adoption Service convenes a Disruption Meeting in order to try learn lessons and to achieve a better understanding of the factors which has led to the breakdown of the placement. This helps in planning future placements. These meetings are chaired by an independent social worker with extensive experience of adoption work.

A summary of the conclusions of the meeting are presented to the adoption management team meeting and the relevant Adoption Panel in order that they can learn any lessons. The

disruption rate for children placed by the Croydon Council Adoption Service has historically been below the national average.

8. Investigations into allegations that are made known to adoption service staff, adopters and children and young people

The adoption service has a separate child protection procedure relating to allegations from or about a child in an adoptive placement who may or may not be receiving post adoption support services. This procedure requires consideration of child protection procedures and strategy meetings but in cases where this is not appropriate adheres to the Croydon Child Protection procedures published by the Croydon Safeguarding Children Board: these are in line with the London Child Protection Procedures.

The basic principle is that in safeguarding the child, it should also be recognised that an adopted child may have specific networks and specific life experiences which may impact on planning and decision making.

9. The range of post adoption support services available to all those affected by adoption

The Croydon Adoption Units provides an intermediary service and counselling and advice to adult adoptees and birth relatives.

The team also provides a range of direct services to adoptive families if they are experiencing any difficulties. These include counselling and advice, an assessment of need for adoption support, including financial support where relevant, and is based on the assessed needs of the child.

All newly approved adoptive parents are offered free membership of Adoption UK for one year. Croydon Council Adoption Agency also facilitates the local support group for adopters.

All known adopters in Croydon are sent an annual copy of the Croydon Council Adoption & Fostering Service Training Booklet, with information regarding workshops and training for adopters and foster carers.

10. Assessing adoption support needs for previously adopted Children

Any adopted child residing in Croydon may make representations for post adoption support, including those who have been placed by another agency and for whom the three year post adoption period has elapsed. In these situations, a Post Adoption Assessment will be carried out by an adoption social worker to determine the circumstances and needs of the child, the adopter/s and other family members and make recommendations regarding the level of support required.

Croydon's Adoption Service has a duty system which runs between 10am – 1pm and 2pm – 4pm from Monday to Friday. A duty social worker is always available during these times to answer telephone enquiries, provide information and take referrals as appropriate. A duty manager is also available for guidance.

Queries and referrals are also taken via letter and E Mail. A duty worker will deal with such matters on a daily basis.

Once a referral has been completed, and if assessed as appropriate the case is allocated to a social worker. Allocations take place every two weeks at team meeting. However, if the matter is identified as urgent, the Delivery Manager can make a decision to allocate the case immediately.

A leaflet providing details of the types of services provided is available contact details.

11. An equal opportunities policy that covers all aspects of adoption:

Croydon Council Adoption Service works in line with the Council's Equality and Diversity Strategy, which is available to all staff via the Council's intranet service.

The adoption service will treat all service users fairly, openly and with respect throughout the adoption process. Applicants wishing to be approved as adopters will be considered irrespective of age, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation or disability, and on the basis of being able to parent and to meet the lifelong needs of adopted children.

Every effort will be made to find a placement which meets a child's emotional and developmental needs taking into consideration their ethnicity, religion, language, culture, gender and disability, without delay being placed with adopters who can meet most if not all of a child's needs.

12. There is a system in place to monitor and evaluate the provision of services to ensure that services provided by the Adoption Service are effective and the quality of those services is of an appropriate standard:

Croydon Council Adoption Agency has developed a system for monitoring service users' feedback during different stages of the adoption process. This information is analysed and reported in the annual Adoption Service Action Plan. Where necessary the information is used to improve the service. This monitoring includes:

- Adoptive applicants
- Feedback on attendance at preparation courses
- Feedback on attending adoption panel
- Feedback on written information at time of placement
- Birth Parents are asked to include their views when the plan for adoption is presented to the Adoption Panel.
- The Letterbox Service is to set up an evaluation and review system for all parties to arrangements.
- Feedback from children who have been placed via the Looked After Children Review process
- Children are counselled and their wishes and feelings ascertained during family finding process taking account of their age and understanding.

13. Monitoring of the Adoption Service

The Service meets with senior managers who review performance in the previous year and sets targets for the forthcoming year, having regard to any serious shortfalls in the service and the standards and timescales set out in legislation.

