

Corporate Parenting Panel Agenda



To: Councillor Alisa Flemming (Chair)

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

Co-optee Members

Virtual School: Shelley Davies, Angela Griffiths, Sarah Bailey
CLA Designated Health Professionals: Dr Julia Simpson, Fiona Simmons
Health Commissioners: Pasquale Brammer, Roneeta Campbell-Butler
Health Providers: Sue Goode
EMPIRE: Young People and Council Staff
Care Leaver Representative; Ashleigh Searle
Foster Carer Representatives: Angela Christmas, Manny Kwamin

A meeting of the **Corporate Parenting Panel** which you are hereby summoned to attend, will be held on **Wednesday, 13 January 2021 at 5.00 pm. This meeting will be held virtually and a meeting link will be circulated in due course.**

JACQUELINE HARRIS BAKER
Council Solicitor and Monitoring Officer
London Borough of Croydon
Bernard Weatherill House
8 Mint Walk, Croydon CR0 1EA

Michelle Ossei-Gerning
020 8726 6000 x84246
michelle.gerning@croydon.gov.uk
www.croydon.gov.uk/meetings
Tuesday, 5 January 2021

The agenda papers for all Council meetings are available on the Council website www.croydon.gov.uk/meetings

If you require any assistance, please contact Michelle Ossei-Gerning
020 8726 6000 x84246 as detailed above

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 (To Follow)

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 5 - 8)

The Children in Care Performance Scorecard for November 2020 is attached.

7. Summary of ALS Adoption activity (Pages 9 - 16)

The report provides an overview of the work of Adopt London South (ALS) Regional Adoption Agency to achieve permanence for children looked after.

8. Croydon Social Care update on children with a plan for adoption
(Pages 17 - 26)

The report provides an overview of Croydon Council's work to achieve permanence for children looked after.

9. Croydon Renewal Plan and the Impact on Children (Pages 27 - 44)

This report details the work undertaken to date, the changes proposed, the early impact on children's services, particularly children in care and care leavers, and considers the likely long term impacts of the Croydon Renewal Plan.

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. Work Programme

To consider and approve the Panel's work programme for the municipal year 2020/21.

12. 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."

This page is intentionally left blank

Indicator Number	Indicator Title	Polarity	2020/21								RO	2020-21 Target	RAG	2019-20 YTD or latest	2020-21 YTD or latest
			Apr-20	May-20	Jun-20	Jul-20	Aug-20	Sep-20	Oct-20	Nov-20					
CLA 1	Number of CLA at the end of the month		787	788	777	767	765	764	747	741	RC	NA	Grey	807	741
CLA 2	Rate of CLA per 10,000 under 18 population		82.9	83.2	82.0	80.8	80.6	80.5	78.7	78.1	RC	NA	Grey		78
CLA 2a	Rate of CLA per 10,000 under 18 population excluding UASC		54.6	55.0	54.6	53.8	53.7	54.2	52.9	53.2	RC	NA	Grey		53
CLA 3	Number of CLA at the end of the month who are Local CLA (Non-UASC)		518	521	517	511	510	515	502	505	RC	NA	Grey	528	505
CLA 3b	Number of Ceased CLA in the month who are Local CLA (Non-UASC)		24	9	14	21	12	20	13	10	RC	NA	Grey	172	123
CLA 4	Number of CLA at the end of the month who are UASC		269	267	260	256	255	249	245	236	RC	NA	Grey	279	236
CLA 4b	Number of Ceased CLA in the month who are UASC		9	5	9	5	7	9	11	7	RC	NA	Grey	127	62
CLA 5	Number of new CLA in month (total)		45	10	33	25	24	20	15	20	RC	NA	Grey	306	192
CLA 6	Number of new CLA in month who are UASC		5	4	3	4	7	4	3	4	RC	NA	Grey	152	34
CLA 10	Percentage of CLA for whom a visit has taken place within statutory timescales (6 weekly Visits)	BIB	96%	93%	93%	88%	98%	93%	94%	94%	RC	95%	Amber	94%	94%
CLA 11	Percentage of CLA children with an up to date review	BIB	94%	95%	96%	97%	96%	95%	95%	96%	AFS	95%	Green	92%	96%
CLA 12	Percentage of CLA who have participated in Reviews (aged 4+) in the month	BIB	76%	68%	80%	73%	77%	68%	74%	78%	AFS	80%	Amber	73%	74%
CLA 13	CLA 13 - Percentage of CLA at SSA (Statutory School Age) with a Personal Education Plan (PEP) reviewed & completed in the last 6 months.	BIB	83%	85%	89%	95%	95%	94%	92%	89%	RC	85%	Green	87%	90%
CLA 14	Percentage of eligible CLA with an up-to-date Care Plan (6 months)	BIB	82%	79%	76%	86%	89%	91%	92%	91%	RC	95%	Amber	87%	91%
CLA 15	Percentage of eligible CLA with an up-to-date Pathway Plan	BIB	83%	81%	81%	72%	74%	74%	78%	84%	RC	95%	Red	86%	84%
CLA 16	% of children in care for at least 12 months for whom health assessments are up to date.	BIB	82%	80%	83%	86%	88%	87%	85%	86%	RC	95%	Amber	80%	86%
New	Number of children in care for at least 12 months for whom health assessments were due in the month(completed/due in month).								42/128	47/124	RC	NA	Grey		TBC
CLA 17	% initial health assessments requested for health service within 3 working days of date child become looked after.	BIB	10%	33%	60%	30%	67%	60%	50%	TBC	RC	NA	Grey	49%	44%
CLA 18	% initial health assessments delivered within 20 working days of date child became looked after.	BIB	62%	67%	90%	50%	67%	80%	50%	TBC	RC	95%	Grey	67%	66%
CLA 19	Percentage of CLA that have been in care for 12+ months, that have had same social worker for last 6 months	BIB	69%	71%	72%	68%	71%	72%	68%	62%	RC	65%	Green	59%	62%

Indicator Number	Indicator Title	Polarity	2020/21								RO	2020-21 Target	RAG	2019-20 YTD or latest	2020-21 YTD or latest
			Apr-20	May-20	Jun-20	Jul-20	Aug-20	Sep-20	Oct-20	Nov-20					
CLA 20	Percentage of CLA under 16 in care for more than 2.5 years: in the same placement for 2+ years	BIB	70%	70%	66%	73%	74%	72%	72%	69%	RC	75%	Amber	77%	69%
CLA 21	Percentage of CLA at end of month with 3 or more placements during the year	SIB	7%	6%	6%	6%	5%	5%	5%	6%	RC	8%	Green	8%	6%
CLA 22	Percentage of CLA placed <20 miles from home	BIB	84%	83%	84%	84%	84%	83%	83%	82%	RC	90%	Amber	84%	82%
CLA 23	Number of CLA allocated to CWD		28	29	29	29	28	26	26	28	MB	NA	Grey	28	28
CLA 24	Percentage of CLA for whom a visit has taken place within statutory timescales (Allocated to CWD teams)	BIB	96%	100%	100%	100%	100%	88%	96%	94%	MB	95%	Amber	96%	94%
CLA 25	Number of CLA who returned home (E4A, E4B, E13, E41)	BIB	14	2	7	9	2	6	8	2	RC	NA	Grey	72	50
F 1	Total number of foster carer households	BIB	234	235	240	238	235	238	236	229	RC	NA	Grey	230	229
F 2	Percentage of DBS Checks within time	BIB	96%	96%	96%	97%	97%	96%	95%	97%	RC	95%	Green	98%	97%
F 3	Percentage of Annual Reviews of Foster Carers completed on time	BIB	97%	98%	98%	98%	95%	95%	98%	96%	RC	95%	Green	95%	96%
F 4	Percentage of Foster Carers' most recent announced visit within timescales	BIB	92%	96%	94%	95%	92%	96%	95%	84%	RC	95%	Amber	79%	84%
AD 1	Number of children for whom the agreed plan is adoption (ADM)	BiB	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	IF	NA	Grey	11	2
AD 2	Number of children waiting to be matched to an adopter		24	24	24	20	16	13	16	14	IF	NA	Grey	17	14
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	548	548	553	553	538	562	TBC	TBC	IF	558	Amber	550	TBC
CL a	Care Leavers with an Up-to-date Pathway plan	BIB	83%	91%	91%	77%	83%	84%	78%	78%	MM	85%	Amber	79%	78%
CL 1	Number of Care Leavers in employment, education, or training (EET) on their 17th to 21st Birthday		377	384	367	358	347	405	347	339	MM	NA	Grey	388	339
CL 1a	Percentage in employment, education, or training (EET) on their 17th to 21st Birthday	BIB	63%	63%	61%	60%	58%	62%	59%	57%	MM	85%	Red	64%	57%
CL 2	Number of Care Leavers not in employment, education, or training (NEET) on their 17th to 21st Birthday	SIB	220	224	236	236	242	245	244	260	MM	NA	Grey	217	260
CL 2a	Percentage not in employment, education, or training (NEET) on their 17th to 21st Birthday	SIB	37%	37%	39%	40%	42%	38%	41%	43%	MM	NA	Grey	36%	43%
CL 3	Number of Care Leavers in suitable accommodation on their 17th to 21st Birthday		576	585	581	572	573	573	565	577	MM	NA	Grey	586	577
CL 3a	Percentage in suitable accommodation on their 17th to 21st Birthday	BIB	96%	96%	96%	96%	96%	96%	96%	96%	MM	90%	Green	96%	96%
CL 4	Number not in suitable accommodation on their 17th to 21st birthday	SIB	26	25	25	24	21	23	26	24	MM	NA	Grey	23	24
CL 5	Percentage in touch with the authority from 17th to 21st birthday	BIB	94%	92%	91%	89%	89%	91%	91%	93%	MM	95%	Amber	95%	93%

