

# Corporate Parenting Panel Agenda



To: Councillor Alisa Flemming (Chair)

Councillors Shafi Khan, Janet Campbell, Bernadette Khan, Jerry Fitzpatrick, Maria Gatland and Helen Redfern

## Co-optee Members

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

LAC Nurse/Doctor: Julia Simpson, Simon Wilkinson, Sue Goode,

Lyn Glover;

EMPIRE: Emily Collinsbeare, Julie Ralphs;

Care Leaver: Ashleigh Searle;

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

Health Commissioner: Fiona Simmons, Michelle Quinn, Amanda Tuke and

Connie Ikhifa

A meeting of the **Corporate Parenting Panel** which you are hereby summoned to attend, will be held on **Wednesday, 3 July 2019** at **5.00pm** in **F10, Town Hall, Katharine Street, Croydon CR0 1NX**

JACQUELINE HARRIS BAKER  
Council Solicitor and Monitoring Officer  
London Borough of Croydon  
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[www.croydon.gov.uk/meetings](http://www.croydon.gov.uk/meetings)  
Tuesday, 25 June 2019

Members of the public are welcome to attend this meeting.

If you require any assistance, please contact the person detailed above, on the righthand side.

N.B This meeting will be paperless. The agenda can be accessed online at [www.croydon.gov.uk/meetings](http://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 - 12)**

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 6 March 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 13 - 16)**

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

**7. Independent Reviewing Service Annual Report (Pages 17 - 40)**

This report is an analysis of the activity of the Independent Reviewing Officer and Independent visitor services and their effectiveness and impact on children's and young people's safety and care in Croydon.

**8. Update on South London Commissioning Programme**  
(Pages 41 - 52)

This report is an update to the South London Commissioning Programme.

**9. Corporate Parenting Panel Annual Report 2018/19** (Pages 53 - 70)

The Corporate Parenting Panel Annual Report 2018/19 is attached.

**10. 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.

**11. 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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# Public Document Pack Agenda Item 2

## Corporate Parenting Panel

Meeting of Corporate Parenting Panel held on Wednesday 6 March 2019 at 5.09pm in F11,  
Town Hall, Katharine Street, Croydon, CR0 1NX

### MINUTES

**Present:** Councillor Alisa Flemming (Chair);  
Councillors Janet Campbell, Jerry Fitzpatrick, Maria Gatland, Maddie Henson,  
Shafi Khan and Helen Redfern

Co-optees

Foster Carers: Angela Christmas, Manny Kwamin, Martin Williams

Virtual School Head: Shelley Davies, Sarah Bailey

Health Commissioner: Connie Ikhifa

### Also

### Present:

Councillor Robert Ward

Nick Pendry (Director of Early Help and Children's Social Care)

Vanessa Strang (Head of Corporate Parenting)

Porsha Robinson (Youth Engagement Leader)

Thomas Joyce (Youth Engagement Worker)

Child F (Young Person and Member of EMPIRE)

Child S (Young Person and Member of EMPIRE)

Child L (Young Person and Member of EMPIRE)

Child C (Young Person and Member of EMPIRE)

Child M (Young Person and Member of EMPIRE)

Child G (Young Person and Member of EMPIRE)

Child V (Young Person and Member of EMPIRE)

Child D (Young Person and Member of EMPIRE)

Kevin Wong (Coram)

Henrietta Delalu (Service Manager for Children in Care)

Spencer Duvwiana (Service Manager for Fostering)

### PART A

#### 14/19 Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 16 January 2019 were agreed as an accurate record.

#### 15/19 Disclosures of interest

There were no disclosures of pecuniary interests.

**16/19 Urgent Business (if any)**

There were no items of urgent business.

**17/19 Update on actions agreed at previous meeting(s)**

The Panel agreed to circulate actions outside the meeting.

**18/19 Children in Care Performance Scorecard**

The Panel was referred to the Children's Performance Dashboard provided in the agenda pack with updated data included (up to and including January 2019).

Officers described the implementation of a new process for bringing children into care. This involved a new panel where requests to bring children in to care were discussed in detail before any decision to progress was implemented. Emergency referrals into care would also have to go through this route.

However, officers also described how they were working and exploring new ways to support children to stay in their family settings avoiding the need to come into care; oversight was provided in order to give support to families where children are likely to come into care.

The new approach to bringing children into care was also focused on providing early access to permanency planning allowing for a more timely approach.

The Panel discussed the data provided through the scorecard. There was a specific focus on LAC 13 – the percentage of LAC with a Personal Education Plans (PEP) reviewed in the last six months. Panel Members questioned this figure (34%). Officers addressed this by describing the work that had been undertaken and what further was planned to happen. A dedicated officer was responsible for supporting the review of PEPs and highlighting their importance to social workers. The target had been set to review 90% of PEPs within six months. It was noted that the 15% improvement from the lowest point in performance (in late 2018) was achieved over a duration of three weeks following the recruitment of the new officer.

Officers described how support was being provided to social workers to develop their skills and strengthen their understanding of threshold criteria. They were being encouraged to talk about children's needs. It was reported how this process was creating a culture of understanding.

It was additionally emphasised that the use of thresholds only tells part of the story in terms of how practitioners approach children at risk. It was highlighted that this was about culture and having a vision for practice where Croydon will

be working more justly and humanely with families. It was described how support was being given to practitioners to understand that threshold should be consistent across the service. It was stressed that there was much greater understanding than previously in how it was possible to work with families.

## 19/19 **Fostering**

### Fostering Statement of Purpose (SOP):

Officers shared that Children's Social Care (CSC) was responsible for recruiting foster carers and highlighted that the Fostering Statement of Purpose Report for 2019-20 detailed:

- i. the strategic principles of children in care;
- ii. forward plans;
- iii. what the authority had committed to provide to foster carers and the children; and
- iv. how fostering affected the lives of looked after children

The published report was structured in line with OFSTED requirements.

### **Recommendations:**

**The Panel RESOLVED that it would review;**

- i. **the Foster Carers Charter; and**
- ii. **the Fostering Statement of Purpose.**

Feedback was received from the EMPIRE representatives present on their experiences of being in care. It was reported that this wasn't always as it was hoped for. However, there were positive experiences in terms of accessing activities organised through the foster carer agency.

The Panel led a discussion about the relationship between the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) and the looked after child. It was established that there was a new proposed structure being put in place in order to improve these relationships. This was focused on helping to understand and have insight into what was happening inside a placement. Panel Members were in consensus that the child's voice was fundamental to the improvement of the service and had to be a key part of the review of the work undertaken on an annual basis.

The Panel highlighted that it wished to gain reassurance that LAC Reviews included the feedback of a range of stakeholders including young people. It was noted that it was an important part of the IRO's role to provide the looked after child with the details of an appropriate adult they could go to in order to have someone with whom they could express their feelings. The Panel stressed how it continued to want IROs to improve the support offered to young people.

**Recommendations:**

- i. **for young people and their foster carers to have the direct contact information for all relevant professionals involved in their care; and**
- ii. **to bring up-to-date data on LAC children and the number of advocates to the next panel.**

It was noted that a pack already exists containing all relevant contact details for children in care that was provided when children in care were old enough. It was agreed that this should be shared with EMPIRE representatives in order to receive their feedback. Officers expressed the desire that this was appropriate and accessible for young people.

The Panel discussed the processes/support available for those in care who were new into the country. All have to be referred to the Refugee Council. This provided specialist advisers and clubs. Help was provided to enable engagement with others in similar circumstances and for specific issues. It was noted that it was important for all those involved in the care of these young people to know this support existed. For example, the Designated Teacher.

The Panel discussed the Connected Persons Report, the importance of this to the foster carer review and the need to hear the voice of young people in this review.

An EMPIRE representative shared the difficulties they were experiencing at school and how they felt alone which when expressed was not taken seriously. The Head of the Virtual School expressed sadness at this situation and that there should be professional support available but acknowledged variation in the quality of settings.

The Panel agreed that this again stressed the need for feedback from young people in order to achieve meaningful self-assessment of the service.

The Chair of the Panel explained how it was the intention to develop a number of Young Inspectors who would look at all aspect of the care provided for children and young people in Croydon. It was described how a Young Inspector would be developed from EMPIRE. This Young Inspector would then form part of the Panel's membership, providing regular feedback as well an annual review with a focus on what was missing and needed to be improved. This would support the Panel in generating a number of recommendations for implementation and demonstrate to children and young people that their views were being listened to and generating a response.

**Recommendation:**

**As there is often long period between meetings, for the Panel to maintain its relationship with young people in care by arranging to a visit EMPIRE. A request to visit would be made.**



### Fostering Action Plan:

Foster carers Panel members requested that the quality of the communication with carers be examined as part of the Fostering Action Plan.

Officers requested further feedback on the Fostering Action Plan and what additional areas needed to be added.

### **Recommendation:**

**Review of the Fostering Action Plan along and the Improvement Plan be added to the Panel's work programme for review on a quarterly basis.**

### Recruitment and Deregistration of foster carers:

#### Deregistration

Officers explained how Croydon had a large population of foster carers with only a small percentage who leave. This was set against a national trend of movement in the foster carer population which was a product of volatility at a national level as opposed to being caused by local reasons. (This included fosters carers taking Special Guardianship Orders.) It was highlighted that the authority had plans in place to fill any gaps in foster carer provision.

Deregistration's were reviewed with work happening to prevent those where this was the desired outcome and requests were made for deregistration to be revoked.

#### Recruitment

Officers updated the Panel on the recruitment of foster carers. Over 100 enquires have been received against a target to add a further 60 over a period of two years. The service was working with the Foster Carer Association to explore how foster carers themselves can support recruitment through activities such as word of mouth and helping to review marketing. The campaign started in January 2019 and is led by Coram which was based in the authority's offices. This was a commissioned service but there was a responsibility that targets were met and work completed. It was explained that the target was exclusive of recruitment of the connected person (for which recruitment is via a different route) and that the current target was perceived as a minimum with a desire that this be exceeded.

Officers stressed the difference between recruiting foster carers and achieving approved carer status. Whilst Coram was responsible for recruitment everything beyond this was the responsibility of the Fostering Service.

It was explained that the recruitment wasn't focused on foster carers for specific forms of placements. The need for those able to address behaviour

issues would be dealt with through training and ongoing support. The aspiration was for carers who could support the full range of needs.

The foster carer Panel members asked that foster carer allowances be reviewed in order to address Croydon's lack of competitiveness.

*7:07pm Cllr Maria Gatland left the meeting*

Officers responded that allowances were currently being reviewed; the authority recognised the importance of addressing this as well as providing good support. The service in Croydon being described as good would be a big attraction. However, money should not be the motivation. Panel Members thought there was merit in reviewing the package but thought there was also a need to see what Coram achieved first.

*7:17pm Cllr Henson left the meeting.*

**Recommendation:**

**The foster care allowance to be brought to the Panel for review in summer 2019.**

**Adoption Statement of Purpose:**

Officers updated the Panel that Croydon was no longer part of the *Adopt South*. This would be reflected in the Adoption Statement of Purpose (SOP). Officers highlighted that there were no further major changes with the Adoption SOP. This set out what Croydon was doing for looked after children;

**RESOLVED:** the Panel noted all the reports.

**20/19 How has the Panel helped Children in Care today?**

The Panel highlighted the following accomplishments which helped Children in Care:

- The Panel listened to the voice of children, responded to points raised and reflected on this to inform practice. The Panel had focused on how the voice of children could be heard in a systematic way;
- Positive that the Foster Care Charter was being developed to set a minimum expectation of a response from the social worker to the foster carer in a set period of time;
- Impressed that young people were part of the Panel and they felt confident to express their views and concerns. It was good for them to see that they were being listened to and their views being taken on-board;
- Positive to have the meetings to see what was to be actioned. The suggestion of an spreadsheet of actions was discussed;
- Impressed with the contribution of young people to the Panel. Stressed the need to inform them of the action being taken;

- Wanted to hear progress from young people on the issue of knowing who to complain; and
- Positive that young people were included in the Panel. Need to focus on those foster children who are isolated. Highlighted that it was young people themselves who knew what a good foster home looked like. Welcomed the opening up the IRO role; it was good to challenge the role of the IRO which should also be evaluated by young people. Stressed the need for information for young people to be made available in a range of suitable languages;
- Valued the views of young people being expressed at the Panel. Looked forward to attending EMPIRE;
- Would be getting the input of young people to the foster carer review;
- Sad to hear some of the stories from young people. This should not be their experience. The deep dive foster carer review needed to ensure it was capturing the voice of children. Members of the Panel asking to be invited to EMPIRE was a real positive and would have a beneficial impact for looked after children; and
- It was powerful to welcome young people to the Panel. It was a powerful message for them to attend the meeting. The Panel could underestimate the strength and confidence of young people in care. Found having young people at the Panel inspirational. Needed to consider opportunities to do more and how Croydon was able to support children long-term. For example, through apprenticeships etc

**21/19 Work Programme**

It was agreed this would be reviewed in anticipation of the new municipal year.

**22/19 Exclusion of the Press and Public**

This item was not required.