There are review systems in place for the following:

- All approved adopters are formally reviewed annually by senior adoption social workers and team managers

- The Independent Reviewing Officer reviews the progress of all children placed for adoption.
- Staff within the Adoption and Children's Services supervise and monitor the placement.
- The Adoption Panel has an overall quality assurance role to uphold best practice.
- There is a well-established supervision policy, which is available to all members of staff on the Croydon Council's Intranet, and an on-going performance review system for all members of the service.
- Additionally each Unit Manager monitors the work in progress.

An Adoption performance meeting, chaired by the Head of Service for Looked After Children, meets bi-monthly and includes all relevant managers from children social care and adoption. The purpose of the meeting is to review the progress of all LAC cases and to identify and address obstacles to permanence.

14. Storage, access, maintenance and security of adoption records

Croydon Council Adoption Agency acknowledges the need to ensure all records are maintained in accordance with Adoption Regulations and the National Minimum Standards for Adoption. The indexes to all adoption case records are kept for 100 years, and where the case concerns a placement resulting in an adoption order being made, the related case papers are also kept for 100 years.

All other records are retained in line with Croydon Council Policy on Record Retention and Destruction Handbook. All requests for access to closed adoption files must be made through the Adoption Delivery Manager and the Adoption Service maintains a log of all requests. All files are held in lockable, secure storage.

15. A summary of the complaints procedure established in accordance with section 26(3) of the Children Act 1989 (a) and the Complaints Procedure Directions 1990 (b)

Complaints about adoption fall into two categories.

- a) Complaints about the service received by any of the adoption teams are dealt with under the Croydon Customer Services Complaints Procedure available on request. A service user or any one acting on their behalf can make a complaint.
- b) Where the Agency Decision Maker is minded not to recommend the approval of adopters, the applicant will have the opportunity to have their case reviewed by the Agency Decision Maker or refer their case to the Independent Review Mechanism.

The Independent Reviewing Mechanism is managed by the: CoramBaaf on behalf of the Department for Education. The Independent Review Mechanism (IRM) is a review process, conducted by a panel, which applicants can use when they have been informed that the Agency does not consider them suitable and does not propose to approve them as adoptive parents or has terminated their approval.

The IRM welcome can be contacted directly from people who are considering the use of the IRM or who wish to discuss their options. They also welcome enquires from agency staff.

Their address is:

IRM Contract Manager
Independent Review Mechanism (IRM)
Unit 4
Pavilion Business Park
Royds Hall Road
Wortley
LEEDS LS12 6AJ

Tel: 0845 450 3956
Fax: 0845 450 3957
(charged at local rates)
E-Mail: irm@baaf.org.uk

www.independentreviewmechanism.org.uk

16. The system for reviewing the Statement of Purpose

The Statement of Purpose will be reviewed annually. The information contained in this Statement of Purpose can be made available in alternative formats: Large print, Braille, audio tape or disk. We can also translate the information into other languages.

Please contact:
Croydon Council
Adoption & Permanence Team
Children's Social Care
People Department,
London Borough of Croydon
4TH Floor, Bernard Weatherill House
8 Mint Walk
Croydon
CR0 1EA

By free phone: 0800 389 0129
By telephone: 020 8726 6000
By fax: 020 8760 5665

By email: adoption.enquiries@croydon.gov.uk

This Statement of Purpose has been approved by:

Councillor, Chair, Corporate Parenting Panel (Original Signed copy held by the Adoption Service)

Signed:.....

Date:

Nick Pendry, Director, Children & Family Early Intervention and Children's Social Care

Signed:.....

Date:

Agenda Item 9

REPORT TO:	CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL 6 March 2019
SUBJECT:	WORK PROGRAMME 2018-19 & WORK PROGRAMME 2019-20
LEAD OFFICER:	Michelle Ossei-Gerning Democratic Services & Governance Officer – Council and Regulatory

PURPOSE:	To review and agree the work programme for future meetings.
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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Corporate Parenting Panel Committee has a responsibility to monitor the programme each municipal year.

2. WORK PROGRAMME

- 2.1. The Corporate Parenting Panel work programme 2018-19 for the remainder of this municipal year is attached as **Appendix A**.
- 2.2. The Corporate Parenting Panel work programme for the municipal year of 2019-20 is attached as **Appendix B**.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

- 3.1. Members are asked to comment on the Work Programme.