Indicator Number	Indicator Title	Polarity	2020/21								RO	2020-21 Target	RAG	2019-20 YTD or latest	2020-21 YTD or latest
			Apr-20	May-20	Jun-20	Jul-20	Aug-20	Sep-20	Oct-20	Nov-20					
CL 6	Care Leavers - LOCAL (non-UASC)		335	337	333	334	352	348	344	346	MM	NA	Grey		
CL 7	Care Leavers - UASC (non-LOCAL)		513	523	526	528	495	459	444	434	MM	NA	Grey		

This page is intentionally left blank

REPORT TO:	Corporate Parenting Panel 13 th January 2021
SUBJECT:	Summary of ALS Adoption activity
LEAD OFFICER:	Rodica Cobarzan Interim Head of Service Children Looked After and Care Leavers Natalie Craig Service Manager – Permanence
CABINET MEMBER:	Cllr Alisa Flemming Cabinet Member for Children, Young People & Learning
WARDS:	All
PUBLIC/EXEMPT:	NA

SUMMARY OF REPORT:

The report provides an overview of the work of Adopt London South (ALS) our Regional Adoption Agency to achieve permanence for children looked after. The report is a summary of ALS annual report prepared by Susanna Daus – Head of Service for Adopt London South. The Report by Susanna Daus is dated 10 July 2020 and was presented to the Board of Directors in September 2020. This full report will be published in due course.

POLICY CONTEXT/AMBITIOUS FOR CROYDON:

With our determination, we will be the best corporate parent to Croydon’s children and young people in care, supporting them through into successful young adulthood; as any parent does.

[Corporate Plan for Croydon 2018-2022](#)

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

N/A – Report is for information only, see below funding arrangements for ALS.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Corporate Parenting Panel are asked to note the ALS activity during 2019-2020.

1. Background and Context

- 1.1 The creation of Regional Adoption Agencies (RAAs) was part of a national agenda to improve the recruitment and assessment of prospective adopters and speed up the matching and placement of children for adoption.
- 1.2 The Education and Adoption Act 2016 required local authorities to combine their adoption services into Regional Adoption Agencies by April 2020 or be directed to do so if they do not choose to do so on a voluntary basis.
- 1.3 In 2018 there was a decision taken to establish 4 RAAs across London (North, South, East and West). Each of the 4 RAAs would be delivered through a hosted model and each would work collaboratively with each other across London on areas where it made sense to do things once, together under the umbrella term “Adopt London”.
- 1.4 Southwark was agreed as the host Borough for Adopt London South (ALS) RAA. Croydon is part of ALS alongside Kingston and Richmond operating as AFC, Lambeth, Lewisham, Merton, Southwark, Sutton and Wandsworth.
- 1.5 Prior to the implementation of the RAA a detailed partnership agreement was developed and approved by all partners. The partnership agreement also set out the governance arrangements to oversee and support the implementation and development of Adopt London South.
- 1.6 A Management Board made up of Directors from each borough meets regularly to receive updates on progress of key priorities, to discuss issues and risks and to provide strategic oversight and support.
- 1.7 A Quality Assurance group comprising of Heads of Services from each participating borough meets monthly with the Head of the RAA and are responsible for monitoring, tracking and developing the delivery plan and ensuring partner engagement is effective at an operational level.

Non-Executive Template

- 1.8 The ALS service comprised 49 FTE at the point of its creation, 30 individuals transferred under TUPE legislation, and 7.5 FTE posts originated from Southwark, with the funding from the remaining post being transferred in to Southwark as the host authority. The transition to the RAA began in July 2019.
- 1.9 These posts created a number of teams, led by a Head of Service, to deliver the core adoption functions.
- 1.10 The Host Authority (Southwark) will discharge the following delegated adoption functions of the Partners:
- The recruitment of persons as prospective adopters
 - The assessment of prospective adopters' suitability to adopt a child
 - The approval of prospective adopters as suitable to adopt a child
 - The provision of adoption support services
- 1.11 Partner Boroughs retain responsibility for the following:
- Corporate Parenting
 - Agency Decision Making responsibilities and all legal responsibilities for looked after children
 - Early permanence planning
 - Adoption allowance
- Supporting the RAA partnership by contributing to:
- Quality assurance and performance tracking
 - Providing timely data

Adopt London South -Year One

- 1.12 Within the first few months of operating, it was evident that demand was higher than previously expected in the post adoption support area and that some of the original base line data that informed the projections for approvals of adopters and the number of children waiting for adoption was flawed.
- 1.13 A significant cause for concern was the continual rise in post adoption referrals (139 were expected to transfer in July 2019, this number increased to 917 by

Non-Executive Template

March 2020 and is currently at 1033). In addition to the adoption support cases, there is a waiting list of up to 9 months for adopted adults requiring support to access their records or to receive counselling.

- 1.14 An additional 3 FTE posts were agreed on a temporary basis by the Management Board in May 2020 to respond to the rise in adoption support cases. This included additional management capacity. These temporary posts take the establishment to 54 FTEs.
- 1.15 ALS's funding model for the first 2 years is set below. The partnership agreement provides for a demand based funding going forward and the budget for 2021/2022 is yet to be set.

Partner	% contribution
Croydon	17.16%
Southwark	15.44%
Lewisham	14.34%
Lambeth	12.57%
Wandsworth	12.02%
AFC	9.91%
Merton	9.40%
Sutton	9.14%
TOTAL	100%

- 1.16 The funding for interagency placements follow the same pattern as the % contribution for the partner agency.
- 1.17 The Adoption Support Fund has now transferred to ALS and additional COVID funding was made available by DfE to support adoptive placements.
- 1.18 Sufficiency of adopters**
- The same number of adopters were approved from July 2019 as the previous financial year, but not yet meeting the target of 88 families. Adopters of BAME heritage were 38% of families approved, compared to 54% of the children waiting with a Placement order. At the time of completing the report (July 2020) 21 adoptive families are in the final stage 2 of the approval. ALS prioritises adopter applications from families who are likely to be suitable for ALS children.

1.19 Family finding performance was impacted by the transition to regionalisation

ALS data indicates there are 79 children currently waiting with a Best Interest Decision, of whom 59 have a Placement order. Family finders work closely with children's own social workers in the respective authorities to identify new families. ALS data indicates a big reduction in Placement orders made by the Courts during Covid19.

1.20 How long children wait

41 children had already waited over a year before ALS started and some of these children have now been matched with new families. Of the 50 children matched in 2019/20, 38 were aged under 2. Babies waited an average of 112 days but 6 older children had waited over 1000 days. Average waiting times for children of BAME heritage were 135 days longer than children of white European heritage. The average waiting times for all ages were 246 days, compared to pre ALS which was 250 days. It should be noted that for the children who waited the longest, having a new permanent family is still a good outcome and evidences the LA commitment to adoption for the child.

1.21 Early Permanence

Increasing Early Permanence placements is an objective for ALS. Since 1st July 2019, there have been 7 placements. There is no previous South London wide data available, although Southwark led on Early Permanence training. All ALS adopter applicants are encouraged to attend Early Permanence training. Further work will be needed to help local authority children's social workers with early identification of those who will benefit.

1.22 Post adoption support

Despite a 9% increase in the value of Adoption Support Fund services delivered in 2019/20, demand for these services continued to rise from 1st September 2019. 139 cases were anticipated but by 1st July 2020 this had risen to 1033 people requesting a service. Waiting times remain a concern with over 300 cases currently open. The current Covid19 emergency services enable a faster

response, because a full social work assessment is not required to access them. These services will end on 30th September 2020.

1.23 Services to adopted adults

There have been a total of 295 adults requesting services, of whom 90 have now received a service, but waiting times have been up to 9 months. People who were adopted before 2005 are entitled to counselling as well as access to their records. Croydon provided extra resources to help 116 people who had been waiting at the point of transfer. Adopt London plans to develop the webpages for Adopted adults to enable some self-directed help.