The meeting ended at 8.00 pm

**Signed:**

**Date:**

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OUR  
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# Childrens Performance Dashboard

May 2019

Produced by  
Performance Intelligence and Data Quality Team



**CROYDON**  
[www.croydon.gov.uk](http://www.croydon.gov.uk)

Indicator Number	Indicator Title	Polarity	2018/19												2019/20				Comparative Data												
			Apr-18	May-18	Jun-18	Jul-18	Aug-18	Sep-18	Oct-18	Nov-18	Dec-18	Jan-19	Feb-19	Mar-19	Apr-19	May-19	RO	2018-19 Target	2019-20 Target	RAG	2018-19 YTD or latest	2019-20 YTD or latest	Croydon 2017-18	England 2017-18	Stats Nbr Average 2017-18	Croydon 2016-17	England 2016-17	Stats Nbr Average 2016-17	Croydon 2015-16	England 2015-16	Stats Nbr Average 2015-16
MC 8	Number of missing episodes started in month - <b>LAC missing from placement</b>	SIB	162	147	164	167	138	171	190	160	211	169	177	165	151	202	HD	NA	NA	Grey	1,985		871			525 (all missing)	399.5 (average)	543 (average)	105	57 (Average)	59
MC 11	% of Total found episodes in month (missing episodes only) where RHI was offered and accepted (RHI DONE) - <b>LAC missing from placement</b>	SIB	55%	56%	52%	56%	47%	62%	60%	70%	70%	67%	63%	69%	60%	71%	HD	NA	NA	Grey	61%	66%	44%								
LAC 1	Number of LAC at the end of the month		789	794	779	780	771	784	799	813	818	821	814	821	836	840	VS	NA	NA	Grey	821	840	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	85.9	86.6	88.2	88.6	VS	NA	NA	Grey	86.6	89	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	57.1	58.0	58.9	59.2	VS	NA	NA	Grey	58.0	59	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	541	550	558	561	VS	NA	NA	Grey	550	561	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	273	271	279	279	VS	NA	NA	Grey	271	279	309			390	4560 (Total)	51 (Average)	430	4300 - average 28	395
LAC 10	Percentage of LAC for whom a visit has taken place within statutory timescales (6 weekly Visits)	BIB	90%	92%	90%	86%	88%	89%	88%	91%	89%	91%	92%	88%	95%	96%	VS	95%	TBC	Green	90%	96%	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%	96%	93%	88%	90%	AFS	95%	TBC	Amber	87%	89%	68%						80%		
LAC 12	Percentage of LAC who have participated in Reviews (aged 4+ ) in the month	BIB	79%	78%	75%	76%	76%	72%	70%	82%	64%	43%	52%	67%	70%	75%	AFS	80%	TBC	Amber	70%	72%	78%			Need to establish			91%	78%	
LAC 13	Percentage of LAC with a Personal Education Plan (PEP) reviewed in the last 6 months (Need to get he EPEP Number from the Virtual teams)	BIB	25%	23%	23%	22%	18%	15%	17%	15%	36%	33%	34%	33%	61%	78%	VS	85%	TBC	Red	25%	70%	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%	89%	86%	87%	98%	VS	95%	TBC	Green	86%	1	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%	59%	62%	60%	82%	VS	80%	TBC	Green	62%	1	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%	84%	91%	85%	80%	AT/WT	95%	TBC	Red	91%	1	80%			66.5%	89.4%	94.2%	86%	90%	93%
LAC 18	% initial health assessments delivered within 20 working days of date child became looked after.	BIB	18%	14%	23%	16%	26%	13%	25%	37%	62%	34%	43%	31%	66%	TBC	AT/WT	95%	TBC	Grey	28%	66%	15%								
LAC 19	Percentage of LAC that have been in care for 12+ months, that have had same social worker for last 6 months	BIB	62%	61%	64%	65%	70%	68%	58%	55%	60%	60%	52%	50%	58%	63%	VS	60%	TBC	Green	50%	63%	65%								
LAC 20	Percentage of LAC under 16 in care for more than 2.5 years: in the same placement for 2+ years	BIB	82%	80%	80%	77%	80%	76%	73%	70%	82%	72%	85%	72%	72%	74%	VS	75%	TBC	Amber	72%	74%	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%	9%	8%	8%	8%	VS	8%	TBC	Green	8%	8%	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%	84%	82%	84%	84%	VS	90%	TBC	Amber	82%	84%	81%			42%	74.2%	68.4%	92% (2015)	86% (2015)	
F 1	Total number of foster carer households	BIB	236	235	229	228	230	233	236	236	235	235	235	235	231	235	VS	NA	NA	Grey	235	235	239			260 Households	288 (average)	152 (average)	390 (total number)	292 (average)	170 (average)
F 3	Percentage of Annual Reviews of Foster Carers completed on time	BIB	87%	92%	93%	92%	87%	86%	85%	81%	85%	95%	98%	96%	95%	92%	VS	95%	TBC	Amber	96%	92%	81%								
F 4	Percentage of Foster Carers' most recent announced visit within timescales	BIB	80%	76%	78%	75%	64%	73%	72%	72%	56%	76%	79%	75%	79%	79%	VS	85%	TBC	Amber	75%	79%	77%								

Indicator Number	Indicator Title	Polarity	2018/19												2019/20				Comparative Data													
			Apr-18	May-18	Jun-18	Jul-18	Aug-18	Sep-18	Oct-18	Nov-18	Dec-18	Jan-19	Feb-19	Mar-19	Apr-19	May-19	RO	2018-19 Target	2019-20 Target	RAG	2018-19 YTD or latest	2019-20 YTD or latest	Croydon 2017-18	England 2017-18	Stats Nbr Average 2017-18	Croydon 2016-17	England 2016-17	Stats Nbr Average 2016-17	Croydon 2015-16	England 2015-16	Stats Nbr Average 2015-16	
AD 0	Number of Adoption Orders achieved in the month	BIB	0	2	5	1	0	0	1	1	0	5	1	1	0	3	IF	NA	NA	Grey	17	3	9			Need to establish	28.6	26				
AD 1	Number of children for whom the agreed plan is adoption (ADM)	BiB	48	49	0	1	0	1	1	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	IF	NA	NA	Grey	105	0	431					28				
AD 2	Number of children waiting to be matched to an adopter		22	27	19	19	18	17	17	18	17	13	12	11	10	15	IF	NA	NA	Grey	11	15	18					19				
AD 7	Average time between a child entering care and moving in with the adoptive family , for children who have been adopted (days) (12 Months rolling average)	SIB	0	543.2	521.22	523.2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	IF	558	TBC	Grey			309			696 (2014-17) 3 yr average	520 (2014-2017) 3 yr average	554.5 (2014-2017) 3 yr average	1073 (2016) AND 779 (3 Year)	558 (2013-2016) 3 yr	604 (2013-2016) 3 yr	
CL a	Care Leavers with an Up-to-date Pathway plan	BIB	74%	74%	82%	83%	82%	83%	82%	87%	85%	86%	87%	88%	89%	83%	FM	95%	TBC	Amber	83%	86%	69%									
CL 1a	Percentage in employment, education, or training (EET) on their 17th to 21st Birthday	BIB	63%	63%	63%	61%	64%	66%	64%	63%	61%	64%	64%	66%	65%	64%	FM	60%	TBC	Green	64%	64%	75%	84%	81%	53% (19-21 yr olds)	50% (average 19 to 21 yr olds)	50.2% (average 19 to 21 yr olds)	60% (345) (2016)			
CL 3a	Percentage in suitable accommodation on their 17th to 21st Birthday	BIB	84%	84%	85%	83%	90%	92%	90%	91%	88%	89%	89%	92%	90%	90%	FM	85%	TBC	Green	92%	90%	75%	84%	81%	77% (19-21 yr olds)	84% (19-21 yr olds)	81.5% (19-21 yr olds)	77% (2016)	83%	83%	

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Reporting Period	1 <sup>st</sup> April 2018 – 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2019
Report of	INDEPENDENT REVIEWING SERVICE – Quality Assurance Team
Report to	Corporate Parenting Board
Report Originators	Adam Fearon-Stanley
Date of Report	21 <sup>st</sup> June 2019

## ***The Contribution of Independent Reviewing Officers to Quality Assuring and Improving Services for Looked after Children.***

This report is an analysis of the activity of the IRO and Independent visitor services and their effectiveness and impact on children's and young people's safety and care in Croydon.

It provides qualitative and quantitative data on the service for 2018/19 as required by statutory guidance.

### 1. Introduction

This annual report covers the period from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2018 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019 and has been produced under the requirements of the IRO handbook 2010 for scrutiny by the members of the corporate parenting board.

The guidance states that:

*This report should identify good practice but should also highlight issues for further development, including where urgent action is needed. It should make reference to:*

- *procedures for resolving concerns, including the local dispute resolution process and it should include an analysis of the issues raised in dispute and the outcomes;*
- *the development of the IRO service including information on caseloads, continuity of employment and the make-up of the team and how it reflects the identity of the children it is serving;*
- *extent of participation of children and their parents;*
- *the number of reviews that are held on time, the number that are held out of time and the reasons for the ones that are out of time;*
- *outcomes of quality assurance audits in relation to the organisation, conduct and recording of reviews; and*
- *whether any resource issues are putting at risk the delivery of a quality service to all looked after children.*

The Independent Reviewing Service has a key role in assuring the quality of a Local Authority's care planning for looked after children and improving the overall quality of services offered.

### 2. Legal & Statutory Context of the IRO role

The appointment of an Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) for a child or young person in the care of the Local Authority is a legal requirement under s.118 of the Adoption and Children Act 2002.

The Independent Reviewing service operates within the framework of the IRO Handbook. This is statutory guidance issued to local authorities in 2010. The

IRO has a key role in relation to the improvement and quality assurance of the Care Planning for Looked after Children and in challenging any drift and delay.

IRO's have a responsibility to ensure that plans are timely, effective and achieve good outcomes for children and young people. They have a responsibility to promote best practice and high professional standards across the Children's Social Work Service.

IROs make an important contribution to the consistency of practice from all those who have a corporate responsibility for looked after children. They have a duty to prevent drift and delay in care planning and ensure that the local authority's efforts are focused on meeting the needs of children and achieving the best possible outcomes. IROs monitor the activity of the local authority as a corporate parent, in ensuring that appropriate actions are taken to meet the child's assessed needs, and that the Local Authority is operating in line with care planning regulations.

### 3. Profile of Croydon IRO Service

The Independent Reviewing Service is sited within the Quality Assurance Service in Croydon and benefits from close links with the Child Protection Conference Chairs and the Local Authority Designated Officer. In October 2018 three administrative posts were added to Quality Assurance to support the central organisation of Looked After Children Reviews

Adam Fearon-Stanley now leads the service, having acted up in the position from February 2018 before being appointed on a permanent basis in March 2019. The Local Authority Designated Officer assists with supervision and appraisal of five of the IRO staff.

At the time of writing this report the IRO Service has 13 full time equivalent posts. There are 15 IRO's in place. 10 are permanent full time IRO's. There are 2 permanent part time IRO's. 3 agency IRO are in post, one of whom has been with the IRO Service for over a year. Agency IRO provided cover for permanent positions whilst recruiting and in inducting new IRO's, and have contributed to managing sickness in the service. The service has also been joined by 3 business support staff who support the central organisation of Looked After Children Reviews.

During the period 2018 – 2019 three IRO's left the Local Authority, and a fourth IRO has acted up in a different position within the Quality Assurance service. There has been significant sickness affecting three members of staff, which has led to a reduction of caseloads for those affected. Long term absences from work have been mitigated by the addition of agency IROs to the staff group and Quality Assurance Managers assisting with the chairing of Looked After Reviews. There has been an intensive recruitment drive which at the time of writing has culminated in 3 IROs being appointed on a permanent basis, 2 of whom have begun work while the third progresses through employment checks. One post remains vacant.

IRO's who have remained in post during this period have strong and enduring relationships with the children and young people they review. The same IRO will tend to review all the children in a sibling group, which maintains continuity for children and parents alike. Many children have had the same IRO for a number of years. Maintaining this ongoing consistent relationship is seen as very important by children and IROs alike. Many IRO's elect to retain allocation of children whom they review on duty, due to staff sickness or turnover, if they have capacity to do so.

The team is predominantly female- of the 15 staff in post, 9 are women of African or African Caribbean ethnic origin and 2 women of white British ethnic origin. We have one woman of Asian ethnic origin. We have 4 male IROs 3 of white British ethnic origin and the 4<sup>th</sup> who is Black American.

Below is a table showing the diversity of the ethnic backgrounds of the children looked after by the local authority.

<b>Children looked after as at 31st march 2019</b>	<b>2018-2019</b>
<b>Yes</b>	
A1 - White British	178
A2 - White Irish	7
A3 - Any other White background	119
A4 - Traveller of Irish Heritage	<5
A5 - Gypsy / Roma	<5
B1 - White and Black Caribbean	39
B2 - White and Black African	10
B3 - White and Asian	15
B4 - Any other mixed background	48
C1 - Indian	5
C2 - Pakistani	9
C3 - Bangladeshi	<5
C4 - Any other Asian background	129
D1 - Caribbean	76
D2 - African	124
D3 - Any other Black background	38
E1 - Chinese	5
E2 - Any other ethnic group	18
E4 - Information not yet obtained	<5
<b>Children who had left our care in 2018 - 2019</b>	
A1 - White British	64
A2 - White Irish	<5
A3 - Any other White background	97
B1 - White and Black Caribbean	14
B2 - White and Black African	9
B3 - White and Asian	6
B4 - Any other mixed background	26
C1 - Indian	<5
C2 - Pakistani	<5
C3 - Bangladeshi	<5

C4 - Any other Asian background	75
D1 - Caribbean	27
D2 - African	75
D3 - Any other Black background	18
E2 - Any other ethnic group	21
E3 - Refused	<5
E4 - Information not yet obtained	7
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>1273</b>

The make-up of our IRO Service does not reflect the gender make-up of the children looked after by Croydon – there are a higher number of males than females in our care whilst the composition of our IRO Service is the reverse with more females.

#### 2018-2019 Gender of Children Looked After

2018-2019 LAC Children Looked After at 31st march 2019			
	Female	Male	Grand Total
Yes	287	537	824
No	139	310	449
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>426</b>	<b>847</b>	<b>1273</b>

All IROs have at least five years post-qualifying experience as a social worker and are registered as social workers with the Health and Care Professionals Council (HCPC). Several of our IRO's have previously held managerial roles in other service areas. All newly appointed IRO's in the period 2018 - 2019 have previously held management positions or have experience of supervising social work staff, as this has now been made a requirement in the job specification.

IROs and managers can access a diverse range of training appropriate to their development needs and the specific areas of knowledge required by the needs of the young people on their caseloads. Some of this training is bespoke and arranged by the service to meet the specific requirements of IROs, such as the IRO CAF/CASS Conference. Other training is more generic and accessed by a wide range of social work staff. IRO's manage their own practice group sessions where IRO prepare and present to the group about a relevant topic. One of the IRO's takes responsibility for maintaining a team library for the service sharing articles and publications relevant to the role and alerting colleagues to new additions.

IROs were observed chairing reviews by their managers this year, and it has been agreed that this needs to increase in order to ensure consistency of practice. In response to this, an IRO stock take is underway which will be outlined in later sections of this report.

The service is represented on the Adoption panel and Fostering panel for the authority. IROs regularly take part in selection panels for the Independent Visitor Service. Efforts to link IRO's to specific service area's to support communication

between services has been variable, with initial meetings taking place between IRO and Service area's but relationships only being sustained in a few services – Adoption, Virtual School, and Children in Care Service for local children. The IRO Service Manager is part of Care Panel, Permanency Panel and High Cost Panel all of which are opportunities to highlight IRO views to decision makers and conversely for the activity of the IRO's to be understood by colleagues across the services.

The IRO service is represented at the London wide IRO group and has regular feedback from the sessions held.

During 2017 the IRO Manager forged links with the Court Case progressions Manager within Croydon and the CAFCASS Manager in South London. This has helped to improve links overall for the IROs with Children's Guardians appointed by the Courts for children in proceedings. The CAFCASS link Guardian for Croydon has attended 2 team meetings during 2018 - 2019. The IRO Service Manager is also part of the quarterly meetings between the local authority and CAFCASS which began in early 2019.

The Croydon IRO service hosted a conference of IROs and Children's Guardians from across South London in June 2018. This was a valuable training opportunity and networking event for IRO's and Guardians across the region. Judge Probyn gave a keynote speech. This was a well-attended meeting and further strengthened the links between IROs and Children's Guardians which will benefit children in proceedings. The Croydon IRO service is again hosting the same conference in September 2019 to continue to build the links between IRO and Guardian's.

#### 4. Our context

The OFSTED inspection in 2017 identified that the service provided to children and young people in Croydon was inadequate. The Inspectors did note that there were 'unique' factors in Croydon around unaccompanied asylum seeking children. They also recognised that we were improving standards but the pace of change wasn't quick enough.

The OFSTED inspection found there was insufficient evidence of IRO challenge on children's files particularly where plans were found to be subject to unnecessary drift and delay.

At Ofsted's monitoring visit in October 2018 it was noted that IRO challenge was beginning to be more effective but had not had sufficient impact on outcomes for children in the cases seen by Inspectors. It was recognised that there had been 27 examples of escalation including to CAFCASS and Director level. It was encouraging that Ofsted Inspectors had recognised an increase in IRO challenge to colleagues, but it was recognised that there was still much to be achieved.