CONTACT OFFICER: Michelle Ossei-Gerning
Democratic Services Officer
Michelle.Gerning@croydon.gov.uk

APPENDIX A: Corporate Parenting Panel Work Programme
2018/19

APPENDIX B: Corporate Parenting Panel Work Programme
2019/20

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**Appendix A
Corporate Parenting Panel Work Programme 2018/19**

Proposed Dates	Tues 17 July 2018 5pm	Wed 5 Sept 2018 5pm	Wed 21 Nov 2018 5pm	Wed 16 Jan 2019 5pm	Wed 6 Mar 2019 5pm	Thur 25 April 2019 5pm
Standing Agenda Items	Update on actions agreed at previous meetings Children in Care Performance Scorecard Work Programme How has the Panel helped Children in Care today?	Update on actions agreed at previous meetings Children in Care Performance Scorecard Work Programme How has the Panel helped Children in Care today?	Update on actions agreed at previous meetings Children in Care Performance Scorecard Work Programme How has the Panel helped Children in Care today?	Update on actions agreed at previous meetings Children in Care Performance Scorecard Work Programme How has the Panel helped Children in Care today?	Update on actions agreed at previous meetings Children in Care Performance Scorecard Work Programme How has the Panel helped Children in Care today?	Update on actions agreed at previous meetings Children in Care Performance Scorecard Work Programme How has the Panel helped Children in Care today?
Proposed Agenda Items*	1. The Role of Panel Members & Terms of Reference 2. Staying Put 3. Children and Social Work Act 2017 4. Review of Fostering Services	1. Independent Reviewing Officer – Annual Report 2. Leaving Care and Housing (Inc. care leaver core offer) 3. Staying Put Update	1. Placement Stability, Sufficiency; Permanence and Population 2. Engagement and Achievement (Inc. Complaints and Learning opportunities) 3. Children missing from Care 4. Annual Report of Adoption Service	1. Health of Looked After Children 2. Education & Employment, NEET (Not in Education Employment or Training) Young People 3. Annual Report of the Virtual School 4. Review of the Fostering Allowances	1. Fostering - Annual Review of the Statement of Purpose - Recruitment and De-Registration - Fostering Action Plan update - Adoption Statement Purpose	1. Annual Report of Corporate Parenting Panel

*All proposed items to include a short section detailing 'how it relates to the Improvement Plan'

Appendix A
Corporate Parenting Panel Work Programme 2018/19

			and Panel – inc. plans/update of regional adoption agency			
			5. Care Leavers Offer Review			

*All proposed items to include a short section detailing ‘*how it relates to the Improvement Plan*’

Appendix B
DRAFT: Corporate Parenting Panel Work Programme 2019/2020

Proposed Dates	Wed 3 July 2019 5pm	Thurs 5 Sept 2019 5pm	Wed 13 Nov 2019 5pm	Wed 15 Jan 2020 5pm	Wed 4 Mar 2020 5pm	Thur 30 April 2020 5pm
Proposed Agenda Items*	<p align="center">SUFFICIENCY</p> <p>Residential care (Part B paper)</p> <p>Update on the South London Commissioning Programme</p> <p>IRO Annual Report</p>	<p align="center">EDUCATION</p> <p>Exam results Exclusion SEN</p> <p>Annual Report of Virtual School</p> <p>Mentoring and careers guidance for LAC and CL</p> <p>Difference between mentoring and IV work</p> <p>Engagement Achievement (inc. complaints and leaving opportunities)</p>	<p align="center">HEALTH</p> <p>IRAs</p> <p>RHAs</p> <p>CAMHS</p>	<p align="center">ADOPTION</p> <p>Annual Report of Adoption Service and Panel (inc. plans/update of regional adoption agency)</p> <p>Statement of Purpose</p>	<p align="center">FOSTERING</p> <p>Annual Report of Fostering Service and Panel</p> <p>Statement of Purpose</p> <p>Recruitment and deregistration</p> <p>Review of Fostering Allowances</p> <p>Review of Fostering services</p> <p>Escalation Policy for foster carers</p>	<p align="center">Annual Report for Corporate Parenting Panel</p>

*All proposed items to include a short section detailing 'how it relates to the Improvement Plan'

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