1.24 Adoption Panels

It is a statutory requirement to set up and maintain adoption panels, which consider the suitability of adopters and children's matches to new families, recommending a decision to the Agency Decision Maker. For adopter suitability decisions, the Agency Decision Maker is the ALS RAA Head of Service. The decisions with regard to children's matching sits with the child's local authority. Panels started in September 2019, and have operated without disruption. Membership reflects the BAME and LGBTQ communities in South London. During Covid19 19, virtual panels were established with quoracy maintained and new protocols agreed. Panel training has been provided including on Early Permanence and good practice in moving children into new families.

Summary and plan for future

1.25 Croydon Council works with ALS to ensure that children who cannot live with birth families have a timely plan for adoption and access to support services.

1.26 ALS has identified a number of priorities to work on as follows:

- Significant increase in BAME adopters
- Recruiting local adopters for London children
- Supporting approved adopters who are not a match for ALS children adopting from other Local Authorities
- Reducing the time BAME children wait to be adopted

- Improve early permanence planning
- Increase capacity for post adoption support
- Develop system to track and predict future demand
- Implement activity based budgets
- Improved data, processes and systems

1.27 Whilst ALS is still developing, we see positive signs that our work with ALS will provide positive outcome for children who need a placement outside their birth family.

2. CONSULTATION

NA

3. FINANCIAL AND RISK ASSESSMENT CONSIDERATIONS

3.1. Revenue and Capital consequences of report recommendations

Croydon is a partner in ALS and as part of the partnership agreement Croydon is financially contributing to ALS's budget. The contribution is calculated on a demand basis and linked with the number of children and adopters requiring services from ALS. For the 2020/2021 Croydon contributed 17.17% of the total ALS budget. The budget for 2021/2022 is currently under review.

3.2. The effect of the decision

As detailed it is legal requirement that Croydon joins a RAA, Croydon works with ALS and the other 8 London Boroughs that form ALS to support better adoptions practices for our children.

3.3. Risks

The budget is demand based and an increase in our adoption activity might lead to a higher contribution into ALS

3.4. Options

There are no options at this stage

3.5. Future savings/efficiencies

Monitoring activity to ensure our children get best possible homes

4. LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

NA

5. HUMAN RESOURCES IMPACT

NA

6. EQUALITIES IMPACT

NA

7. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

NA

8. CRIME AND DISORDER REDUCTION IMPACT

NA

9. DATA PROTECTION IMPLICATIONS

9.1. WILL THE SUBJECT OF THE REPORT INVOLVE THE PROCESSING OF 'PERSONAL DATA'?

NO

9.2. HAS A DATA PROTECTION IMPACT ASSESSMENT (DPIA) BEEN COMPLETED?

NO

9.3. Approved by: Nick Pendry, The Director of Early Help and Childrens Social Care

CONTACT OFFICER: Natalie Craig, Service Manager

Agenda Item 8

Non-Executive Template

REPORT TO:	Corporate Parenting Panel 13 th January 2021
SUBJECT:	Croydon Social Care update on children with a plan for adoption
LEAD OFFICER:	Rodica Cobarzan Interim Head of Service Children Looked After and Care Leavers Natalie Craig Service Manager – Permanence
CABINET MEMBER:	Cllr Alisa Flemming Cabinet Member for Children, Young People & Learning
WARDS:	All
PUBLIC/EXEMPT:	NA

SUMMARY OF REPORT:

The report provides an overview of Croydon Council work to achieve permanence for children looked after.

POLICY CONTEXT/AMBITIOUS FOR CROYDON:

With our determination, we will be the best corporate parent to Croydon's children and young people in care, supporting them through into successful young adulthood; as any parent does. This will involve listening to their worries and their ambitions and championing their interests.

[Corporate Plan for Croydon 2018-2022](#)

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

N/A – Report is for information only. The cost of placements are budgeted for within existing Children's Social Care budgets.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Corporate Parenting Panel are asked to note the report and permanence activity during 2020.

1. Background and Context

- 1.1 Permanence is the long term plan for the child's upbringing and provides an underpinning framework for all social work with children and their families from family support through to adoption. It aims to ensure a framework of emotional, physical and legal conditions that will give a child a sense of security, continuity, commitment, identity and belonging.
- 1.2 There are a number of options and avenues by which a child may achieve permanence. These are remaining or reunification with birth parents, adoption, long term foster care or placement in the care of a family member or friend under a legal order, either a Special Guardianship Order or Child Arrangements Order.
- 1.3 Croydon Council work across the social work system contributes to improving outcomes for the most vulnerable children and young people in the borough; the key priority is to achieve 'permanence' for Children Looked After, ensuring they can be brought up in loving, secure and stable families.
- 1.4 Where the child's welfare requires a placement outside the birth family via Adoption, Croydon Council works with Adopt London South to secure permanence outside the birth family. Croydon has joined Adopt London South (RAA) in July 2019.
- 1.5 The Family Justice Review, introduced the 26-week timescale for care proceedings and this has had a significant impact on the Adoption Services over the last few years. Local Authorities are required to develop permanence plans for children and place them in alternative family arrangements more quickly.
- 1.6 Nationally there has been a steady rise in the use of Special Guardianship Orders with family members as an alternative route to achieve permanency

as the Courts are increasingly reluctant to make a placement order, with Adoption being the last resort '*where nothing else will do*.

- 1.7 The number of children looked after who were adopted fell by 4% during 2019/2020 (DfES statistics) and this decline is in line with a reduction in the number of children looked after and continues to reduce since a pick in adoptions in 2015.
- 1.8 The number of children looked after who left care through a special guardianship order (SGO) decreased by 4% as well nationally (DfES) in 2019/2020 compared to the previous year. Most SG carers are family members, whilst a small 9% number are former foster carers.

Special Guardianship

- 1.9 Croydon Council has a Family & Friends Team whose role is to undertake Special Guardianship Assessment and make recommendations to the court as to the support any prospective carers might need in order to meet the needs of children they propose to care for.
- 1.10 The team of Social workers, who are all agency staff, are supported by an Assistant Team Manager and Team Manager.
- 1.11 In the last financial year, April 2019 until March 2020, 65 Special Guardianship Orders were granted. Of these orders, only 3 were granted to mainstream foster carers, one was granted SG's for two children and one was granted for one child.
- 1.12 This financial year there were 4 Special Guardianship Orders granted in Q1 (April 2020 to June 2020), 6 in Q2 (July 2020 to September 2020) and 6 so far in Q3. This is a total of 16 so far this year and if the amount of orders granted continues on this trajectory, there will be a significant decrease this year.

1.13 The main reasons for this are:

- There has been a reduction in care proceedings in LB Croydon.
- Improved quality of assessments resulting in less carers being able to demonstrate in the assessments that they could meet the needs of children. This prevents children placements breaking down in the long term.
- A significant number of kinship carers are progressed via the Fostering Panel and ADM and we have a higher number of connected carers currently.
- Delays in concluding of proceedings due to Covid19 and as such we have an increase in Connected Carers. We do expect to see many of these result in Special Guardianship Orders but this is likely to take until at least Q2 next year.

1.14 The Post Order Support Team is currently made up of two social workers and one team manager. Their role is to offer ongoing support to Special Guardians and the children they care for. Croydon Council is responsible for ongoing support for at least 3 years post order, after which it transfers to the local authority where the Special Guardians reside (this excludes financial support)

1.15 The team has just set a process of undertaking an annual review process for carers who were assessed as requiring a financial support packages. Any financial support package (other than those offered to former foster carers who have this protected for a 2 year period) should be re-means tested annually to ensure any financial support remains appropriate and necessary.

1.16 Every child is entitled to an annual assessment of their support needs and in addition to this Special Guardians can contact the team at any time to seek support. The aim is therefore that every family is contacted annually but that if families are in need we are actively supporting the family.