A new Head of Service, Shaun Hanks began in post after the October monitoring visit. In January 2019 a new Director, Nick Pendry, began. Both bring a focus on systemic based social work practice and outcomes for children in relation to their health, education and social relationships. A restorative practice approach is being embedded within the Quality Assurance Service to ensure that challenge is effective and supports outcomes for children.

There has been an expansion of staff and administrative support in social work teams which has been positive in relation to improving practice, but placed increasing pressure on office space. There has been an increase in the number of requests to work from home, which impacts upon the IRO presence within the office. At the time of writing a new desk allocation plan across the division is being designed.

Update on Annual work programme for April 2018 – March 2019 (detailed in the previous Annual Review)

***Theme One: Achieve good outcome for looked after children and young people***

***Service Outcome: The IRO role in improving the outcomes for children and young people is evident and valued by managers and workers across the service***

- ***Launch a system of mid-way reviews and checks. Ensure IROs are aware of changes in cases and have a clear mandate to check and chase progress on actions they have outlined as being needed as part of Care Planning for Looked After Children.***

Midway Reviews were implemented in August 2018. As of the 27<sup>th</sup> May 2019 278 Midway Reviews had been carried out by IRO's. These can be carried out as a case file audit, and where required progress to face to face meetings if a care plan is not thought to be progressing by the IRO. 60 Midway Reviews have resulted in face to face meetings between IRO and colleagues. Nine led to Looked After reviews being convened earlier to address care planning issues and 13 resulted in escalations where there were concerns regarding drift or delay.

Feedback from social workers and team managers is that the Midway Review is a valued space in which to discuss children's care plans and agree how to progress. Anecdotal feedback from several IRO's suggest that the Midway Reviews may reduce the requirement for escalation as they identify drift and delay prior to the next review. From discussion with IRO's timely recording of Midway Reviews is an area that needs to be improved.

IRO's can also use the Midway Review to record their views as the IRO when attending professional or strategy meetings. Team managers do not often attend Midway Reviews with IRO's and this is also an area that requires further development.

- ***Run a series of sessions with IRO's alongside partners in Camden to further enhance IRO skills in relation to recognising good quality Care Planning activity and challenging colleagues when standards are not met.***

At the time of writing this report there had been a series of sessions carried out alongside our partners in Camden (four in total). These have been fruitful discussions about how to sustain respectful relationships with others whilst holding them to account for standards of practice. Systemic approaches to social work practice have been at the heart of these sessions and this will be built on by the introduction of reflective group supervision for IRO's in the coming period by the new head of systemic practice in Croydon and the supervision offered by quality assurance managers who are receiving systemic supervision training.

- ***Introduce a grading system for care plans in order to identify cases where the quality of Care Planning has not been good enough and also to recognise best practice in Care Planning.***

Formal QA feedback to social work reports was introduced in October 2018. This led to an increase in reports being completed for Looked After Children Reviews and offered an opportunity for IRO's to comment on the quality of reports provided to reviews. Since January 2019 responsibility for quality assuring social work reports is now held with Team Managers and routine formal QA feedback on social work reports has since ended.

- ***Monitor themes of the issues escalated by IROs to aid service planning.***

The IRO Service Manager has oversight of all issues escalated to senior leadership by IROs, which will be discussed in greater detail in later sections of the IRO Report.

- ***Learn from information provided by complaints, Advocacy and Independent Visitor Service about key issues affecting the lives of children and young people we look after.***

The bi-monthly Learning Loop meetings established in 2019 are the conduit through which learning from complaints can be relayed. The IV service has relayed the views of some young people that they do not wish to engage in reviews and the service is challenging itself to develop more inclusive and less formal reviews.

- ***Work alongside colleagues in Care Planning and Permanence to introduce methods of gaining feedback from children and young people who are looked after via APP based technology.***

This has been progressed and the council will award a contract for an app to assist children to feedback to Looked After Children Reviews. This APP can also be potentially used for Personal Education Plan Meetings, Child In Need Meetings, Child Protection Conferences and Family Group Conferences. 40



children, both looked after and living with their birth families were part of the commissioning and procurement process and their views have been given precedence in the selection process.

## **THEME TWO: Improve Timeliness of Reviews and Recording**

***Service Outcome: Reviews and the recording around them are a priority for all teams who share responsibility for making them a helpful part of the Care Planning process for children and young people.***

- ***Reduce recording system dependency on sequential activity. Allow Outcomes to be entered without pre meeting reports where these have not been completed.***

Sequential recording of Looked After Children Reviews was adjusted in October 2018, to allow Looked After Children Review minutes to be entered without Pre Meeting reports being available. This had an immediate impact on IRO's capacity to enter Looked After Children Review minutes in a timely way which is reflected in performance data discussed in later sections of this report. Where care plans are in draft this can still prevent IRO's entering their Looked After Children minutes. There is further revision of the recording system proposed which will be discussed in the proposed work programme for April 2019 – March 2020.

- ***Monitor completion of outcomes by IROs and identify early any issues of delay.***

IRO's now receive a weekly report which sets out all of their Looked After Children Reviews, and when they are due to give them an immediate overview of their caseloads and tasks. The IRO Service Manager receives a daily report reporting all Looked After Children Reviews in this same style which allows for immediate identification of late reviews or those Looked After Children Reviews at risk of being out of time scale. This has been invaluable to Quality Assurance Managers in the service in managing caseloads during sickness and absence.

- ***Reduce the administrative load of organisation and management of review activity on Social Workers, IROs and their managers by centralising administration of reviews in Quality Assurance Business Support Team.***

In October 2018 three business support staff were appointed to support the central organisation of Looked After Children Reviews, initially the administrative team focused on 2<sup>nd</sup> reviews onwards and are now expanding to assist with Initial Reviews also. The administrative team also take responsibility for booking rooms at BWH, arranging interpreters to any Looked After Children reviews and sending out Consultation forms and invites. This additional support has decreased the administrative burden on staff across

the services and has helped to increase the attendance of Personal Assistants at reviews as they are now automatically invited.

It is envisaged that administrative team will have a role in supporting the Looked After Children App, and that the central distribution of review minutes will also facilitate guardians receiving review minutes in a timely manner where children are subject to proceedings.

Performance Indicators were recently introduced for the period of June 2019 onwards to help manage the timeliness of invites sent, minutes distributed, and whom is receiving the minutes particularly children, parents and foster carers who do not have access to our recording system. There is an intent to use central administration to support wider participation of health and education agencies. At the time of writing the IRO Service Manager has met with the Virtual School and Looked After Children Health Assessment Team to explore how to highlight children and young people about whom they are particularly worried to the IRO's. It is the aim that this will encourage discussion about how the staff from these services can be part of Looked After Children Reviews depending the child or young person's individual wishes and feelings.

## **5. Quantitative Information about the IRO Service in Croydon**

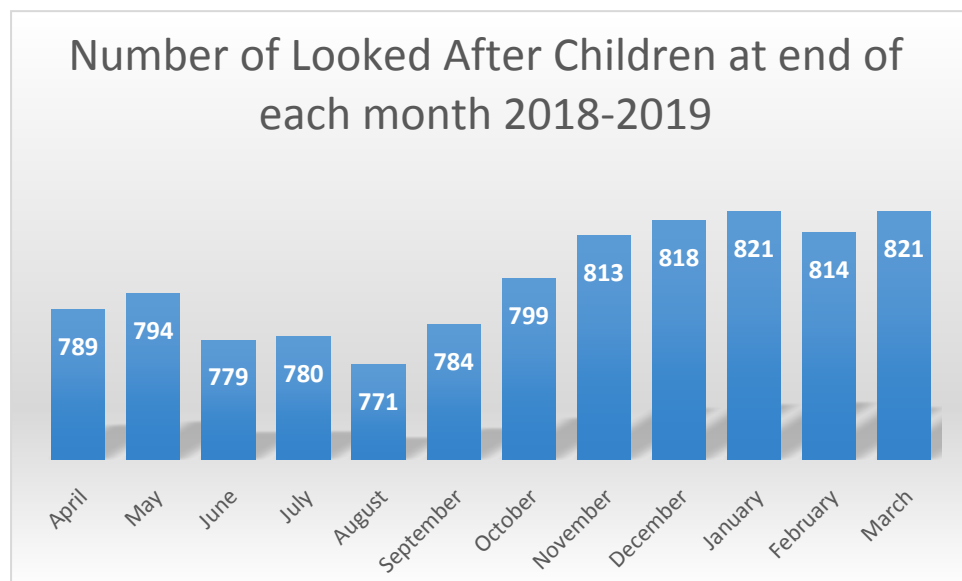
The recommended average caseload as set by the IRO Handbook for an IRO is between 50 and 70 Looked After children. During 2018-19 the average IRO case load was between 60 and 65 cases with caseloads rising to between 66 and 72 by the time of writing this report. Part time IRO's are between 43 and 47 children, which is in excess of the recommended case load pro-rata. The average case load of IRO's is affected by the reduced case load of three IRO's who are held at 50 cases and below, the continuing absence of one IRO on sick leave, and the need to build new IRO's caseloads gradually. Pure numbers of children are not a true indicator of workload for an IRO as this varies a great deal depending on the geographical locations of Looked After Children the number of sibling groups and the complexity of the issues for each child or young person.

As the charts below show the population of Looked After children in Croydon has risen overall throughout the year reaching 821 in April 2019 and currently at 840 at the time that this report was written in June 2019. This is an increase of nearly 1 IRO case load being held across the IRO Service.

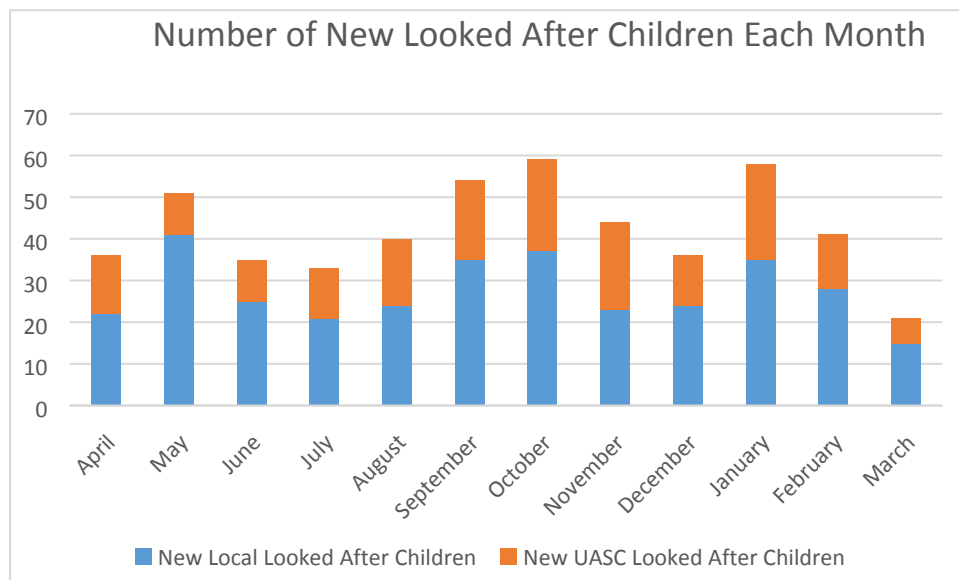
Care planning and reviewing for children originating from other countries brings additional levels of complexity in relation to issues of establishing jurisdiction, use of interpreters and cultural needs, all of which require additional time to ensure effective care planning.

Improvements have been made in respect of Personal Education Plans for children with the percentage of children having a Personal Education Plan review rising from 25% of all children looked after to 52% of all children looked after by the end of the reporting period. This is mirrored by improvement in

health assessments for looked after children. The percentage of all children looked after who had an up to date Looked After Child Health Assessment in the reporting period has risen from 62% to 88%.



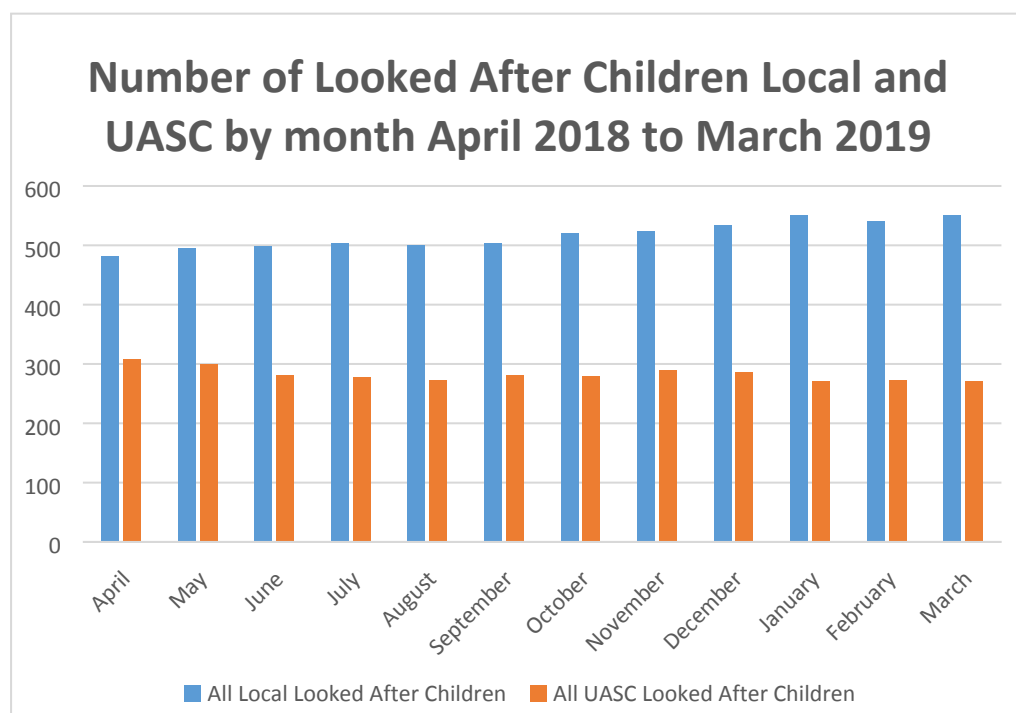
The composition of the Looked After Children population has changed, with an increase in local children (from 482 to 550 by the end of year). This reflected a trend identified in the last IRO Annual Report.



Increases in newly looked after children are a challenge for the whole service including the Independent Reviewing Officers, as initial reviews are required within 28 days of the child or young person becoming Looked After. Overall timeliness for reviews was at 89% during 2018-2019.

Historically the 28 day target can prove challenging when Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking children have been placed at a distance from Croydon through the National Transfer Scheme. During 2018/19 however the National Transfer Scheme only transferred 1 child of the 94 children referred to another Local Authority.

The increase in children becoming looked after that are local children correlates to an increase in family court proceedings over the year. This brings an additional layer of scrutiny to care planning for these children and many IRO's choose to offset this by convening Looked After Children Reviews on a more frequent basis.



This chart shows that although the number of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking children being cared for in Croydon fell at the beginning of the reporting period it has remained at between 270 and 280 in total and the total looked after population increased during the year.

As at the end of March 2019, 821 children were looked after by the local authority, 275 of which were unaccompanied asylum seeking children. This equates to 87 children looked after per 10'000 children, or 58 children looked after per 10'000 children if you exclude unaccompanied asylum seeking children. This means that the Local Authority is closer to the National Average of 60 children looked after per 10'000 children and significantly higher than the average number of children looked after by neighbouring London Boroughs of 40 per 10,000 (as of yearend of 2018)

Of the children looked after at the end of 2018 – 2019 406 children were looked after under S20 agreements, of which 275 children were unaccompanied asylum

seeking children. 129 children were subject to Interim Care Orders and subject to Family Court proceedings. 268 children were subject to full Care Orders and remained in the care of the Local Authority. 32 children were subject to Placement Orders with the plan to seek Adoptive Carers for them.

#### Children and Young People ceasing to be Looked After:

<b>Table 4. Nos. of children leaving care with reasons</b>		<b>9</b>
	<b>Number of children</b>	<b>% of all leaving care</b>
In care on remand – came to an end	8	1.68%
Adopted - application unopposed	14	2.94%
Adopted- consent dispensed with	5	1.05%
Age assessment determined UASC to be aged 18 or over	5	1.05%
Care taken over by another LA in the UK	57	12%
Sentenced to Custody	13	2.74%
Child died, subject to Serious Case Review	2	0.42%
Moved into independent living arrangement and no longer looked after : accommodation providing no formalised advice/support arrangements (e.g. B&B, bedsit, own flat, living with friends)	35	7.36%
Moved into independent living arrangement and no longer looked after : supportive accommodation providing formalised advice/support arrangements (e.g. most hostels, YMCAs, and care leaver projects)	91	19.157%
Returned Home under Child Arrangement Order	10	2.10%
Return home to live with parents, relatives, or other person with parental responsibility as part of the care planning process	74	15.57%
Return home to live with parents, relatives, or other person with parental responsibility which was not part of the care planning process	20	4.2%
Special guardianship order made to carers other than former foster carers	39	8.21%
Special guardianship order made to former foster carers	1	0.2%
Transferred to care of adult social services ( Possibly some Leaving Care Service Users as well as adults with needs related to Physical or Mental Health )	71	14.947%
Children accommodated for 1 night prior to dispersal on Pan London Rota	11	2.31%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>475</b>	<b>100%</b>

There are several notable changes in the reasons that children and young people are ceasing to be Looked After in Croydon which suggest significant shifts in practice. There is a significant increase in Special Guardianship Orders being granted whereby children live with family members, the use of Child Arrangement Orders to regulate children looked after with wider family members,

and children returning home to live with their parent's. These cohorts have almost doubled in percentage since 2017/18. This reflects efforts by the Local Authority to seek permanence for children within their birth families wherever this can be safe and in their best interests. This is supported by the improved Family Group Conference Service which engages children's families in care planning, further investment in Early Help Services including Functional Family Therapy and Edge of Care Services and wider initiatives already detailed.

## **6. Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children and the National Transfer Scheme**

The National Transfer Scheme was launched in July 2016 to encourage all local authorities to support unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) so that there is a more even distribution of caring responsibilities across the country. Under the scheme a child arriving in one local authority area, already under strain caring for unaccompanied asylum seeking children, could be transferred to another council with capacity.

Croydon is deemed to be a borough under strain and has been placing children on the transfer scheme according to the transfer protocol. Of the Unaccompanied asylum seeking children who arrived in Croydon in this reporting period 94 were referred to the National Transfer Scheme as suitable for transfer.

Of these 94 children and young people only 1 has transferred to another authority under the scheme. The remaining 93 remain in the care of Croydon. In mid-2018 it was recognised that children and young people were not being accepted by other Local Authorities and therefore placements were found in Croydon or as close to Croydon as possible. This reduced disruption for children when responsibility for their care was not accepted by another Local Authority. It also increased their access to services for unaccompanied asylum seeking children that are clustered in the South East region and Croydon particularly which mirror our historical position as receiving a larger proportion of these children.

The IROs have been active in ensuring that children placed on the National Transfer scheme understand what is happening to them and why. Audits reveal that the IROs were particularly concerned that the children and young people understood that the home they were in was a stable one. They listened carefully to concerns raised about culturally appropriateness of some living arrangements and about the linguistic and cultural connections the young people wanted to make. The review proved a catalyst in a number of cases for Foster Carers and Social workers to make links with sports clubs and religious organisations in order to assist the children and young people to become involved in community life as well as family life in their new home.

## **7. Local Looked After Children Themes and issues.**

The rise in the number of local looked after children is an area of concern. Croydon has in the past had lower numbers of Local Looked After Children than

the national average. To ensure that the right children are becoming looked after new measures have been put in place.

The IRO Manager attends the Care Panel alongside a multi- agency group of professionals to ensure that all avenues to support families to stay together are explored. The number of cases in proceedings has increased throughout the year and this is reflected in the number of children subject to Final Care Orders in the year. Legal Planning Meetings are being convened on a weekly basis and chaired at Director or Head of Service level. These are recorded more consistently and the progress of cases through the Courts is being monitored by the Court Case Progression Manager.

IRO's are checking the legal status of children in reviews and there is evidence that they are liaising more with the children's guardians once cases are in proceedings. Feedback from the IRO link with CAFCASS Guardians at the time of report writing was that contact between IRO and guardians was better overall, with increased communication and IRO's easier to reach, particularly when there was a contentious care planning issue that required discussion. The overall increase in local looked after children subject to a care order during the year was 42 in total.

The recognition of children who are living with extended family members and the regulation of these as connected carers has been a prevalent issue during the year. This has been mirrored by the Local Authority's recognition that this is an area that requires attention and monitoring. IRO's have been active in identifying to line management where they believe a child is Looked After and living with a family member and there has been drift and delay in recognising this.

There has been continuing focus on children who are looked after under S.20 agreements (Section 20, Children Act 1989). The number of children have remained similar over the year beginning at 132 in April 2018 and ending at 125 by March 2019.

The number of cases where children are subject to CP plan prior to becoming looked after has increased and so has the necessity for IRO and CP chairs to liaise with one another about managing the end of CP Plans and the beginning of Looked After Children Review arrangements. Close alliance between the Child Protection Chairs and IROs in cases where children are moving from child protection plans to being looked after has resulted in greater understanding of the issues facing families.

Permanency Planning for all children in Croydon has been a focus since the October 2018 monitoring visit by Ofsted. The IRO Service Manager led a cross service project to focus on children in our care in excess of 1 year to support colleagues to achieve permanency for these children (at that point 128 children). This consisted of face to face work with team managers and social workers in the Corporate Parenting Service to explore permanency planning and agree actions going forward. This led to establishing an ongoing Permanency Panel co-chaired by the IRO Service Manager and the Adoption Service Manager to review this group of children and all children under the age of 5 years old.

IRO's have been provided with the outcome of this learning activity with colleagues and used Looked After Children Reviews to pursue Permanency Planning for these children. IRO's are also able to refer children to the Permanency Panel where they are concerned that there is drift or delay to ensure that senior line managers are sighted on this.

IRO's have identified a range of issues impacting on care planning across the social work services;

- the management of contact between siblings, particularly after final orders are granted, and ensuring that contact with parents continue to be in the best interests of children.
- supporting the stability of placements for children and young people.
- the difficulties faced in identifying placements that can meet children's changing needs over time, and moving children to new carers in a planned way that minimises their distress.
- the lack of consistency in the application of savings policies for looked after children.

#### **8. Timeliness of reviews:**

The Annual 903 return shows that 89% of looked after children received their reviews on time during the year. This figure is not as we wish and reflects the fact that if a single review in the reporting period is out of time then subsequent reviews cannot alter this fact.

Analysis of the data demonstrates the increase of IRO activity over the year, in addition to efforts to embed Midway Reviews, QA Feedback and the monitoring focus on Connected Persons, S20, and Permanency described above.

IRO's have convened Looked After Children Reviews for 1238 children during 2018 - 2019, compared to 1019 in 2017 – 2018.

2600 reviews were held during the year 2018 - 2019. IRO's have chaired 494 additional Looked After Children Reviews in this reporting period compared to 2017 - 2018.

This demonstrates that despite an increased pressure on the IRO Service to meet demand Looked After Children Reviews remained in timescale for the large majority of children. The increase in the number of Looked After Children Reviews reflects a number of intersecting factors;

- An increase in children becoming looked after
- An increase in IRO convening Looked After Children Reviews in cases where children are subject to family proceedings
- IRO's convening Looked After Children Reviews where children's arrangements have changed
- An increase in children being placed for Adoption and hence requiring more frequent Looked After Children Reviews



- An increase in children spending a shorter period in care before returning to their birth families or transferring to adult services
- A significant decrease overall in children being dispersed on the national transfer scheme and hence requiring 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3 Reviews within the calendar year.

A large number of Looked After Children Reviews being out of timescale related to initial reviews (104 over the year). The assistance of new administrative team in the coming year will help to improve this.

Since January 2019 staffing became more unstable in the IRO Service and there has been a higher number of 2<sup>nd</sup> Looked After Children Reviews that have been late. Over the entire reporting period. 182 Looked After Children Reviews were out of timescale, albeit that use of the duty IRO system helped to prevent this being higher.

### **IRO Footprint**

One of the concerns OFSTED had during their Inspection in 2017 was the lack of visibility of the IRO Service within the case records, particularly in relation to how they managed concerns and challenged poor practice.

In 2017 – 2018 one of the primary reasons for this was the absence of Looked After Children Reviews recorded on CRS. At that point recording of reviews was often done 'off system' because pre meeting reports and care plans were not being effectively updated on the system. This practice had become embedded and needed to change.

Through 2018 – 2019 Looked After Review recording was improved by allowing records of reviews to be recorded without a Pre Meeting report being available. This improvement has taken place in the context of a significant increase in the workload of IRO's across the service. There is a need to continue to monitor the timeliness of Looked After Children Review minutes produced by the IRO Service.

Connected to the footprint of the IRO is the use of Midway Reviews which has helped improve identification of when a change of placement review is required. The distribution of decisions within 5 working days of a review has also improved, but remains an area for further development.



## **9. Qualitative**

As we continue to seek to put the child at the heart of our work IRO's contribution to children's lives and their care planning happens in different ways.

below is an example of how one IRO listened and achieved this.

## SOCIAL WORKER FEEDBACK TO IRO SERVICE MANAGER

*Dear colleagues,*

*XXXs IRO made his day even more special by bring Tess the Dog to his review as promised.*

*XXX asked me to remind the IRO to bring Tess and he did not disappoint. We also facilitated an extra contact session with his parent which happened after the meetings.*

*The IRO's gesture made XXXs day even more special and whilst he was able to check on the quality of the service XXX is receiving, his contribution added to a very nice moment where social work happened as it should.*

### **Participation in Reviews**

Participation of children and young people in their reviews is a priority for all IROs. At year end 2018 – 2019 70% of Children and young people over 4 took part in and contributed to their reviews. This does represent a reduction of 11% from the previous year which is of concern.

There is clear evidence in case recording that IROs are meeting and talking to children and young people before their reviews as well as in between meetings.

Below is an example of an IRO ensuring the participation of a child in their meeting;

*Dear XXX*

*Just note to say thank you for your intervention at XXX Review today. Taking the time to talk in depth about what counselling could do for him, and providing him with an opportunity to begin to think about coming to terms with the loss he has felt .....also to stop feeling responsible for XXX was a great step forward*

It is anticipated that the introduction of the Looked After Children App to enable feedback by children to reviews alongside the alteration of the Looked After Children Review format will address this downward trend and evidence the engagement of children in their Reviews more effectively.

Over the period 2018 – 2019 there has been much discussion within the IRO Service about other ways that we can engage with children and place them at the heart of the Looked After Children Review. Two IROs have been piloting writing letters to children to summarise the child's Looked After Review. Other IROs are beginning to move towards this practice. Examples of other boroughs where this practice is embedded has also been shared with IRO Service with colleagues from a neighbouring borough agreeing to meet with our IRO's to discuss this approach. The anticipated revision of the Looked After Children Review formats in the period 2019 - 2020 will be the point where all IRO's are expected to write letters to children summarising their review which not only improves communication and understanding now, but also in the future as adults looking back on their life story.

There is positive feedback from children, parents and professionals about the use of letters to engage children in their reviews. Parents have noted that they have not always been receiving Looked After Children review minutes and are not always informed, foster carers reflect similar concerns. The observations of a supervising social worker for a foster carer as shared with an IRO are below;

*Thank you XXX*

*I can certainly see the benefits for young people to have all this information in a letter, a proper ending for the young person and a reminder of the professionals that were involved in their care.....More user friendly.*

How others experience Looked After Children Reviews and how we can improve participation and experience is an important area to be considered going forward. At the time of writing the IRO stock take is underway. This involves focus groups with IROs, children, parents, foster carers and colleagues to reflect together about Looked After Children Reviews in Croydon and how we can make these better. Questionnaires have also been sent to all participants of reviews in March 2019 seeking their views.

Groups with children are planned in July 2019. The aim is to provide an agreed action plan from the IRO Stocktake for Young Commissioners to inspect the IRO Service against over the remainder of the year.

### **Dispute resolution and escalation**

A significant aspect of IRO's work is focussed on continuing oversight and scrutiny of each child's care plan in between statutory reviews. For Croydon IROs this part of the role is about good quality conversations and appropriate challenge between the IRO and others (e.g. child/ young person/ social worker/ parent/ carer/ school). This activity is difficult to quantify, but is key to ensuring that plans progress appropriately and in a timely way.

It was recognised as part of the OFSTED oversight that not all the IROs were recording their conversations and emails with social workers and managers on the child's record in CRS. This meant there was limited evidence of challenge and any changes as a result of such challenges were harder to track. At Ofsted's Monitoring

visit in October 2018 it was noted that the IRO's had increased their challenge to colleagues but there was still a need to evidence its impact on outcomes for children.

Using the Croydon Escalation and Resolution process (CERP) relaunched in 2017 - 2018 153 CERPs have been raised by IRO's in relation to 105 children. The difference of 48 relates to where the same CERP has been escalated to successive levels of line management to seek resolution. This is a continued increase in the number of CERPs raised in the previous reporting year. Additionally, IRO's have sought informal advice from CAFCASS on 3 occasions making a formal and informal referral to CAFCASS in 2 of these instances during 2018-2019.

Alerts have been raised by the IRO Service for a wide range of reasons including;

- Drift and delay in securing permanency for a child
- The legal status of a placement, as S20, or as requiring regulation as a connected carers arrangement
- Querying the provision of services to a child to support their health, such as counselling or education, such as extra tuition through the Personal Education Plan, or their social relationships, such as contact or life story work
- The level of need for a child
- A child not being visited, or required reports or care plans not being completed for the Looked After Children Review

Other IRO's have suggested that the use of Midway Reviews reduces the need to use CERP, as the use of these resolve issues prior to reviews.

While the number of CERPs has increased overall, the responsiveness of colleagues to this process remains an issue resulting in escalations to Director level. It is in these scenarios that IRO's have sought advice or intervention from CAFCASS

Staff continue to report that they find the CERP adversarial and experience a CERP being raised as a complaint about their practice. This is not a universal position amongst colleagues but typifies many views.

It is evident that the effectiveness of CERPs in resolving issues for children's care planning is governed by various factors;

- How colleagues receive and respond to IRO's challenge and scrutiny.
- The communication by IRO's prior to using an escalation process.
- How the IRO Service raises these alerts when it is necessary.