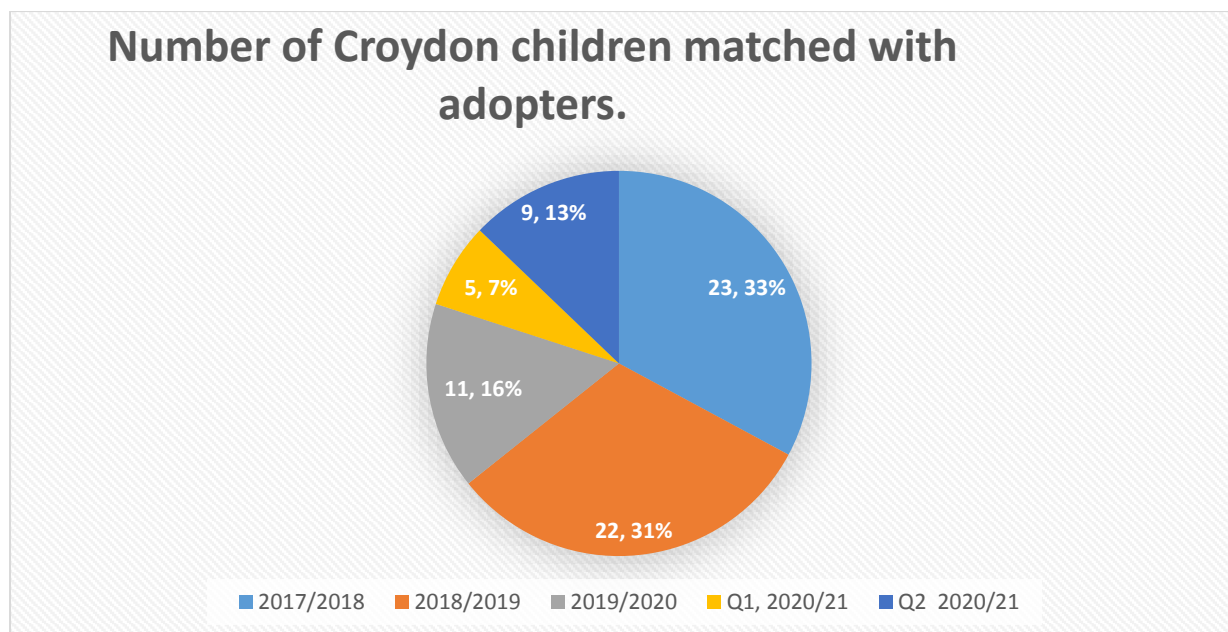
1.17 The post order support team also offers other types of support including solution focussed work, support in managing and negotiating contact,

signposting, life story work and referrals to the Adoption Support Fund which is available to children who were looked after immediately before the Special Guardianship Order being granted.

- 1.18 Financial assistance was provided by government to Adopt London South to commission additional services to support Special Guardians during Covid19. These were commissioned through Grandparents Plus at tier 2 and had the added benefit of being ongoing until May 2021 as long as referrals were made before the end of December 2020.

Adoption

- 1.19 The current process for adoption is:
- All children who enter our care have a Permanence Planning Meeting as early as possible to consider the child's plan and all assessments completed. If adoption is a possible plan, the social worker would ask the 'Agency Decision Maker' ADM to consider the information available and decide if the adoption is in the child best interest as soon as no other options are left available that would offer the child permanence.
 - The Local Authority will make an application to the court for a Placement Order.
 - Once an Order is granted Croydon Council and ALS work together to identify the best family for the child and proceed to a matching panel, this is organised by ALS. The final matching decision is made by Croydon Agency Decision Maker.



1.20 The priorities of Croydon Council and the ALS partners are :

- Decisions about placements are always made in the child's best interests;
- Social Workers making decisions about adoptions are highly skilled professionals who make high quality evidence-based decisions and do not tolerate damaging delay for children in their care;
- Matches are made without unnecessary delay;
- Fostering for Adoption to offer children early permanence placements;
- Every adoptive family has access to an ongoing package of appropriate support with a high-quality specialist assessment of need;
- The voice of adopters and their children is at the heart services.

1.21 There are currently 4 children with a best interest decision for adoption who do not yet have a Placement Order. There are currently 12 children with a Placement Order where active family finding is taking place.

1.22 There are currently 4 children for whom applications are being made to discharge a Placement Order. Two children had their Placement Orders revoked on 3rd November 2020, they are brothers and we had looked for adopters for over a year. Two other children had their Placement Order revoked as part of an appeal and are being placed with a family member.

Non-Executive Template

- 1.23 The Local Authority have a duty to consider Early Permanence for every child. LB Croydon have had 3 early permanence or foster to adopt placements this calendar year. Early Permanence is becoming more embedded through the Permanency Planning Process and more pre-birth PPM's are taking place to consider whether early permanence is an option. This will limit placements moves and allow children to form attachment to their carers from as early as possible.
- 1.24 We are considering a number of foster carers as prospective adopters for the children in their care.
- 1.25 There are currently 14 children placed for adoption who await an Adoption Order.
- 1.26 In 2019-2020, 23 children had Adoption Order made. Since 1st April 2020 15 children have had Adoption Orders made. This appears on track with last year's figures, however there are significant delays in the court system which are leading to a longer waiting time.
- 1.27 There have been no placement breakdowns this calendar or financial year.
- 1.28 Corporate parenting duties for children placed for adoption are implemented and monitored using the following processes:
- Placement Planning Meetings taking place until such time a child has been placed for adoption, ensuring key tasks such as later life letters and lift story work are underway.
 - All children will have a CLA review within 15 days of placement with prospective adopters.
 - Their care/needs in adoptive placements will be monitored by the child's social worker alongside ALS and the Independent Reviewing Officer as the child remains looked after until the Adoption Order is granted.
- 1.29 Adopt London South had 970 enquiries for post adoption support from Sept 2019 – March 2020, of these 15% were Croydon families. In Quarter one of

Non-Executive Template

2020 there were a further 47 enquiries and in quarter two a further 30, making up 15% of the enquiries to ALS so far this year. This is therefore consistent.

- 1.30 The increase in post-adoption support may be due to a number of issues, it does not seem to directly correlate to the length of time a child was in care. However children placed for adoption at an older age, who were in the care of their birth family for longer often need a higher level of adoption support. The level of enquiries from Croydon families has been consistent since ALS became operational. It is however likely that Covid19 will lead to an increase in referrals due to the pressures of children and parents being at home without school provision.
- 1.31 Post-Adoption support can be a number of different requests from support to make an application to the Adoption Support Fund for an assessment of need to plan for a course of therapy to support in accessing the right school provision, provision of courses or a period of support sessions offered by a social worker. At present families are being Triaged to ensure those with the highest level of need are offered a service first.
- 1.32 Post-Adoption support is an area on ongoing improvement for Croydon and ALS.

Summary

- 1.33 Croydon Council work around permanence for children is improving is in line with our vision to achieving good outcomes for children in care.
- 1.34 Whilst there remains a challenge regarding the timeliness of matching there are strong indications of improvements in timeliness for the last 12 months.
- 1.35 We are committed to work with ALS to pursuing plans for adoption for children and sibling groups with complex needs.

- 1.36 We also continue to work in close partnership with the local Family Justice Board, to consider all matters regarding timeliness in matching and placement of children with a plan for adoption to make further improvements.

2. CONSULTATION

NA

3. FINANCIAL AND RISK ASSESSMENT CONSIDERATIONS

3.1. Revenue and Capital consequences of report recommendations

Croydon is a partner in ALS and as part of the partnership agreement Croydon is financial contributing to ALS's budget. The contribution is calculated on demand bases and linked with the number of children and adopters requiring services from ALS. For the 2020/2021 Croydon contributed 17.17% of total ALS budget. The budget for 2021/2022 is currently under review.

3.2. The effect of the decision

As detailed it is legal requirement that Croydon joins a RAA, Croydon works with ALS and the other 8 London Boroughs that form ALS to support better adoptions practices for our children.

3.3. Risks

The budget is demand based and an increase in our adoption activity might lead to a higher contribution into ALS

3.4. Options

There are no options at this stage

3.5. Future savings/efficiencies

Monitoring activity to ensure our children get best possible homes

3.6. NA

4. LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

NA

5. HUMAN RESOURCES IMPACT

NA

6. EQUALITIES IMPACT

NA

7. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

NA

8. CRIME AND DISORDER REDUCTION IMPACT

NA

9. DATA PROTECTION IMPLICATIONS

9.1. WILL THE SUBJECT OF THE REPORT INVOLVE THE PROCESSING OF 'PERSONAL DATA'?

NO

9.2. HAS A DATA PROTECTION IMPACT ASSESSMENT (DPIA) BEEN COMPLETED?

NO

9.3. Approved by: Nick Pendry, The Director of Early Help and Childrens Social Care

CONTACT OFFICER: Natalie Craig, Service Manager

REPORT TO:	Corporate Parenting Panel 13 th January 2021
SUBJECT:	Croydon Renewal Plan and the Impact on Children
LEAD OFFICER:	Nick Pendry Director- Early Help and Children's Social Care Rodica Cobarzan Head of Service Children looked After and Care Leavers
CABINET MEMBER:	Cllr Alisa Flemming Cabinet Member for Children, Young People & Learning
WARDS:	All
PUBLIC/EXEMPT:	NA

SUMMARY OF REPORT:

Croydon Council faces significant financial difficulties and has put in place a Renewal plan which is set to deliver a big change programme for the council. As part of the plan, the council has set out the response to the financial challenge whilst considering how priority services are delivered effectively, sustainably, and within the council financial means.