The relationships between IRO's and colleagues, how colleagues understand the IRO role, is a significant factor in how able we are able to resolve disputes between our services prior to use of the CERP. This will continue to be addressed in the coming year through our Restorative Practice approach, within the IRO stock take, further sessions with Camden including IRO and team managers, and proposed workshops on a monthly basis for staff to learn about the IRO role.

The IRO Service requires senior management to support the scrutiny and challenge that the IRO role has in quality assuring care plans for children and be responsive to

CERPs when they are raised. Both of the interim heads of service for Care Planning and Children in Care view the relationships between the IRO Service and operational social work teams as critical to drive better oversight and scrutiny of social work practice and have assured the IRO Service Manager of this going forward.

The IRO Service Manager and other quality assurance managers encourages IRO's to resolve disputes at a local and informal level including the use of Midway Reviews before using formal mechanisms such as CERP or referral to CAFCASS.

We also seek to support IRO's to progress CERP's. We participate in issue specific meetings alongside the IRO, sight senior management on the ongoing concerns and where they have not been resolved and discuss how else to communicate IRO views with colleagues to achieve best outcomes.

The management of the service by one overall manager with supervisory support from a colleague does mean that themes are picked up in individual supervision across the service. IROs are pro-active in raising issues with each other and escalating these through their manager.

The thematic reporting by quality assurance managers to senior management had been taking place quarterly to the senior leadership team. With the change of director and executive director including several heads of service (including quality assurance) this reporting mechanism needs to be re-established. The Learning Loop meetings referred to previously in this report may be the most appropriate forum for this.

## 10. Rights and Entitlements of Children and Young People

### **Complaints and Compliments:**

The Complaints leaflet revised in 2017 – 2018 for children and young people is distributed by Looked After Children administrators to all children and carers who receive invites to Looked After Children Reviews.

Several IRO's have empowered children to make complaints in this period and reflect that when these are responded to it can give the young person a strong sense of being heard and respected.

We have been encouraging IROs to recognise and promote good practice where they see it. IRO's praise both social workers practice with children and the quality of their written work and presentation. It is recognised by the IRO Service that we need to continue to support our colleagues not only to see where they can improve practice but where they are already doing well.

It is recognised by the IRO Service Manager that there is a requirement to identify themes or patterns emerging from complaints, compliments, advocacy and the

Independent Visitor Service and the consultation of children, parents, and foster carers to Looked After Children Reviews

### **Independent Visitor Service:**

This internal service was recognised by the OFSTED inspection 2017 as offering a valuable outlet for children and young people in Croydon. There has been substantial investment in this service, there are now 3 full time Independent Visitor Co-Ordinators in post and the service is promoted in Looked After Children Reviews and across the services.

40 new IVs have been recruited and a further 70 IVs trained. As of the end of the reporting year there were 79 children and young people matched with Independent Visitors with 100 children and young people receiving the service through the year.

The team have aspirations to continue to grow their service to children year on year, and currently have the highest number of matched children with IV nationally. The service is a valuable resource for children looked after in Croydon.

### **Advocacy:**

Our Advocacy Service is currently provided by Barnardo's. This service also provides Advocacy to children who are subject to Child Protection Plans. Barnardo's have provided advocacy report to 47 children in the year 2018 – 2019. A broad range of issues have been addressed including;

- Children and young people's wishes and feelings about changes to where they will live-Participation in meetings such as Looked After Children Reviews
- Transition planning for older children and the location of proposed future placements-Savings and entitlements

### **Conclusion:**

There have been significant improvements in the IRO service as evidenced by:

- Maintenance of high levels of reviews being completed on time, with an increasing Looked After population.
- Implementation of Midway Reviews to monitor the progress of care plans
- Commencing writing letters to children as a record of their review
- Improvements in recording and administrative support
- Involvement of children and young people in commissioning the App, interviewing our IRO's and in the IRO Stocktake.

There also remain areas for improvement:

- Improve the involvement of children in their reviews and development of the service
- Evidence impact of IRO involvement and escalation of issues in relation to outcomes for children
- Continue to ensure that IROs practice in a way that provides Challenge and Support

- Better analysis and impact of complaints and compliments

With these areas in mind the action plan for 2019-2020 focusses upon two main themes:

### **Annual Work Plan 2019 – 2020**

#### **Theme 1: To increase participation of children within LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN Reviews and in the strategic delivery of IRO Services**

- Implementation of Looked After Children App across social work services, including health, education and significant partners such as the Refugee Council.
- Completion of IRO stock take and agreed plan reviewed by Youth Commissioners on an ongoing basis
- Revision of Looked After Children Review formats and the implementation of letter writing to children as a summary of their Looked After Children Review

#### **Theme 2: To increase the visibility of the IRO Service, support our colleagues to understand our role, and to build relationships between us that allow high support and high challenge**

- To further embed the success of Midway Reviews as a space in which to improve relationships between our services and achieve better outcomes for children
- For IRO and Team Managers to participate in further workshops with Camden to explore our roles and how to work together better within a Restorative Practice approach
- To deliver monthly workshops to social work staff with the support of Learning and Development to help increase understanding of the IRO role.
- To continue to develop the use of strengthening families, restorative practice, motivational interviewing and systemic practice within the IRO Service through individual and group supervision
- To use key performance indicators to measure the performance of IRO's and Looked After Children admin, to ensure that children, parents, foster carers and other professionals are invited to Looked After Children reviews where required and receive minutes of Looked After Children Reviews.
- To develop analysis of complaints, advocacy, app based consultation to Looked After Children Reviews, and compliments to inform service delivery to looked after children.

Author:

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Report agreed:

Shaun Hanks

Annual Report of Croydon IRO Service 2018-2019

(HOS Safeguarding & QA)

Nick Pendry  
(Director of Early Help and Children's Social Care)



<b>REPORT TO:</b>	<b>CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL (CPP)</b> <b>Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2019</b>
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>SOUTH LONDON COMMISSIONING PROGRAMME (SLCP)</b> <b>UPDATE</b>
<b>LEAD OFFICER:</b>	<b>JENNIFER WADE</b> <b>HEAD OF COMMISSIONING &amp; PROCUREMENT</b>
<b>CABINET MEMBER:</b>	<b>COUNCILLOR ALISA FLEMMING</b> <b>CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN, YOUNG</b> <b>PEOPLE AND LEARNING</b> <b>COUNCILLOR SIMON HALL</b> <b>CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE AND RESOURCES</b>
<b>WARDS:</b>	<b>ALL</b>
<b>CORPORATE PRIORITY/POLICY CONTEXT/AMBITIOUS FOR CROYDON:</b>	
<p>The work undertaken by the South London Commissioning Programme (SLCP) will contribute to a number of Corporate priorities including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children and young people thrive and reach their full potential.</li> <li>• Children and young people are safe, healthy and happy, and aspire to be the best they can be.</li> <li>• Safeguarding children and young people and improve their outcomes.</li> <li>• Good, decent homes ensuring that all people including children have the opportunity to access a suitable home.</li> </ul> <p>The work undertaken by the South London Commissioning Programme (SLCP) will facilitate the realisation of the Council's Equality Strategy objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To improve outcomes for children by providing a better start in life.</li> <li>• To achieve better learning outcomes for Children and Young People (CYP) by narrowing the attainment gap for those who are vulnerable.</li> <li>• To achieve better outcomes for children and young people by increasing the proportion that say they are listened to and able to influence.</li> <li>• To improve support for vulnerable people by making it easier for them to have more choice and control over their lives.</li> </ul>	
<b>FINANCIAL IMPACT</b>	
<p>The approximate annual spend across South London is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Special Educational Needs Independent and Non-Maintained Placements: Approximately £75 million.</li> </ul>	

- Looked After Children Residential and Independent Foster Care Placements: Approximately £90 million.

Across South London there are a large number of high cost placements in these areas and this is resulting in an overspend within LAC and the High Needs budgets. The South London Commissioning Programme has been established to work across borough boundaries and assist member boroughs with achieving efficiency savings as highlighted within this report.

At the end of 2018/19, LAC residential placements in the London Borough of Croydon overspent by £4.62 million against a budget of £2.196 million. There were 37 children in residential placements. This overspend is due to the increasing numbers of children in high cost residential placements.

The base budget in 2019-20 is £3.258 million. This will fund approximately 16 residential placements at an average cost of £4k per week. The current number of residential placements has risen to 40. If the level of placements remain at his level in 2019-20, there will be an overspend of approximately £5.5 million next year.

The London Borough of Croydon currently spends just over £12 million per annum on independent fostering placements. There is scope for the council to decide to use the independent foster care placements lot within the LAC framework to secure these services in the future.

The expenditure on SEND placements to the Non Maintained and Independent School sector in the London Borough of Croydon was £13.9 million in 2017-18.

## **1. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 1.1 The recommendation is for the panel to note the progress that has been made so far in relation to the South London Commissioning Programme (SLCP).

**No decisions from this panel are required.**

**Reasons for urgency:** *N/A*

## **2 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 2.1 The South London Commissioning Programme (SLCP) is an award-winning partnership of 12 Boroughs' (Croydon, Merton, Bromley, Bexley, Sutton, Wandsworth, Lewisham, Greenwich, Kingston and Richmond, Lambeth & Southwark). The Programme was established by Croydon Council to collaborate on the strategic commissioning of good quality placements for children and young people with Special Educational Needs & Disabilities and for those who are Looked After.

- 2.2 The SLCP vision is:

“Together we will provide the opportunity for children and young people to reach their potential in a safe, caring & secure environment”

2.3 The SLCP is hosted by the London Borough of Croydon and currently has two active projects.

- Special Educational Needs & Disabilities (SEND) for the Independent School Sector (10 boroughs).
- Looked After Children (LAC) in residential or independent foster care provision (8 boroughs).

2.4 The total spend across all participating boroughs is approximately £165 million per annum. Since being formed in 2014, the SLCP has saved over £2 million for the partnered Boroughs as a result of joint working on the SEND project. Further savings are anticipated as the projects develop.

2.5 The aim of the Programme is to develop regional commissioning models which operate at sufficient size to provide economies of scale and a varied range of placement options. This approach seeks to achieve the following outcomes;

- Increased placement stability;
- Children matched to the right placements to meet their needs;
- Increase in high quality places for children and young people;
- Improved management of data and enhanced planning;
- Reduced use of spot purchasing;
- Opportunities to shape the market to deliver outcomes;
- Value for money for local authorities.

2.6 The SLCP will achieve this vision by working in partnership to secure high quality services that are needs-led, best value and deliver positive outcomes to children and young people.

2.7 The SLCP secured DFE Innovation Fund funding in 2017 for the development of an outcomes-based commissioning model for LAC residential care and independent fostering agencies. Following the development of this project, the tender for the joint procurement of these services is planned to be published in March 2020.

2.8 This report is intended to provide the panel with an update in relation to the next steps and future intentions of the South London Commissioning Programme.

### **3 PROGRAMME UPDATE**

#### **3.1 Programme Development:**

3.1.1 The South London Commissioning Programme was established in 2014 by Croydon Council. What started as a partnership between four South London Boroughs has expanded to include twelve local authorities.

3.1.2 The partnership works across borough boundaries to improve outcomes for:

- **Looked After Children (LAC)** – through the commissioning of residential care and foster care placements across Croydon, Bexley, Greenwich, Lambeth, Lewisham, Merton, Southwark and Sutton;
- **Children and Young People with Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND)** – through the commissioning of independent and non-maintained provision across Bexley, Bromley, Croydon, Greenwich, Kingston, Lewisham, Merton, Richmond, Sutton and Wandsworth.

3.1.3 These services represent a combined commissioning spend of approximately £165 million per annum.

## **3.2 Achievements to Date:**

3.2.1 To date, the SLCP has delivered significant benefits for member authorities. As a result of having a joint approach to managing annual fee increases the member boroughs have saved over £2 million from the SEND project, with further revenue savings projected.

3.2.2 On average, partner boroughs have received a return on investment of over 1,700% based upon their annual partnership contribution (through the SEND commissioning work).

3.2.3 The SLCP has been successful in securing over £1.7 million of grant funding to jointly implement an integrated commissioning solution for SEN and later an integrated commissioning solution for LAC on behalf of the boroughs.

3.2.4 In 2016, the SLCP established the first multi-borough dynamic purchasing system for the commissioning of independent and non-maintained placements for children and young people with SEN. This has enabled the boroughs to achieve improved prices and economies of scale when securing placements in the independent and non-maintained sector.

3.2.5 In December 2016, the DCS's in 6 of the 12 boroughs (London Boroughs of Merton, Croydon, Sutton, Bexley, Lewisham and Royal Borough of Greenwich) determined to work collaboratively to improve outcomes for looked after children and young people (LAC). They agreed to jointly implement an outcomes-based commissioning model for LAC residential care and independent fostering agencies. As part of this agreement, each borough has committed to:

- An investment of £30,000 per year.
- Providing suitable representatives from their boroughs for the Board (strategic level governance) and Operational Group (operational level governance) to develop and implement the model.

- Submitting a joint proposal to the DfE Social Care Innovation Programme to enable us to establish a blue print for sustainable sub-regional commissioning arrangements for LAC that is scalable across the country.

3.2.6 The key priorities within the successful DfE Innovation Fund bid were as follows:

- Development of a sub-regional outcomes-based commissioning approach;
- Build the capabilities of providers to encourage innovation within the market;
- To maximise our purchasing power to make efficiency savings and securing more choice of good quality placements;
- Analysis our collective data to identify trends, understand demand, review and develop a strategic sub-regional approach to sufficiency planning (such as dynamic purchasing, block contracting or cost and volume arrangements) to address the findings;
- Jointly manage and shape the market to encourage new providers to set up services that meet the needs of children and young people.
- Ensure children are safe at all times, progressing well, and being prepared for adulthood;
- Establish the culture change and environment necessary to implement an alternative way of working; and
- Develop a blueprint for sub-regional commissioning which is scalable across the country.

3.2.7 Lambeth and Sutton subsequently decided to join this initiative bringing the total number of participating boroughs to eight.

3.2.8 The aim of the LAC framework is to develop the sub-regional commissioning model which operates at sufficient size to provide economies of scale and a varied range of placement options. This approach seeks to achieve the following outcomes:

- Increased placement stability;
- Children matched to the right placements to meet their needs;
- Opportunities to shape the market to deliver outcomes;
- Positive interventions for LAC through innovative joint projects; and
- Value for money for local authorities.

3.2.9 The SLCP are actively engaging with stakeholders. A recent provider event attracted 134 providers. To ensure that children and young people input into project development and delivery, meetings have been arranged with the Children in Care Councils in each borough. Project reference groups have been set up by youth engagement teams across South London.

3.2.10 The partnership has made significant progress in improving the relationship with the market and shifting attitudes towards local authorities as customers.

3.2.11 By sharing provider intelligence across boroughs, we have confidence in the quality of the provision where our children and young people are placed.

### **3.3 Progress**

3.3.1 Following the success of the SEND commissioning work, a business case for the LAC project was agreed by the members of the SLCP to include the commissioning of Children’s Residential Care and Fostering.

3.3.2 A formal partnership is now in place with Link Maker who will work in partnership with the Programme to develop and host the IT platform that will assist with the management of the Integrated Commissioning Solution. This will enable the Partnership to develop the data set that will allow for the effective stimulation of the market. This should result in innovative solutions to the challenges we face, in terms of addressing gaps in provision, promoting high quality placements, and encouraging investment by providers and SLC members.

Deliverable	Progress
Implement outcomes-based commissioning approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Draft outcomes framework has been developed in partnership with providers (includes measurable KPI’s to track impact).</li> <li>• Process of developing the Individual Child Agreement that will incorporate outcomes &amp; measurements.</li> <li>• Established partnership with NAFP and ICHA (Fostering &amp; Residential) to assist in the further development of the outcomes framework.</li> </ul>
Engage the sector with one voice – market engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hosted 5 provider events (109 providers in attendance 22<sup>nd</sup> May).</li> <li>• Bi-weekly working groups to develop the ICS.</li> <li>• Contacted the Children in Care Council CiCC in each Borough &amp; established an engagement strategy with children and young people.</li> <li>• Establishing bi-weekly CYP Reference Groups in each Borough (Croydon &amp; Bexley established).</li> </ul>
Develop a joint sufficiency strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Needs Analysis completed for LAC &amp; SEND.</li> <li>• Baseline provider costs are now known for existing placements across South London.</li> </ul>
Implement an integrated commissioning solution (ICS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ICS developed and shared with member boroughs.</li> <li>• Options appraisal to identify on-line IT provider.</li> <li>• Formed a partnership with Link Maker.</li> <li>• Developing &amp; testing the IT platform (Southwark).</li> <li>• Options appraisal DPS or framework completed.</li> </ul>
Streamline QA & contract management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• QA post established.</li> <li>• Draft contract management framework being finalised.</li> </ul>
Ensure sustainability & consider opportunities to scale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Options Appraisal submitted to SEND &amp; LAC Board for sustainability.</li> <li>• Link Maker will be available to up-scale across UK (cost to Boroughs for full package 4k).</li> </ul>

## 4 CONSULTATION

- 4.1 Operational leads and service representatives from all participating boroughs have regular opportunities to influence SLCP development and delivery of agreed work streams.
- 4.2 SLCP engages with the market in relation to project progress and next steps in order to strengthen the position as a strong buyer and partner. The most recent event took place on 22 May 2019 where 134 suppliers were in attendance. Feedback received was positive.
- 4.3 A series of child and young people events have been undertaken by the SLCP's engagement support officer. Children and young people will be engaged to influence the development of referral forms and the IT platform.
- 4.4 Young people have reported feeling listened to and that engagement approaches have been friendly. Continued and sustained engagement will be maintained to capture feedback and input of CYP.

## 5 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF ESTABLISHING A FRAMEWORK

### 5.1 Revenue and Capital Projections

- 5.1.1. The table below sets out which provision participating boroughs have signed up to and the estimated annual spend for Residential and Fostering that is expected via the development of the framework.

Service Area	Estimated Annual Spend
Residential Care Provision	£50,264,202
Independent Fostering Agency Provision	£39,517,659

N.B. LB Croydon annual spend figures are for 2018-19. All other boroughs are 2017-18.

### 5.2 Risks

- 5.2.1 The LAC project is now in phase 3 – Development of the procurement documentation. This work is being completed in partnership with the member boroughs.
- 5.2.2 The current risks are highlighted in the table below:

Risk Category	Description	Risk Rating	Mitigation
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Service Delivery	Disruption to service provision as a result of procurement exercise	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Existing placement arrangements will be maintained.</li> </ul>
Meeting Timescales	Failure to meet the deadlines for approvals, publication of tender, and service commencement.	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continued engagement with LAC board members, operational and service leads.</li> <li>Project plan with key dates, resource requirements and procurement strategy shared with member boroughs.</li> </ul>
Framework Design	Framework does not address specific needs of all eight boroughs.	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engagement with contracting authorities to understand specific needs and demand.</li> <li>Representatives of participating boroughs involved in service design and development.</li> <li>Standardisation of documents/templates to improve effectiveness of Framework.</li> </ul>
Legal	Design of Framework not compliant with PCRs	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ongoing legal involvement to ensure processes comply with PCR 2015.</li> <li>Care taken to ensure that PCR 2015 LTR mandatory requirements are adhered to in procuring a 'pseudo' type of framework.</li> <li>Tender documentation will set out how the framework re-fresh will be handled.</li> </ul>
Data Protection	Issues regarding the way data is shared between the Council and the Contractor.	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A Data Protection Impact Assessment is completed and will be reviewed regularly.</li> <li>Each borough will sign up to a data sharing agreement, ensuring all data is processed in accordance with Data Protection Legislation.</li> </ul>
Market Capability	Suppliers, especially SMEs and the voluntary sector, experience difficulties in participating in the bidding process	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Extensive engagement has been undertaken with providers.</li> <li>Additional market event will be held before the tender goes live.</li> <li>Tender process will include clarification window for bidders to ask questions.</li> <li>Helpline established to respond to queries during the tender.</li> </ul>



Framework Providers	Insufficient number of providers awarded to Framework	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Re-open Framework periodically to admit new entrants to the framework.</li> <li>• Extensive early market engagement being undertaken.</li> </ul>
Contractual Obligation	Providers unable to meet contractual obligation	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure potential providers meet the standard requirements in relation to their technical and financial capability.</li> </ul>
Contract Management	Objectives and outcomes of Framework not realised due to poor contract management.	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Robust referral process and contract management protocols will be implemented to maximise the benefits identified.</li> </ul>
Financial Risk	Failure to achieve proposed cost benefits due to reduced competition among Framework providers and poor contract management.	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Refresh Framework periodically to maintain competition among suppliers.</li> <li>• Robust referral process and contract management to maximise the benefits identified.</li> <li>• Engagement with participating boroughs to ensure commitment to use the Framework.</li> <li>• Encourage placement teams to exhaust placement opportunities with Framework providers before using spot purchasing.</li> </ul>
Financial Risk	An increase in Looked After Children (LAC) numbers and therefore costs - due to increasing demand pressures mirroring national trends	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Market development and capacity building using innovative solutions.</li> <li>• Re-open Framework periodically to admit new entrants to the market.</li> </ul>

### 5.3 Future Savings/Efficiencies

5.3.1 The following efficiency savings are expected as a result of joint working via the SLCP:

- Better value for money through economies of scale with twelve London boroughs.
- Reduction in the number of procedures the contracting authorities have to run, therefore decreasing the time and costs linked to carrying out procurement.
- A more streamlined, standardised and efficient referral process.
- A reduction in the number of spot purchases made by participating boroughs.
- The original business case assumed that between 5%-8% savings on current spend can be achieved

## **6 DELIVERING THE NEW FRAMEWORK**

### **6.1 Commissioning Solutions:**

6.1.1 The single new framework is likely to be divided into 3 lots (subject to final agreement from our partner boroughs and the SLCP LAC Project Board):

1. Residential LAC Placements.
2. Independent Fostering Agencies.
3. Positive Interventions Through Innovation.

6.1.2 The first two lots will be attractive to existing and new providers from a wide geographical area. There is a high level of potential business for good quality providers that are admitted to the framework.

6.1.3 Increased levels of support should benefit providers and service users, leading to improvements in placement stability. There will be improved management and sharing of information to assist with placement planning in the wider geographical area.

6.1.4 The third lot reflects opportunities to stimulate and shape the market. This will allow member boroughs to collaboratively invest in market provision to benefit children and young people. Innovation may include;

- Tackling gaps in the market to create new provision.
- Encouraging providers to respond quickly to the needs of our children and young people.
- Investment in new premises to increase capacity.

6.1.5 The proposed length of the framework is eight years (4 years + 2 years + 2 years). This long duration for the framework will give providers a high degree of security, leading to investment in the service offer and a strong focus on raising the quality of the service offered.

6.1.6 SLCP will work closely with teams in all member boroughs to develop the framework, shape the market, and deliver outcomes for service users. This will be a continuous process linked to robust performance and contract management. It is intended that this collaborative model of commissioning will result in improved quality for service users, greater stability for providers, and significant cost savings for the member borough.

### **6.2 Ensuring the Quality of Providers**

6.2.1 The SLCP will engage and work collaboratively with providers to further develop the social care outcomes framework and improve service delivery.

We will look to embed a good practice agreement with all providers. This will be enhanced on a regular basis.

- 6.2.2 We will organise regular good practice seminars and workshops through the provider forum. These events will focus on local and national good practice, developing shared resources, and establishing innovative projects as part of Lot 3 – Positive Interventions Through Innovation.
- 6.2.3 A performance monitoring schedule will specify performance indicators linked to the outcomes framework. This is being developed with member boroughs and providers and will set out KPIs and performance expectations.
- 6.2.4 The SLCP will look for opportunities for high quality providers to expand provision to meet gaps in the market. The framework will provide the stability and needs analysis data to give providers and commissioners the confidence to invest in new and expanded services.
- 6.2.5 There will also be a strong focus on social value with all providers required to develop a social value action plan. We will seek to create excellent practice in this area by using the resources of the member boroughs and our links to local organisations.

### **6.3 Next steps:**

- Procurement of a Light Touch Framework to go live in March 2020.
- Further development of the IT Platform (standardised referral form, provider information, children and young people tool for engagement).
- Complete outcomes framework in partnership with participating boroughs.
- Start work on a Therapeutic Support Framework.
- Analysis Borough Management Information Systems.
- Produce market statement from gaps identified via data base (pipeline).
- Up-scale the IT Platform across boroughs.
- Increase the scope of the SEND project to include a joint approach to managing the Further Education sector.
- Develop and implement the quality assurance process for SEND.

## 6.4 Procurement Timeline

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Proposed Date</b>
Commissioning Intentions RP2 Report: LBC Commissioning and Contract Board Approval	11 July 2019
LBC Cabinet Delegated Approval	August 2019
Final specification agreed & tender documentation approved by LAC Board	End August 2019
OJEU Contract Notice dispatched	7 October 2019
Advertisement published	7 October 2019
Issue Invitation to Tender	7 October 2019
Expressions of interest deadline	11 November 2019
Tender return deadline	11 November 2019
Tender evaluation	November 2019 and December 2019
Tender Award Report RP3 Commissioning and Contract Board	16 January 2019
Cabinet meeting	24 February 2020
Contract award	6 March 2020
Contract commencement	March 2020
OJEU Contract Award Notice dispatch	March 2020

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for children and young people in Croydon

#bethechangecroydon

# CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND EDUCATION

## Corporate Parenting Annual Report

### 2018 - 2019



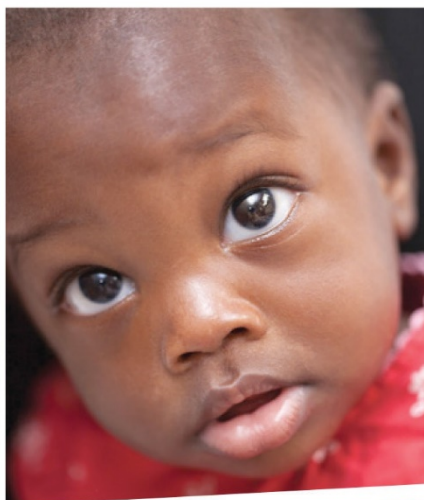
OUR DESTINATION



OUR PRINCIPLES



OUR PRACTICE  
FRAMEWORK



Delivering for Croydon

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## Contents

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## **1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the achievement, progress and challenges in meeting the needs of Croydon's Children looked after and care leavers in 2018/2019 who are placed in borough and outside the borough.
- 1.2 There is a statutory requirement to provide information on a number of areas that relate to the improvement of outcomes for Children looked after and care leavers

## **2. Key legislative and policy framework**

- 2.1 The statutory guidance on the roles and responsibilities of the Director of Children's Services (in Croydon this is the Executive Director, Children, Families and Education) and the Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Learning, states that the Council has a responsibility to act as an effective and caring corporate parent for all children looked after and care leavers. There is a strong emphasis on improving educational attainment, providing stable and high quality placements and proper planning for when young people leave care. The Council takes its responsibility for Children looked after and care leavers very seriously and closely monitors the services provided to these young people to ensure that all Children looked after and care leavers are safe, healthy and happy and aspire to be the best they can be.
- 2.2 The term 'Child Looked after' refers to any child or young person for whom the local authority has, or shares, parental responsibility, or for whom care and accommodation is provided on behalf of their parent/s. The term "child" can refer to any child or young person aged 0 to 18 years. The Council also has a duty and responsibility to those young people who leave their long-term care from the age of 16 years until they reach the age of 25 years.

## **3. Corporate Parenting Panel**

- 3.1 A cross-party Croydon Corporate Parenting Panel of elected members, looked after young people, foster carers and cross council senior officers has been in place since 2007. The Board provides governance and challenge to ensure that outcomes for Children looked after continue to improve via regular Panel meetings throughout the year, meeting with young people to hear directly from them their views and experiences of service offered.

3.2 The priorities for the Panel for 2019/20 are currently being reviewed but in 2018/19 the Panel discussed the following topics:

- Increasing the staying put allowance for foster carers
- Engagement and achievement
- Children and Social Work Act 2017 and the seven corporate parenting principles
- Reviews of the Fostering Service, fostering allowances, fostering action plan, recruitment and registration of foster carers
- Fostering and Adoption Statement of Purpose 2019-2020
- Placement stability and sufficiency
- Health of Looked after children
- Educational employment and training (EET)
- Annual report of the virtual school
- Performance reports

3.3. The chair and elected members of the Panel have been invited to events such as the children looked after and care leavers annual Achievement (STAR) Awards ceremony to support children looked after and young people celebrate their personal and academic achievements and the Foster Carers Award. Given the success of these events there is a commitment to make them annual. These events have provided an opportunity for the chair and the members of the panel to engage directly with children, young people, foster carers, staff and partners and listen to their feedback and views which will inform improvements to our services for children looked after and care leavers.

#### 4. **Children looked after: demographics, health and education**

4.1 Overall there has been a slight increase in the total numbers of Children looked after (CLA) in Croydon since April 2018. In April 2019 836 children were looked after at any one time compared with 789 the previous year.

4.2 There has been a more significant change in the proportion of Local CLA compared to UASC. In April 2017 49% of the total CLA population were Unaccompanied and Asylum Seeking Children (UASC), in April 2018 this figure had dropped to 39% and by April 2019 this number has fallen further to 33%. There has been a steady increase in the number of Local CLA following the Ofsted Inspection in July 2017. In April 2018 61% (482) of the total Child Looked After population were Local CLA this has risen to 67% (561).