This report details the work undertaken to date, the changes proposed, the early impact on children's services, particularly children in care and care leavers and also considers the likely long term impact.

POLICY CONTEXT/AMBITIOUS FOR CROYDON:

Our Renewal Plan is made up of the Financial Recovery Plan which sets out how we'll deliver a sustainable budget in the medium term and a Corporate Improvement Plan to deliver the required changes.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

MTFS savings target allocation for CFE in 2020-21:
£6.467m

RECOMMENDATIONS:

For the Corporate Parenting Panel to note the proposals and the likely impact on children and young people.

1. CROYDON COUNCIL CONTEXT

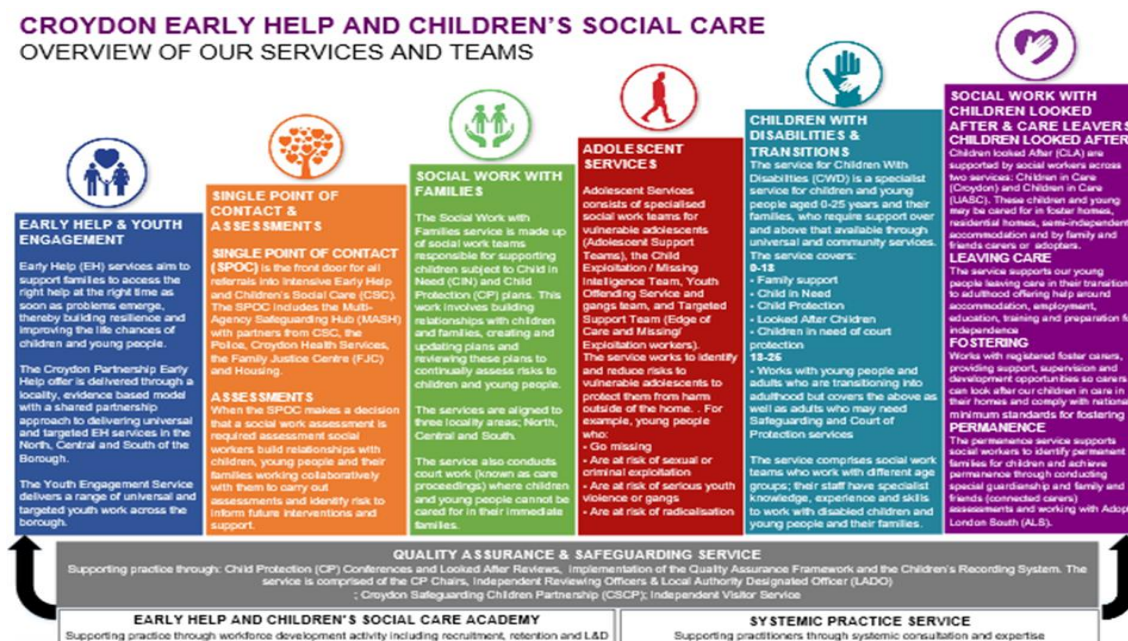
- 1.1. In October 2020, Croydon Council's external auditors, Grant Thornton, published a Report in the Public Interest. This report set out serious concerns about the council's financial situation, decision-making and governance, making 20 recommendations for change.
- 1.2. Following its publication the council put together an action plan that detailed a number of steps to take to ensure tighter spending controls - including better risk management, increased monitoring, improvements to the governance and greater transparency.
- 1.3. The action plan was reviewed and approved at an extraordinary council meeting (ECM) that took place on 19 November 2020.
- 1.4. One of the key priorities in relation to children includes: ***“tackling the root causes of overspends in children’s social care through early action to support families and divert children from going in to care”***.
- 1.5. Councils are required by law to have balanced budgets. If a council cannot find a way to finance their expenditure, a section 114 (S114) can be issued.
- 1.6. Croydon’s chief finance and s151 officer has issued two s114 notices on the basis that the council cannot currently balance its budget by the end of this financial year.
- 1.7. Legally, upon issuing a S114, the council has 21 days to review its situation and produce a new, balanced budget. Upon issuing a notice on 11 November 2020, the council was unable to balance its budget within the 21 days and a second notice was issued on 2 December 2020.
- 1.8. The Council is working with the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) to secure a capitalisation direction (a loan) in order to achieve a balanced budget for 2020/21 and support a savings programme, the Financial Recovery Plan up to 2024.
- 1.9. A section 114 notice bans all new spending across the organisation with the exception of safeguarding vulnerable people and essential statutory services.

2. Early Help and Children's Social care context

2.1. Children's Social Care & Early Help provides a range of statutory and non-statutory services to children and families who live in Croydon.

- Early Help Services provide a vital service to children and families who do not meet thresholds for statutory interventions, but who would experience difficulties without support. A 'whole family' approach ensures that children's needs and welfare are being met and maintained as well as those of the family. This is done by working with the family, local communities and others already supporting them. Early help also includes parents-to-be and very young children where their needs are not being met by routine or 'universal' services such as, Health Visitors, and some targeted support from Early Help Practitioners is required to enable families to build resilience and improve outcomes for children at the earliest opportunity.
- Consider all referrals made in relation to children and undertake statutory assessments to establish if children and their families are in need of support or help and protection.
- Provide statutory services to children assessed as in need or need of protection and take any measures necessary to protect children at risk of harm (including children with disabilities)
- Provide an alternative home for children who are unable to live with their parents and fulfil the statutory responsibilities as a corporate parent to these children.
- Provide ongoing support to young people leaving care, as per statutory responsibilities as a corporate parent.

CROYDON EARLY HELP AND CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE OVERVIEW OF OUR SERVICES AND TEAMS



Non-Executive Template

- 2.2. The Corporate Parenting panel will be aware of the significant investment into Early Help and Children's Social Care following the inadequate Ofsted rating in 2017, who noted that the children in Croydon were not safeguarded.
- 2.3. In February 2020, Ofsted completed an ILACS inspection of Children's social care services in London Borough of Croydon and rated the services provided as **"Good"**.
- 2.4. The Ofsted Report noted that *"Children's services in Croydon have improved dramatically since the last inspection in 2017, when they were judged to be inadequate. Services for children and their families have been transformed as a result of strong corporate and political support, substantial investment, and the appointment of highly experienced senior managers. The current executive director for children, families and education and the director of early help and children's social care were appointed towards the end of 2018. Building on the changes that had already been made, they quickly grasped the full extent of the improvements that were required, and they have systematically and effectively tackled the weaknesses"*.
- 2.5. The Ofsted inspection noted that the experiences and progress of children in care and care leavers still *"requires improvement to be good"*.
- 2.6. The areas of improvement identified have been :
- *"The quality of written plans for children in care and care leavers.*
 - *Services for care leavers, particularly the range of suitable accommodation, responses to emotional health needs and preparation for independence*
 - *Placement sufficiency for children in care, and accommodation for care leavers."*
- 2.7. Ofsted noted that *"Social workers across our practice system work hard to enable children to remain in the care of their families whenever it is safe to do so"*.
- 2.8. Ofsted noted the positive work of our Systemic Clinical team that supported our work with families and an established Edge of care team in providing additional support to families to avoid the need for children becoming looked after.
- 2.9. Ofsted also noted *"When it is not possible or appropriate for children and young people to remain at home decisive action is taken and children are accommodated timely. Such decisions are made after detailed assessments and made by a care panel which is chaired by a senior manager, to ensure sound and consistent decision-making"*.