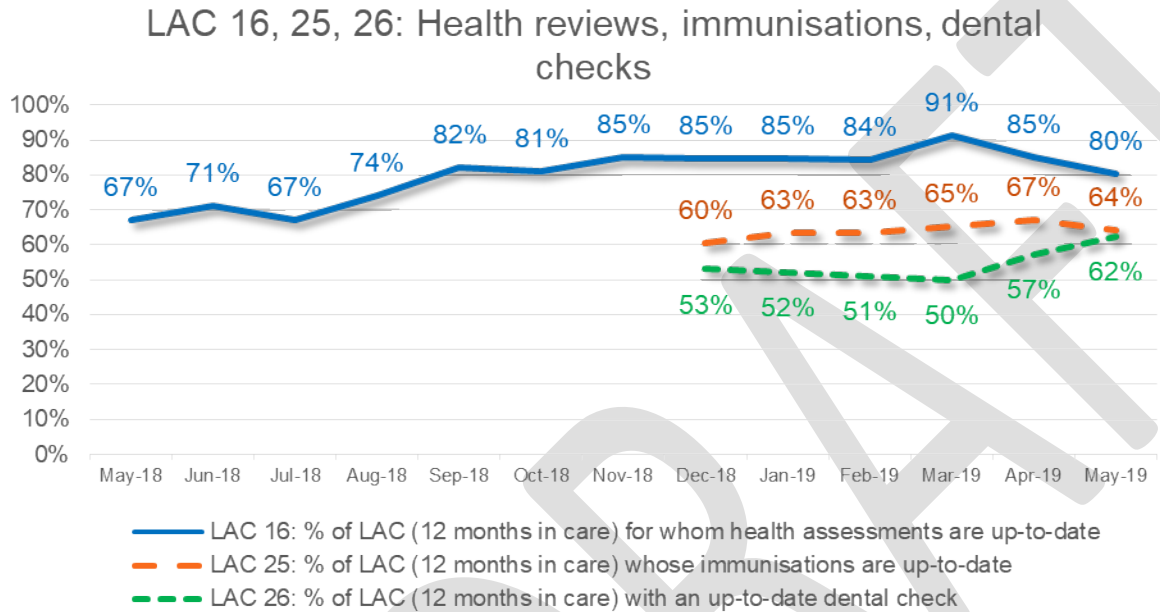


- 4.3 Between April 2018 and April 2019 the average number of children coming into Croydon's care each month was 41. In April 2019, Croydon had 88 Children Looked After per 10,000 population. This is significantly above the historical average of 64 nationally and 44 for London and makes Croydon an outlier amongst our statistical neighbours. After excluding UASC, Croydon had 59 Children Looked After per 10,000 population, a position relative to its statistical neighbours but still above London averages. Croydon's statistical neighbours fall into two tiers, with Merton (33) to Waltham Forest (44) in the lowest tier, and Lambeth (65) to Greenwich (72) in the higher tier.
- 4.4 **Age and gender:** Approximately 72% of Croydon's Children looked after are over the age of 11 with 41% being over the age of 16. There are no UASC children under the age of 12. 66% of Croydon's Children looked after are male with 45% of the male population being UASC. Excluding UASC the proportion of males to females is 54:46.
- 4.5 **Ethnicity:** 35% of Local Children looked after are White British, 31% of Local CLA are from a Black background, 20% of Local CLA are from a mixed background.
- 4.6 **Placement:** 57% of the children in our care are placed within the LA boundary and the average distance from the home of children placed outside of the LA Boundary is 40.6 miles. The majority of Children Looked After are placed in the north and northwest of the borough with a pocket of children in New Addington (information as of December 2018).
- 4.7 **Reasons for coming into care:** 64% of Local children looked after (CLA) are in care as a result of "Abuse and Neglect", with 126 Local children entering care in the last six months for this reason.
- 4.8 **Length of time in care:** 7% (59 children) have been in Care for longer than 5 years with only 5 of those being UASC, 25% (208 children) have been in care for longer than 2 years with 36% of those children being UASC.
- 4.9 **Admissions to care in the last 6 months:** There have been 319 children (39% of the total CLA population) taken into care in within the last 6 months and 228 of these are over the age of 11. This demonstrates that the CLA population is transient and that a significant number of children enter care as teenagers.
- 4.10 **Type of placement:** 81% (667) of Croydon's CLA are currently in Foster Care with 51% (421) placed with Long Term Foster Carers. 15% of UASC are in Independent Living placements, 2.3% (19) children are in placements with a view to the outcome being Adoption. The percentage of Children Looked After with 3 or placements during the year has remained low all year and as of April 2019 remains at 8%.

- 4.11 **Children missing from care:** Nearly 60% of CLA with a missing episode are local children looked after. 140 (37%) of the children who went missing were children looked after placed in Croydon. Local children looked after are twice as likely to go missing as UASC.
- 4.12 **Involvement with Youth Offending Service:** There are 29 children looked after currently working with the Youth Offending Service. 55% are from Black backgrounds, this group is overrepresented compared to the wider children looked after population and of these 75% are local children looked after.
5. **Care Leavers: Demographic profile, health and education**
- 5.1 As of March 2019, there were 779 individuals in Croydon's care leaver population, which has seen a steady increase over the last year. The rise has been mostly unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) (up 81 since April 2018) rather than non-UASC (up only nine since April 2018). Of current care leavers, 494 (63%) are UASC, 285 are non-UASC. There is a pronounced gender split among the care leaver group, with 577 males (74%) and only 202 (26%) females. This gender split is even more pronounced among the UASC population, with 85% males (419) and only 15% females (75). The gender split is much more even among the non-UASC cohort, with 55% males (158), 45% females (127).
- 5.2 **Age and ethnicity:** The majority of Croydon's care leavers are aged 18 – 21. Among Croydon's non-UASC cohort, numbers stay fairly flat across this 18-21 age band, while numbers in the UASC group fall off quickly from age 18 onwards. In terms of ethnicity, among the non-UASC group the largest proportion are black (44%), followed by white (32%), then mixed (13%), with Asian making up less than one-in-ten (8%). By contrast, in the UASC group, Asian is the most populous ethnicity (35%), followed by white (26%) then black (24%).
- 5.3 **Age care leaver became looked after:** Of Croydon's 779 current care leavers, only 106 (14% of the cohort) were first looked after before the age of 13. The vast majority (673, 86%) were first looked after at age 13 or older, peaking at age 15 (284, 36%). This age profile is most pronounced among UASC care leavers with only 5% (24) of the 494 current care leavers being looked after before age 13, and 15 being by far the most common age (227, 46%). The age profile of non-UASC care leavers is different, with almost all of the under-13s (still only 82, 29% of the 285-strong non-UASC cohort), and a much flatter peak at age 15 (57, 20%)

- 5.4 **Education:** Of Croydon's care leaver population, 66% (518) are in either full time (58%, 456) or part time (8%, 62) education, employment or training. The remaining 36% (267) is made up of 28% (222) who are NEET and 6% (45) for whom we don't know their current status. The UASC part of the cohort have higher EET rates (72% overall, 65% full time, 7% part time) and lower NEET (20%). The non-UASC group have lower EET rates (only 55% overall, 45% full time, 10% part time) and much higher NEET (43%).
- 5.5 **Placement stability:** The vast majority (570, 73%) of Croydon's care leavers are now in accommodation classed as Independent Living, predominantly Private Tenancies and Landlord Bond Schemes. Around 6% (46) are living with their former foster carers ("staying put"), a figure that has been broadly stable since August 2018, prior to which it rose from 4% (27) in April 2018. Of Croydon's 779 care leavers, we know that 441 (57%) are still living within the borough and 257 (33%) are residing outside the borough.
- 5.6 **Care Leavers as parents:** Of Croydon's 779 care leavers, 66 (8%) left care as parents. Of those 66, 30 (45%) have parental responsibility for their child/all of their children. A further three (5%) have multiple children, but do not have parental responsibility for all of them. The remaining 33 care leavers who left care as a parent (50%) do not have parental responsibility for their child/children. Only 14 (21%) of the care leavers who left care as a parent were UASC, a much lower proportion than the 63% of all care leavers who were UASC.
- 5.7 **Care Leavers known to the Youth Offending Service (YOS):** Of Croydon's 779 care leavers, 99 (13%) were known to the YOS since 1/6/14. Sixty five were non-UASC, which represents 23% of the non-UASC care leaver cohort. Only 34 of the care leavers were UASC, just 7% of the UASC care leaver cohort. Considering only the 99 care leavers who were known to YOS since 1/6/14, one third were UASC, two thirds were non-UASC. This is in stark contrast to the overall care leaver cohort, which is almost two thirds UASC and just over one third non-UASC. In short, non-UASC care leavers are more than three times more likely to have been known to YOS than UASC care leavers.
6. **Health**
- 6.1 Delivering timely initial health assessments for our children looked after has been a challenge historically, so in autumn 2018 an internal lean process review was commissioned to look at reasons for this. The review led to a set of recommendations for improvement supported by a detailed multi-agency action plan articulating the key actions required to improve performance not only for initial health assessments and review health assessments but also dentals, immunisations and strengths and difficulties questionnaires. The action plan is regularly reviewed and performance challenged at the bi monthly, multi- agency Children in Care Health Strategic and monthly Operational groups and is focused on promoting timely health interventions.

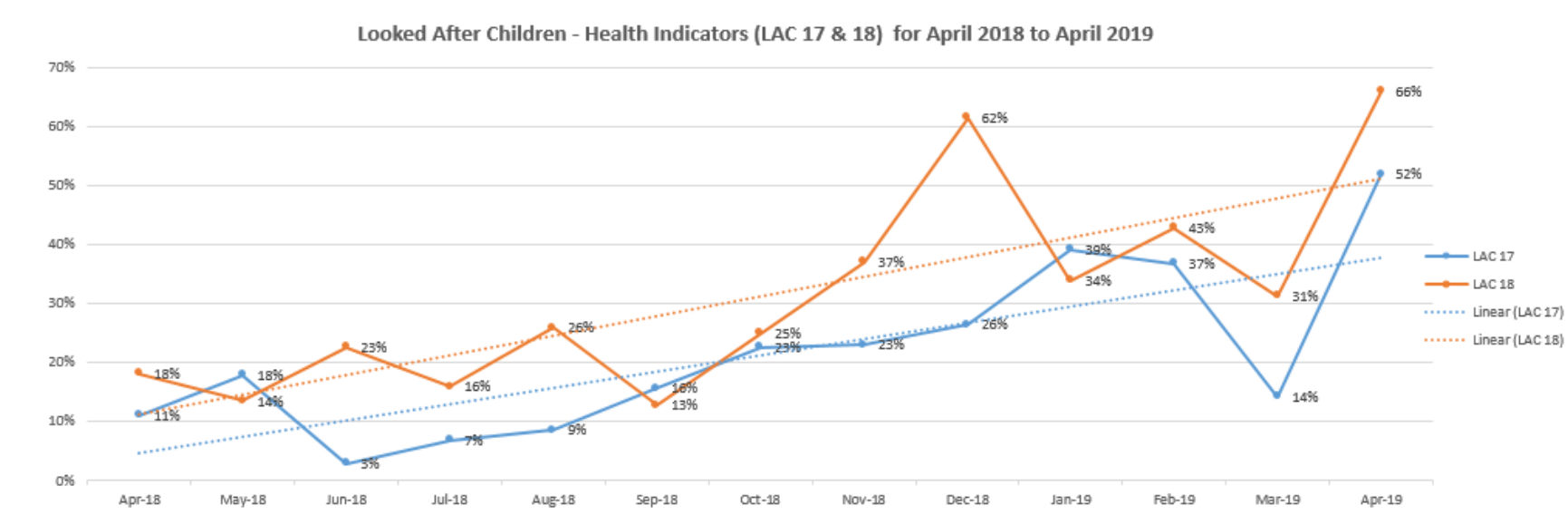
6.2 The graph below outlines current performance on a number of key health indicators.



6.3 The line graph on below shows our performance against two key performance health indicators for children looked after:

1. % initial health assessments requested for health service within 3 working days of date child become looked after (LAC 17); and
2. % initial health assessments delivered within 20 working days of date child became looked after (LAC 18)

6.4 Performance against these indicators has improved since April 2019 from a low base and it is acknowledged that further attention is required in this area ensuring that recording on the system happens in a more timely way to provide a more accurate and up to date picture of performance. A multi-agency Children Looked After Operational Health Group has been set up and has been meeting on a monthly basis since March 2019 to tackle blockages to the delivery of timely health assessments.

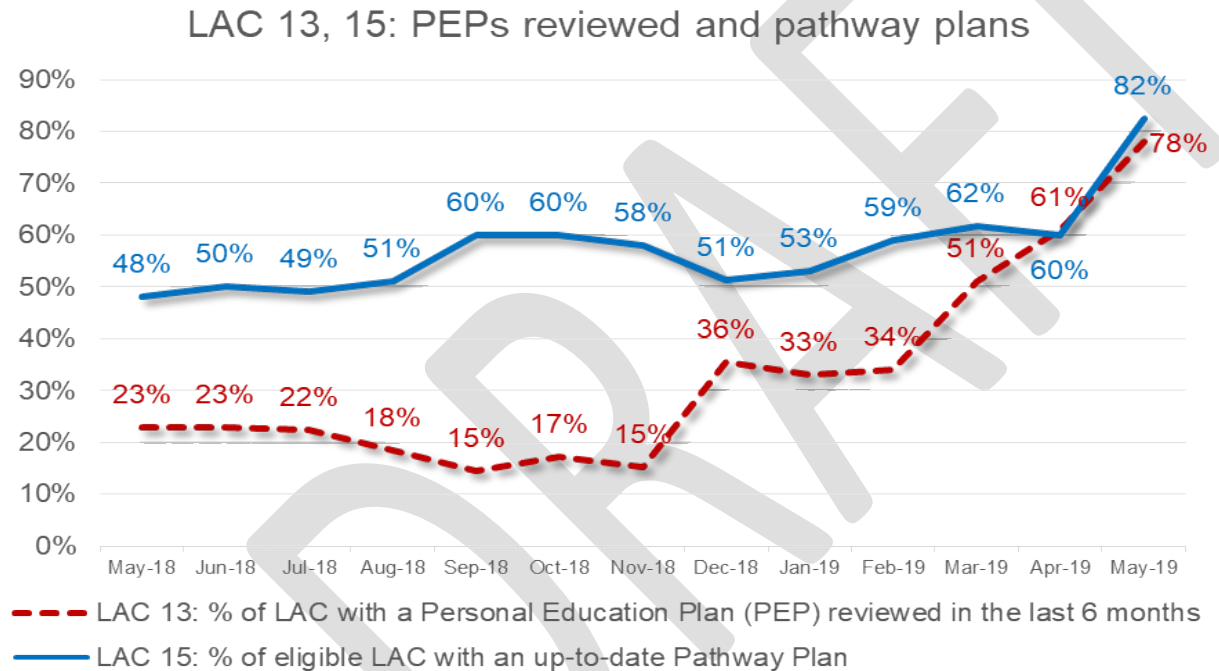


- 6.5 A recent analysis of strengths and difficulties questionnaires (SDQs) of 55 children looked after found that 64% children had low total difficulty score, 7% had a medium score 29% had a high difficulty score. A high difficulty score indicates where additional support may be needed (e.g. CAMHS). Of the sample reviewed, UASC children young people had significantly lower scores than local CLA. There is an annual requirement for Children's Social Care to assess the emotional and wellbeing needs of our children in care through an SDQ. At the end of March 2019 69% were completed in a timely way. In May 2019 this had risen to 82%. A refreshed approach to undertaking SDQs will be launched in July 2019 and we will be analysing closely the impact of new ways of working, in particular, the services and support identified children are offered.
- 6.6 In 2017/18 CAMHS received 101 referrals for children looked after, 90% of which were accepted, this was around 11% of the total CLA population (research suggests that rate of mental ill health among CLA is typically 50%) CAMHS operate a priority service for children in care. They offer weekly consultation sessions for social workers who are concerned about the emotional health and wellbeing of the children they are supporting and guide them on the best approach to take. Awareness raising of the CAMHS support offer is currently taking place.