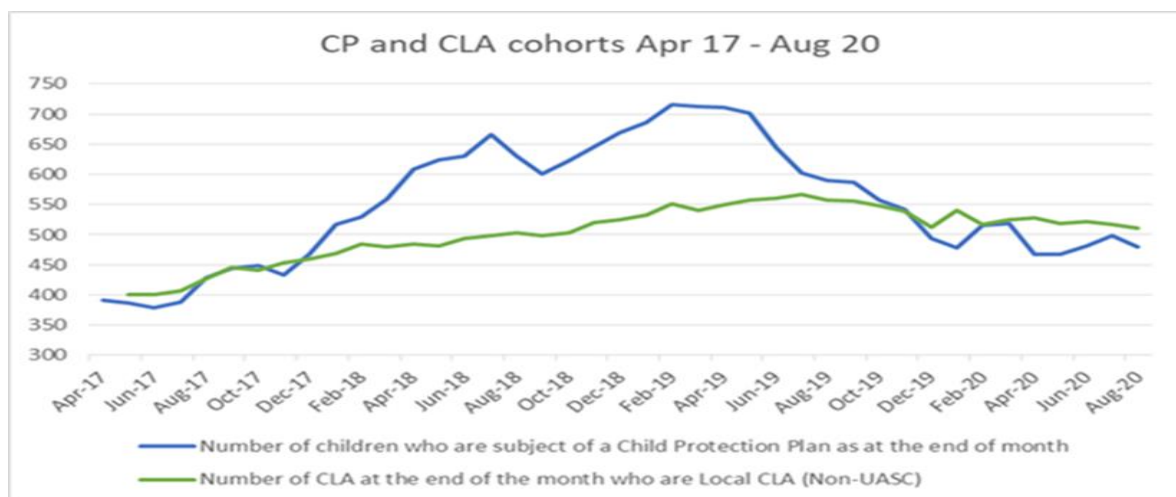
Other factors impacting on children

- 2.10. **Covid19** – Very soon after the positive Ofsted outcome our services have been impacted by the national lockdown, health and social issues associated with the global pandemic.
- 2.11. Our staff have continued to provide a vital service to our most vulnerable children and young people in the community or our children looked after and care leavers.
- 2.12. We have recognised the increased pressures on our children and families, lack of other community resources are creating a further challenge for children and families as they suffer hardship, isolation, emotionally harm and some children fall behind academically.
- 2.13. Our children in care have been mostly impacted because they had limited contact with others important in their lives (family & friends) and this contributed to their sense of isolation and loneliness.
- 2.14. The placement sufficiency has decreased during Covid19 due to many carers opting to keep their own families safe and not taking new placements.
- 2.15. Many parents have lost their jobs and poverty is likely to increase many factors in families that are associated with adverse childhood experiences.

Proposed changes in service delivery

- 2.16. The impact of the inadequate service provision prior 2017 and the subsequent Ofsted rating has seen an increase in pressures on services and as a result further investment has been required.
- 2.17. Croydon has a disproportionate number of children in care who are unaccompanied minors, because Lunar House- Home Office is located in Croydon. Years of underfunding from the Home Office and the pressures of looking after many children and care leavers has been significant for Croydon.

Non-Executive Template



- 2.18. An increase in early help offer, investment in systemic practice, a model of work across the practice system and investment in services for adolescents has seen a significant change in the way our services have been delivered post 2017 to date, which led to better outcomes for children.

April 2018		April 2020
Open Cases	5,198	4,197
Cases in early help	521	1084
Referrals	7112	5112
Child protection plans	568	467
Local children in care	558	518

- 2.19. As a directorate we are acutely aware that we can't continue to work in the way we did due to the council financial situation and a number of proposals have been put forward in relation to changes and reduction in services, some of these remain under consultation.

Areas	Saving £'m
Reconfigure and reduce services for young people	1.450
End Early Learning Collaboration contract	0.082
Cease the Family Group Conference Service	0.203
Reduce support for systemic model of practice	0.272
Reduce the numbers of children in care	0.794
Review care packages for children with disabilities	0.384
Remove support for young people with appeal rights exhausted	0.288
Restructure and reduce early help	0.424
Reconfigure children's centres	0.535
Reconfigure the emergency duty team	0.060
Additional education savings	0.876
Caseloads of 16 across all frontline services	1.065
Croydon Music and Arts grant match-funding waiver	0.034
Total	6.467

Early Help offer

- 2.20. In order to provide services within the financial constrain the proposal is to reconfigure Early Help as a centralised integrated offer. The aim is to retain multi-agency teams operating out of a smaller number of sites, retaining current functions on a reduced footprint e.g. family support and parenting workers, Domestic abuse and substance misuse specialists. The services will be following a more targeted approach – less universal services would be available.
- 2.21. The Family Solutions Service is an essential and integral part of Croydon's Early Help offer, however support to families would be reduced to and follow an 'eligibility criteria' moving forward.
- 2.22. As part of the government's Spending Review, it has been confirmed that the funding for the Troubled Families (TF) programme will continue into 2021/22. Currently, we are awaiting for further information from the MHCLG relating to Local Authority funding allocations for 21/22. Croydon have responded to a request from the MHCLG, and have asked to be invited to a focus group on ways to improve the TF programme in 21/22.
- 2.23. This partial reduction of Early Help services also includes the proposal to end the delivery of Pause, Safe Families and Family Group Conferencing. Some functions taken on within statutory services e.g. SW teams taking

responsibility for convening and implementing Family Group Conferences with support from the clinical team.

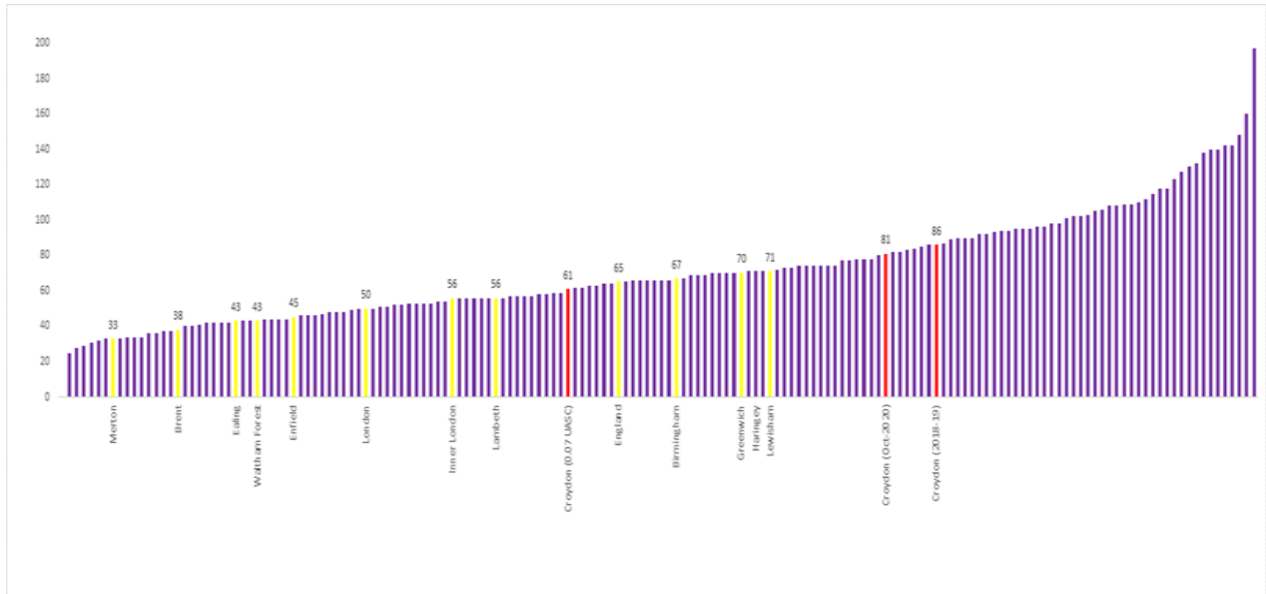
Adolescents Services

- 2.24. The proposal is to amalgamate the statutory work currently provided within the adolescent service into social work with families and social work with children looked after.
- 2.25. The services has been created to develop a specialism specifically for adolescents, with risk factors that are familial and contextual. The service takes on lead responsibility and case hold for these young people and their networks. The service also has a missing and exploitation and a return home interviewing team.
- 2.26. Given that our internal analysis shows that some of the young people known to the service have younger siblings, there is a need for a more holistic approach as opposed a specialist service. We also note that there are duplications with the service, resulting in additional costs which are not sustainable given the current financial constraints on the local authority.
- 2.27. There are the risks that the lack of specialist adolescent focus means that this cohort of vulnerable young people do not receive the current sustained focus and risk management approach they need and as a result we might see an increased number of young people coming into care and being both perpetrators and victims of serious youth violence. Partially the risks are mitigated by the role of the edge of care service under the Head of Service for Access, Support and Intervention.

Children looked after and Care Leavers

- 2.28. In March 2019 Croydon had 86 children looked after per 10000 population. By the end of September 2020, Croydon had 81/10000. This reduction is in part due to fewer unaccompanied minors arriving at the Home Office during Covid.

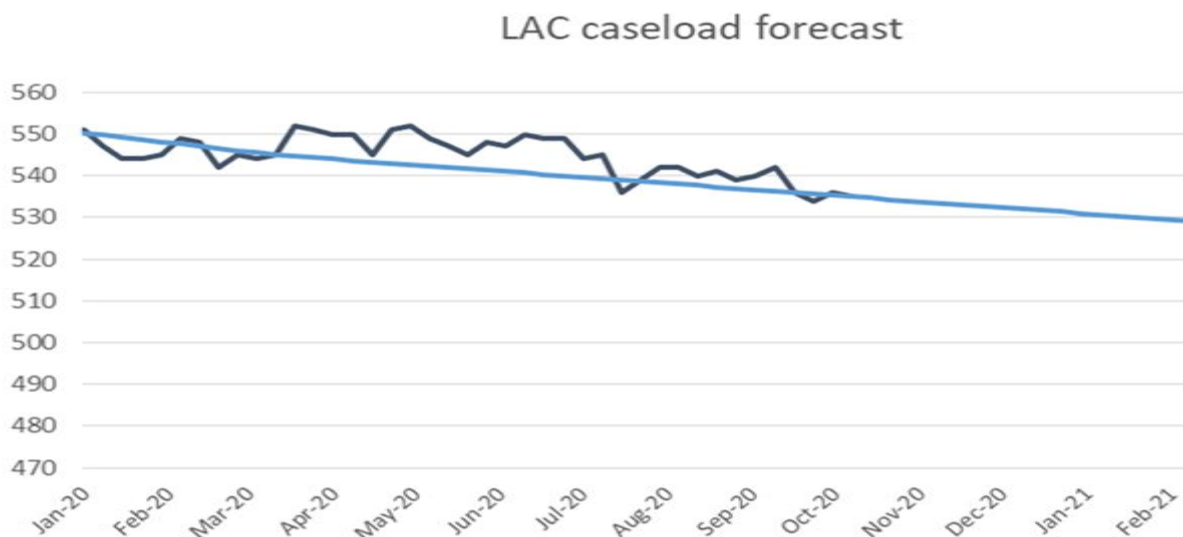
Non-Executive Template



In March 2019 Croydon had 86/10k of Children looked after

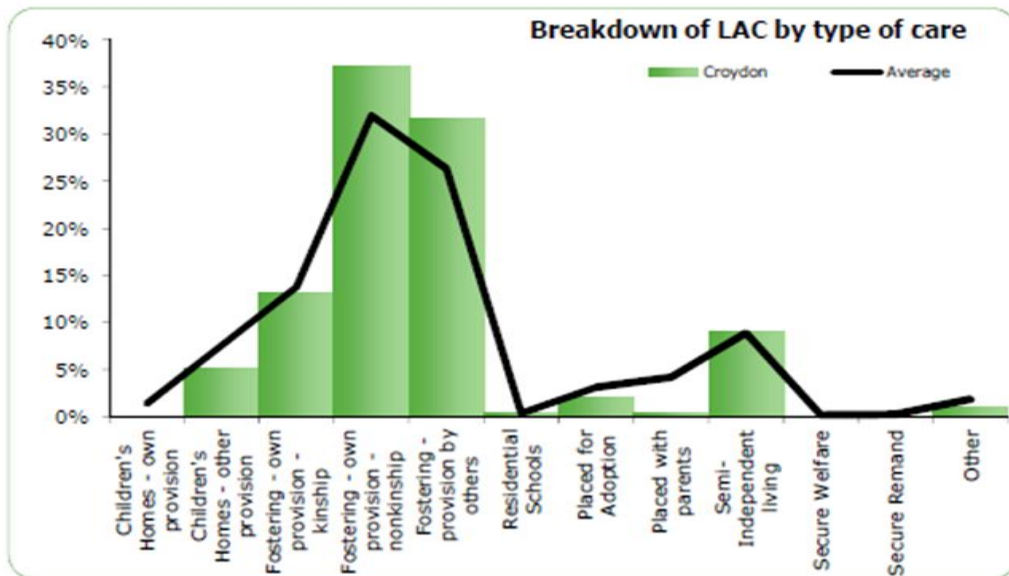
End of September 2020 Croydon has 81/10k of CLA a reduction of 5/10k per 0-17 population

- 2.29. Using the MHCLG demand modelling tool, based on 19/20 Local CLA data, it suggests that our numbers of children looked after will continue to reduce further this financial year. This trend may change post-Covid19 lockdowns. (Source: MHCLG Demand Modelling Toolkit V2.0 Oct 2020; CRS Data)



- 2.30. A substantial amount of work has taken place to understand how we can support our children looked after to live with carers or in accommodation that meets their needs.

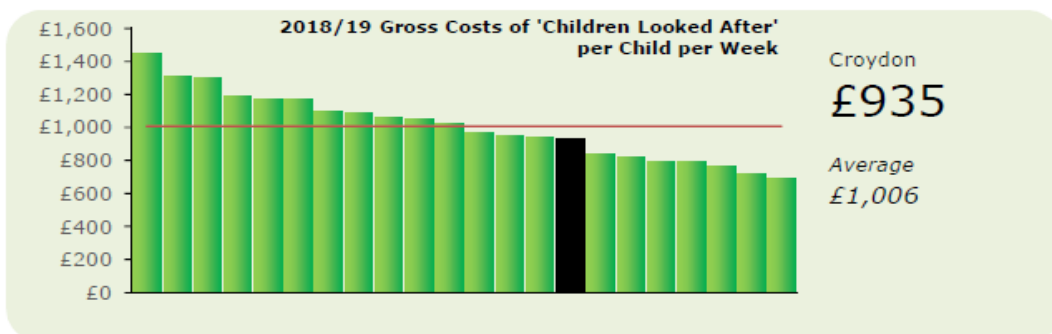
Breakdown of Looked After Children by type of care - 31/03/2019



Source: CIPFA Children Looked After Benchmarking Club 25/06/20

- 2.31. On average, more children looked after are placed with Croydon approved foster carers than any other provision. The in-house fostering resource is well utilised, however for a number of children with multiple difficulties we cannot find in-house carers and they are matched with IFA Foster carers and/or they require care in a residential setting .
- 2.32. The Corporate panel would be aware that children who require residential care are some of our most vulnerable children. They are often young people who have experienced a significant number of adversities and no other care option has worked for them. The demand of such provisions is high and costly but is essential for some of our children (6% of children are placed in Residential care).
- 2.33. The chart below highlights the average weekly cost per child in care.

Section 2a: Summary of 2018/19 Costs



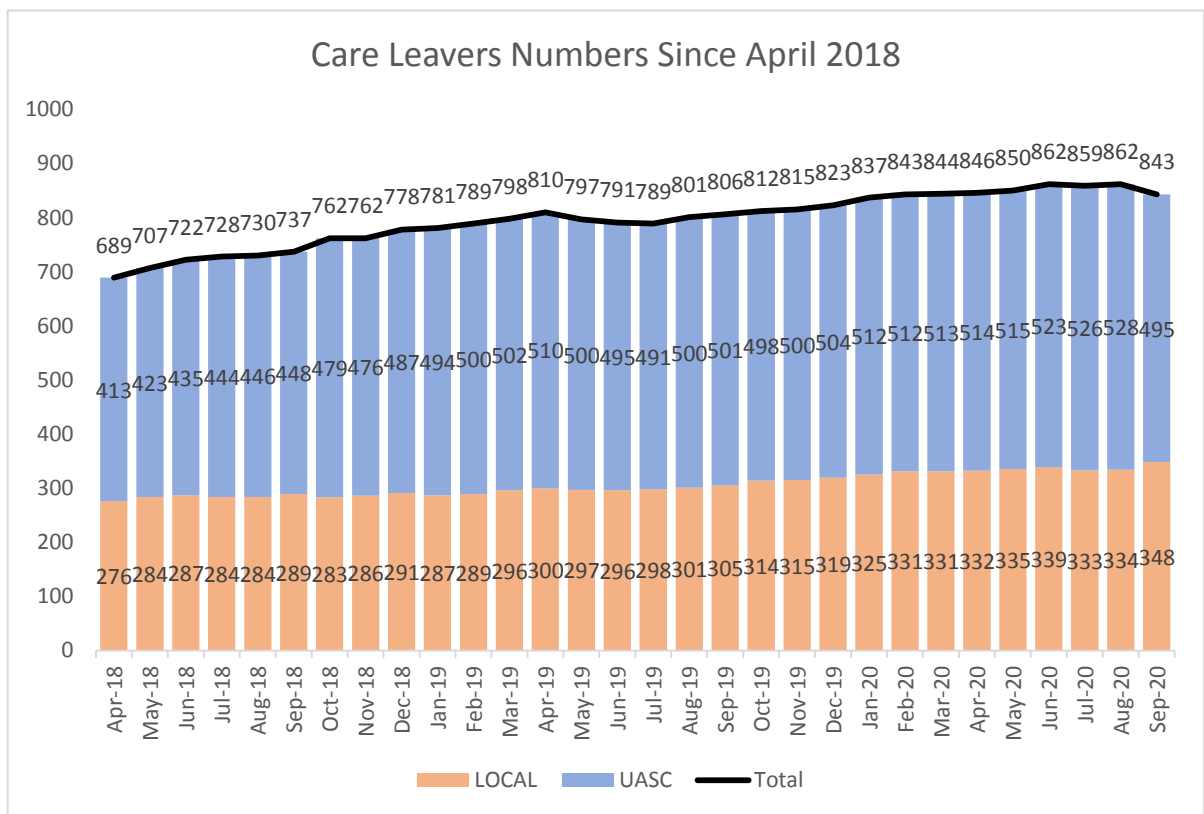
Source: CIPFA Children Looked After Benchmarking Club 25/06/20

Non-Executive Template

- 2.34. The number and rate per 10,000 of children in care has fallen over 2018-2020 however our placement budget remains consistently overspent. Based on the CIPFA average cost of looking after a child in care, the 2020/21 budget is sufficient for the equivalent of around 41 Children and young people per 10,000, whilst are current children looked after rate to 54 per 10,000. There is a significant funding gap.
- 2.35. Our focus remains on ensuring that children remain safe with families and enter our care when necessary to ensure their safety and wellbeing in accordance with our statutory duties and responsibilities.