## 7. Education of children in care

- 7.1 **Schools:** There are 548 pupils of statutory school age (May '19). 27 children currently have no school place (and 20 attend our UASC provision-May '19). 55% attend school in Croydon and 45% outside (May '19). 6% attend special schools (May '19),
- 7.2 **Special educational needs and disabilities:** 41% of CLA of stat school age have a recorded special educational need or disability, compared to national average of 14.6%. 88 (16%) school age pupils recorded as having an EHCP for special educational needs (national average is 2.9%).
- 7.3 **School stage:** There are 24 children of nursery age, 155 of primary age, 370 of secondary age and 393 post 16 (June 2019). 81% of school age children attend 'good' or 'outstanding' OFSTED schools' in May 19.
- 7.4 **Attendance and exclusions:** 91.4% cumulative attendance of children in care of statutory school age (June 2019). Persistent absence rates are high in 2019 at 19% and 34% at post-16. In 2017-18 there were no reported permanent exclusions for statutory school age children in care
- 7.5 **Educational Attainment**
- 7.6 **Year 1:** 50% children received expected standard in phonics screening check (compared to 85% for all Croydon children, 82% all children nationally and 41% CLA nationally)
- 7.7 **Key Stage 1:** 60% of CLA achieved combined expected standards in reading, writing and maths (compared to 75% all children nationally and 41% CLA nationally)
- 7.8 **Key Stage 2:** 55% of children achieved combined expected standards in reading, writing and maths (compared to 66% for all Croydon children, 64% nationally and 34% CLA nationally)
- 7.9 **Key Stage 4:** 7% of children achieved levels 4-9 in English and Maths (compared to 63% for all Croydon children, 59% all children nationally and 19% CLA nationally)
- 7.10 **Key Stage 5:** 50% of children achieved 1 or more A\*-C's at A-level (compared to 77.4% national)

7.11 Personal educational plans (PEPs) and pathway plans



7.12 The number of completed PEPs continues to improve from a low base, all children with an outstanding PEP are now tracked by a key worker and have an action plan for completion. A permanent Head of the Virtual School has been appointed who is overseeing improvements within the service. All social work teams now receive outstanding PEP data on the weekly performance snapshot. In addition to this, designated teachers have been given additional training, culminating in the service achieving its highest performance in the past 13 months at 82% (June 2019).

## 8. Feedback from children and young people in our care

8.1 The comments below were taken from an engagement session with our Children in Care Council (Empire) on 6 Nov 2018. The Council has more work to do to develop this forum and improve its links with the service to ensure that feedback from children and young people in our care is used to drive service improvement, measure impact and to develop forums to engage care leavers more effectively.

### What's working well ...

*"Getting to see my family"*

*"My Social Worker is very helpful and listens to me and actually takes in what I say and try's to help me"*

*"Most of the plans they've made in my review are working as planned"*

*"I can state my views and ideas and be listened to"*

### What's not working well ...

*"I want to go back home and I hate being in care"*

*"Not always able to challenge decisions made for me"*

*"They don't talk to you and take too long. They don't keep me in the loop and keep information from me"*

*"More help with my school"*

### Suggestions...

*"Explain things to me in more detail"*

*"Talk about the things I can fix now so it makes life better in the future"*

*"I would like to see my Social Worker more often"*

*"I would like to stay at my friends house"*



## 9. Key achievements

- 9.1 **Getting basics right:** We are continuing to improve the timeliness of core social work tasks. There has been a steady improvement in a number of key Children Looked After indicators including; timely visits which now stand at 95%, timely CLA reviews at 88% (up from 66% in April 2018). 89% of care leavers have an up to date pathway plan (up from 74% in April 2019). Improvement in performance indicators around health and education are from a low base and it is acknowledged that, although recent figures are encouraging, there is more to do here to sustain performance and improve the quality and timeliness of PEPs and health assessments. Partnership working and communication is improving amongst health, foster carers, Children's Social Care and the Virtual School. It is expected that this will help drive forward improved ways of working to deliver key health services for children and young people in our care. We have identified two CSC Children in Care 'Health champions' who working with our co-located health team and social work teams are promoting the health and wellbeing of children who have not received timely health interventions. Other encouraging indicators are set out below:
- 9.2 **Proximity to home:** 84% of children are placed less than 20 miles from home (compared with 74% national average)
- 9.3 **Post 16:** 65% of care leavers in employment, education, or training (EET) on their 17th to 21st Birthday (compared with 50% national average)
- 9.4 **Accommodation:** 90% of care leavers in suitable accommodation on their 17th to 21st Birthday (compared with 84% national average)
- 9.5 **[A Local Offer for Care Leavers](#):** was published in September 2018. Its aim is to give care leavers an understanding of the services they can expect from the council. The need for a Local Offer arises from the introduction of the Children and Social Work Act 2017 which directs councils publish information about the services they provide. In Croydon, we believe that our published Local Offer should go beyond our legal requirement and should, rather, be a more comprehensive document giving a detailed overview of exactly what we offer, how we will deliver it, as well as other information about services for care leavers provided by others. The information in our local offer will need to be reviewed and updated regularly if it is to be of benefit to our Care Leavers and so continues to be an important priority for us.

#### 9.6 **Supporting UASC: Controlled Migration Fund**

Croydon submitted three successful bids to the Controlling Migration Fund) in 2017 and 2018 to deliver a number of projects in Education, Children's Services and Fostering. The CMF's primary aim is to support UASC towards integration and benefit existing residents by promoting community cohesion. The 3 projects include:

- Improving the stability of UASC placements in partnership with the Fostering service
- Improving the life chances of UASC through education
- Improving the timeliness and efficiency of UASC age assessments and National Transfer processes

9.7 **Summer Mix Education Programme 2018:** The summer school's main aim is to ensure that UASC 15-18 year olds are school-ready and gain greater confidence towards accessing education/employment and training opportunities. Specialist and educational support is needed to ensure well-being, increase life chances and promote integration and community cohesion. The school aims to give young people from UASC background (who are newly arrived in the country or haven't yet found an educational provision) a head start in English and prepare them for school in the UK. The school also works in partnership with UASC specialist organisations and youth clubs in Croydon to offer a range of activities and accredited courses.

9.8 Croydon trialled its first summer school for 15-18 UASC young people living and accessing services in the borough from 2<sup>nd</sup> July to 31<sup>st</sup> August 2018. We worked with 15 partners, mostly from community organisations, to provide ESOL classes (English for Speakers of Other Languages); accredited courses; life skills courses; sports and arts activities; trips to UK landmarks and/or activities with non-UASC young people (social mixing). All activities had a focus on learning English and developing confidence when speaking English.

- 161 young people registered; 89 of them attended the summer school
- 16 out of 18 achieved accreditation in Health and Safety, Food and Hygiene and in financial capability (MyBNK). Two out of four gained their accreditation in "introduction to motorbike mechanics"
- Internal evaluation completed and used to inform forthcoming school programme and structure
- External evaluation under way with a focus on perspectives on the impact of the project on integration and community cohesion

9.9 A project manager attached to the Virtual School is working closely with the UASC team, the virtual school and partners to ensure the aims and objectives of these projects are met in 2019/20.

## 10 Areas for development

### 10.1 Efficient and targeted entry into care

One of the paramount principles of the Children's Act 1989 is that the best place for children is within their family, network and community. Croydon is working hard to ensure the right support is provided, at the right time, to children and their families in order to ensure children live in safe and supportive environments and can remain within the family wherever possible. Strategically, support is targeted to those who need it the most, from the early intervention framework to edge of care and entry into the care system. Social workers, the professional network and the family work together to discuss and agree children in need or child protection plans, which are centred on the needs of the respective child. Family successes are celebrated and embraced. However, if concerns about the child safety or wellbeing remain, these are appropriately escalated and swift action/intervention taken, which may result into children being taken in the care of the Local Authority. Croydon operates a Care Panel, which is chaired by the director, this has been operational since April 2019. The aim of the Panel is to ensure that social work intervention plans are reviewed sensitively and thoughtfully and next steps are planned based on input from a broad professional standpoint. Croydon's goal is to make sure the children who need to be accommodated are accommodated when needed and that the right support is given to those children who needed it the most.

### 10.2 Reducing number of teenagers that come into care

A high level breakdown of young people coming into care in their teens suggests that our responses to this age group are not good enough. Of the 380 children and young people who came into care over 2018-19 (excluding UASC) 53% (or 201) were aged 11-17. Drilling down further, 72 were 16 and 17 year olds. The recently established weekly Care Panel has shown that there is a significant need for adolescent support provision, both for young people on the edge of care and in unstable local placements. We must be able to work differently with these young people and their families to divert them from care, including improving our preventative work with older children. This will be a priority area for us to focus on in 2019/20 and was identified as an area for further work in the recent Vulnerable Adolescents Review.

### 10.3 Improving Permanence Arrangements

As identified by Ofsted in their October 2018 monitoring visit, children in care in Croydon continue to experience drift and delay in securing permanency arrangements. There also is insufficient understanding of the emotional impact that such a delay will have on children and life story work is not sufficiently embedded as part of permanency planning for all children. We have been fully embraced this feedback and work is underway to improve performance in this area. We are developing clearer guidance documents for social worker setting out their responsibilities and timeframes for securing permanency. This continues to be a priority for us.

#### 10.4 **Improving access to good placements**

Process improvements are currently being delivered through a review of end to end business processes. There is opportunity in the Placements team for significant further improvement relating to function and process for ensuring high quality and timely placements, which are suitable to meet the defined needs of the young person. There is opportunity for these placements to be planned further in advance based on good assessment and less of a frenetic approach to where children will stay. Additionally the new structure provides the opportunity to deliver robust provider quality assurance and rely less on provider self-reporting.

10.5 **Supporting children who go missing from care:** Nearly 60% of children looked after with a missing episode are local children. In response to this, the *Missing Step by Step Guide* has been revised and re-issued and an activity tracker created and issued to all service areas on a weekly basis. The Head of the Adolescents Service and the Head of Corporate Parenting are working closely to ensure the approach is embedded within teams and guidance and support offered to foster carers around the risks and vulnerabilities for children. There is also a commitment to work with the Police to develop a shared understanding of thresholds in relation to missing children. Additionally, one of the Croydon Safeguarding Children Board's priorities is in relation to Vulnerable Adolescents, this group is chaired by the Police.

#### 10.6 **Building on improvements for the Health and Education of our children in care**

The focus on promoting improved health and educational outcomes for children and young people in our care continues to be a priority in 2019/20. Action plans for both areas are being closely monitored and performance challenged at the Children's Improvement Board.

#### 10.7 **Reviewing the local offer for Care Leavers**

Section 2 of the Children and Social Work Act 2017 requires local authorities to consult on and publish a local offer for their care leavers. The local offer should provide information about all the services and support that is available to care leavers in the local area where they live. It should include information about their statutory entitlements, as well as any discretionary support that a local authority might choose to provide.

10.8 Given the above, and as part of the corporate parenting duty, the Corporate Parenting and Care Leavers service is working closely with other relevant Council departments (e.g., Housing Allocations, Tenancy Services, Virtual School, etc.) to gather information about all of the services and support that is available to care leavers in the borough from all council relevant departments. The online booklet will be updated and consultation with young people will take place in relation to design, format and content. Once finalised by the Corporate Parenting Panel these documents will be available via the Council's website.

#### 10.9 **Emotional mental health support- CAMHS awareness and UASC**

Croydon CAMHS service recently restructured to increase the size of the team working with vulnerable children including children who are looked after, as well as increasing the accessibility to a wide range of therapeutic support for children looked after. Croydon CAMHS provides consultation advice and support to social workers on a regular basis, either through weekly consultation meetings or telephone support, this is to ensure oversight of the emotional wellbeing and mental health needs of children in our care. We have recently reviewed our approach to undertaking Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaires and will be launching a refreshed process in July 2019. Training is being delivered in June 2019 to social workers by our CAMHS colleagues to help them understand their roles and responsibilities.

10.10 In addition, there is a growing body of literature, which highlights that UASC struggle with mental health care. On their journeys, they often face traumatic events including separation from family and friends, sexual exploitation, torture or trafficking. These events adversely affects their mental health and emotional well-being. Even after they arrived in the UK, they can continue to be negatively affected by a wide range of symptoms such as sleep disruption, flashbacks, post-traumatic stress, self-harm and even suicide. It is also acknowledged that early identification and intervention are essential to ensure that UASC can access the services and support they need to offset the effects of mental health problems. Croydon is considering how to best support UASCs upon their arrival to the UK.

#### 10.11 **Listening to the voice children and young people**

There has been progress in engaging with Croydon's Children looked after and care leavers and encouraging them to get involved and share their views and experiences through a range of ways and means as set out below.

10.12 Croydon elicits the children and young people's views and feeds back to them via various avenues. One of these is the Croydon Children in Care Council (CiCC or EMPIRE), which continues to provide a formal structure for Children looked after and care leavers to voice their views and experiences of the care system, make suggestions to improve services. The CiCC is instrumental in influencing changes and improvements to the delivery of these services in Croydon. We have recently undertaken a review of the participation structures in Croydon and it is hoped that the recommendations to strengthen these arrangements will improve participation in 2019/20. One of the recommendations is to join the British Youth Council/UK Youth Parliament, this organisation will provide training and support is to help young people to develop their skills and confidence to be fully engaged in the delivery of the engagement and participation activities, including representing children and young people's views at Cabinet and Corporate Parenting Panels. We are currently reviewing the range forums for children, young people and care leavers, and will making further improvement in this area.

- 10.13 In addition, Children's Services will embark on a 12 month pilot of the use of a Children Looked After engagement App from September 2019. This will provide our children with the ability to provide feedback on how they are feeling and the service they have received using a smartphone, laptop or tablet, at a time convenient for them as it will be available 24/7. The feedback will be passed to their caseworker to ensure it is acted upon and all feedback will be tracked centrally by the Safeguarding and Quality Assurance team to obtain an overview of service provision from our children's perspective. The App will also be a tool to support CLA Reviews and will enable us to obtain feedback on different themes to help us improve our service. We see the App as being an essential tool in ensuring the voice of the child is at the centre of our service.
- 10.14 Independent Reviewing Officers also assist greatly in listening and promoting the voice of the child via regular Children looked after Reviews, current these are at 82%.

## 11 **Conclusion**

In summary, the Corporate Parenting Panel is committed to ensuring the provision of support for children looked after and care leavers in Croydon continues to improve and it is positive to see early signs of better multi-agency working taking place to improve outcomes for children (e.g. though improvements in the timely completion of PEPs and Health Assessments). The panel is hopeful that the service can build upon these successes in the coming year, and will challenge it to do so. The publication of the local offer for care leavers and successful UASC bids are key achievements this year and key priorities for the coming year will include continuing to provide oversight and challenge around performance and quality indicators so that practice improvements continue or are sustained and building on the work of the Children in Care Council (EMPIRE) to ensure that we listen to and act upon the voices of more children looked after and care leavers.

- 11.1 Updates on progress will continue to be provided to the Corporate Parenting Panel regularly over the 2019/20 period.