Care Leavers

- 2.36. Our young people leaving care continue to require a substantial amount of support. We have over 800 young people we support and over 58% of these have entered our care as unaccompanied minors. The challenges of proving the right support, accommodation and assistance to such a large cohort of care leavers can't be underestimated.



- 2.37. We have a statutory responsibility to support our care leavers and UASC arriving in Croydon. In order to do so, we have continued to liaise with and lobby the Home Office and the DFE to provide the funding required to support our children and young people.

- 2.38. Going forward at practical level we will implement triple planning and work to implement changes in the way we work with young people with appeal rights exhausted, as this will impact on the budget overtime.

Initial analysis of the impact on Renewal Plan on Children

- 2.39. Above the context tells a story of organisational fragility in the context of ongoing improvement. The perfect storm of Covid19 and the council's financial position will not enable the service to continue its trajectory of improvement in the way this was envisaged.
- 2.40. Our children in care and care leavers in particular had yet to receive a level of care that as a council we could be fully content with. We have a significant number of improvements to make that are challenging in the best of times.
- 2.41. Looking after Children and Care Leavers is a corporate responsibility that requires a whole council response and support from all departments alongside partners to make sure we all embrace the responsibilities we have for our children.
- 2.42. Whilst the Renewal Plan makes explicit reference to the council's provision of essential statutory services this is at a minimum possible level and the impact that reductions in parts of other council services will have on the delivery of services for children and families is yet to be fully considered.
- 2.43. At this initial stage the following would need to be acknowledged by the corporate parenting panel:
- Changes in the community services that vulnerable families can access, partly due to financial pressures and Covid19
 - Reduction of early help offer and its impact on children and families needing support when in crisis
 - Changes and reduction of support for adolescents who present with vulnerabilities
 - Increase in Social Workers' caseloads and the impact this will have on support offered to children and families
 - Reduction in other non-statutory services who provided a vital services to care leavers for example – gateway, benefits advisors, housing offer, etc.
 - Changes to the Systemic support and clinical offer to support practice and intervention
 - Reviewing the Children with Disabilities care packages and how their support is delivered
 - Work to review our sufficiency and accommodation for children in care and care leavers

Immediate impact

- 2.44. The only spending allowed under the new measures is essential spend, and this means an increase in scrutiny of payments made to children in care and care leavers. Social Workers and Managers spend more time on monitoring spend and there are some delays in providing services to children and care leavers.
- 2.45. Some services that are not statutory are no longer provided to our children and care leavers (even if these might be of benefit)
- 2.46. Impact on recruitment and retention of staff, especially Social Workers and managers. Changes of Social workers impact on children ability to form and maintain relationships and get the right level of help, this is also applicable to foster carers support
- 2.47. The auditors' report refers to the lack of proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the council's use of resources. The spending controls introduced under the S114 notice have exposed fundamental, long-standing weaknesses in financial and business processes particularly for third party payments. This has resulted in delays in paying for placements and has already impacted on organisational reputation, reinforcing the view that Croydon does not pay providers promptly. Of deeper concern is the impact on placement stability for children and young people who are settled in their homes.
- 2.48. Increased prices, as placement providers try to mitigate the risks of late payments and the negative press around the council's financial position
- 2.49. Training for Social Workers and support they receive from business support.

Likely long term impact

- 2.50. Long term organisational instability and lack of sufficient resources will have an impact on the quality of services provided to children and young people.
- 2.51. Reliance on agency workers to support children is not a financial effective way of service delivery but is also not a positive way of supporting children who are vulnerable.
- 2.52. Providing a "minimum" service will mean that long term some unmet needs will likely surface and cause children and young people issues that will be harder to resolve.

- 2.53. Likely increase in number of children who require intervention due to crisis, including children entering care due to lack of early help and the impact that poverty has on families.

Measures in place to mitigate impact

- 2.54. In October 2020 Children's Services Improvement Board chaired by Eleanor Brazil was set up to consider how the services provided by the council continue to improve or meet the expected national and local standards.
- 2.55. There are regular reviews into the impact the changes made by the council have on children and young people and the risks highlighted with the council Leadership team.
- 2.56. Statutory services are provided and continue to be very closely monitored by very committed staff and managers who works hard to support our children and young people.

Summary

- 2.57. Croydon Council is in a unique position of having to work at this stage under a section 114 notice, however its challenges in terms of cost of delivering services for children and sustainability long term it is not unique.
- 2.58. In August 2020 Matt Dunkley, Chair of the ADCS Resources and Sustainability Policy Committee said: *"We agree that the pandemic has created a 'perfect storm' for council finances as costs have significantly increased and many vital income streams have reduced. Emergency funding from government has helped in the first phase, but according to the report without additional financial support councils face a £2 billion funding gap this year. Additional financial support for councils will be particularly important for children's social care, and it's crucial this is available when we reach our peak of activity. We expect this will arrive in the autumn when children go back to school and the hidden harms from the past six months become apparent. If we don't get the funding we need councils will have to make difficult choices about the future of valued local services and exhaust their reserves when we should be focussing efforts on our ongoing responses to the virus and helping children, families and communities recover. The research suggests potential ways the expected funding shortfall could be mitigated, including via increased grant funding from government or targeted support for councils. While these things may help they are short term solutions to a long term problem; the chronic underfunding of local*

government and children's services, we need an ambitious long term funding strategy to address this. Children's life chances depend on it."

- 2.59. On 24 September 2020 the ADCS noted that 4.2 million children are living in poverty in England, this means 3 in 10 children. The ADCS noted that 45% of these children are from a BAME background. It is also noted that one in eight children in England have a diagnosable mental health condition. The funding for services has reduced by 50% and this is even more significant in relation to children centres and young provisions. ADCS noted that there is an increase of 4.5% of children assessed as being in need and a 19% increase of children in care in England.
- 2.60. The challenge that Croydon has is far from unique but none the less is more challenging because of the local context and lack of resource to provide any investment to care and support our vulnerable children in the community and our children for which we have corporate parenting responsibilities.
- 2.61. Croydon had a developing Early Help & Children's Social Care that is very much impacted by the financial and Covid19 context and inevitably this will have an impact on how the service will move forward.
- 2.62. Croydon is one of the London Outer Boroughs with significant areas of deprivations and BAME population. Children from this minority background are likely to face disadvantage and inequality and is likely the resources will not be there to meet needs. Without resource it is likely our children in care would not be supported to achieve their potential and be the best they can be.
- 2.63. As a Corporate parent we have to provide good care to our children and care leavers and the ongoing challenges should not detract from our main aim and statutory responsibilities. We want our children to be safe and well cared for.

3. CONSULTATION

N/A

4. FINANCIAL AND RISK ASSESSMENT CONSIDERATIONS

4.1. Revenue and Capital consequences of report recommendations

As noted above there are a number of proposals to reconfigure the service delivery and commissioning of services in order to bring the expenditure in line with the council budget. The reduction is gradual over the next three financial years.

4.2. The effect of the decision

The services would need to be delivered within the allocated budget.

4.3. Risks

The allocated funding would be insufficient to meet the demand and this will impact on council ability to safeguard children.

4.4. Options

Review funding and impact as part of Children's Services Improvement Board.

4.5. Future savings/efficiencies

As detailed in the Renewal Plan

5. LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

5.1. NA

6. HUMAN RESOURCES IMPACT

6.1. At this stage all proposed staffing reductions are under consultation and will follow a clear HR process.

6.2. Unison and staff affected are part of the consultation process with any agreed changes taking effect by April 2021.

7. EQUALITIES IMPACT

7.1. NA for this report

8. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

8.1. NA

9. CRIME AND DISORDER REDUCTION IMPACT

9.1. NA

10. DATA PROTECTION IMPLICATIONS

10.1. **WILL THE SUBJECT OF THE REPORT INVOLVE THE PROCESSING OF 'PERSONAL DATA'?**

NO

10.2. **HAS A DATA PROTECTION IMPACT ASSESSMENT (DPIA) BEEN COMPLETED?**

NO

CONTACT OFFICER: Rodica Cobarzan , Head of Service, Children Looked After and care Leavers

This page is intentionally left blank