

Corporate Parenting Panel Agenda



To: Councillor Maria Gatland (Chair)

Councillors Sue Bennett, Mike Bonello, Samir Dwesar,
Maddie Henson, Tamar Nwafor, Helen Redfern and
Catherine Wilson

Co-optee Members

Virtual School: Shelley Davies, Angela Griffiths, Sarah Bailey
CLA Designated Health Professionals: Dr Julia Simpson, Charity
Kanotangudza
Health Commissioners: Roneeta Campbell-Butler
EMPIRE: Young People and Council Staff
Care Leaver Representative
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 **Thursday, 23 June 2022** at **5.00 pm** in **F10, Town Hall, Katharine Street, Croydon CR0 1NX**

KATHERINE KERSWELL
Chief Executive and Head of Paid Service
London Borough of Croydon
Bernard Weatherill House
8 Mint Walk, Croydon CR0 1EA

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Wednesday, 15 June 2022

The agenda papers for all Council meetings are available on the Council website
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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 (Pages 5 - 12)

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 27 April 2022 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. Terms of Reference

[To Follow]

7. Corporate Parenting Panel Moving Forward & Forward Plan

8. Children in Care Council E.M.P.I.R.E. Update

9. Children's Social Care Placement Sufficiency & Update on South London Commissioning Programme

[To Follow]

10. Independent Reviewing Officer Annual Report (Pages 13 - 24)

The Independent Reviewing Officer Annual Report is attached.

11. Children in Care Performance Scorecard (Pages 25 - 28)

The Children in Care Performance Scorecard for May 2022 is attached.

12. 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.

13. Exclusion of the Press and Public

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

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

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Corporate Parenting Panel

Meeting of Corporate Parenting Panel held on Wednesday, 27 April 2022 at 5.07pm.
This meeting was held remotely.

MINUTES

Present: Councillor Alisa Flemming (Chair);

Councillors Maddie Henson, Bernadette Khan, Mike Bonello, Sue Bennett and Maria Gatland

Co-optee Members

Angela Christmas (Foster Carer Representative), and
Porsha Robinson (EMPIRE)

Also

Present:

Shaun Hanks (Head of Quality Assurance)
Brian Amos (Service Manager)
Anna Bangerter (Interim Manager for Fostering Assessment and Recruitment)
Chloe Gardner (Marketing Officer for Fostering)
Farhana and Mohammed Rafi (Foster Carers)
Paul and Gloria Hutchinson (Foster Carers)
Pearl Earle (Mentor)
Susan Simpson (Mentor)
Lajay Taylor (Youth Engagement Worker – EMPIRE)

Apologies: Co-optee Members: Sarah Bailey, Manny Kwamin
Councillor Pat Clouder

PART A

21/22 Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 16 March 2022 were agreed as an accurate record.

22/22 Disclosures of interest

There were none.

23/22 Urgent Business (if any)

There was none.

24/22 Update on actions agreed at previous meeting(s)

It was noted that there were a few outstanding actions following the previous meetings, such as, data relating to adopted children and information on care experienced young people, to be completed. The action relating to housing support for the increased uptake in adoption had been completed.

25/22 EMPIRE: Update on activities and engagement

EMPIRE updated the Panel on the activities they have had since the last Panel, which included fun, active and educational activities during Easter.

EMPIRE was also planning Sunday Service, where care leavers had the opportunity to address any arising issues they may have.

EMPIRE attended a Virtual School Head Teacher conference in partnership with Pan London, which provided a great opportunity for care leavers to raise comments to help change the way Virtual Schools delivered support for young people.

EMPIRE current theme was Unity and this was aimed to reunite with siblings and build relationships.

The Chair thanked officers for the work and support given to EMPIRE and welcomed the idea of unity for young people to maintain connections and contact with their siblings.

26/22 Annual Report of the Fostering Service 2021/22

The Corporate Parenting Panel considered the Annual Report of the Fostering Service 2021/22, which provided an overview of the management and outcomes of the service. The Panel received a short presentation overview from the Service Manager, Brian Amos.

In brief, the Panel heard:

Statement of Purpose:

The Statement of Purpose document was prescribed by Fostering Services Regulations since 2011 and it had set out the Fostering Agency Services' aims and objectives, services, and facilities that it would provide.

Foster carer recruitment:

In relation to the foster carer recruitment, the Interim Manager for Fostering Assessment and Recruitment, Anna Bangerter, and Marketing Officer for Fostering, Chloe Gardner, shared that the service was brought back in-house, providing a very good performance given the difficult time for fostering recruitment. 80% of the budget was moved to online due to the covid-19

pandemic, and included Facebook advertising, geographical targeted online articles, Google display network, banner advertising to name a few.

The new experienced team continued to target marketing areas and intelligent prospecting, which included remarketing, search marketing and contextual remarketing targeting online interests.

Experienced assessment process – Feedback from Newly Foster Carers

The Panel heard feedback from guest speakers who were newly approved foster carers, in relation to their experience of the assessment and panel process being approved.

Guest speakers Mohammed and Farhana shared that they had started their process before the covid-19 pandemic, which delayed their assessment. They persevered and completed their assessment in 2021. They found the process and procedure complicated and thorough and had helpful staff to help with the process. The newly foster carers were happy with Croydon.

Guest speakers Paul and Gloria were recently approved in February and had a good experience during the application process, which was thorough, long, and extensive, though it had opened conversations and they had seen the end reward. The experience had helped them to open as an individual, and they found the service very helpful and supportive. The foster carers appreciated their role in preparation to support young person.

Key elements of mentoring and work and services within Foster Care

In relation to the mentoring service support, Mentors Pearl Earle and Susan Simpson, informed the Panel that the purpose of mentoring was to provide support to newly approved foster carers and also provide support during their journey. Mentees would be met once a week during the first three months and fortnightly during the latter three months of a six-month period where comments would be feedback to recruitment or training team and providing space for mentoring. Enhanced mentoring was also provided to connected carers who would enter the fostering service via a different route, this helped facilitate a change in the mindset of expectations versus reality and supported specific needs with the provision of peer support. Mentoring also pushed for the mentees to take part in other organisations and training. Mentees benefited from loyal and experienced carers by being part of the mentoring programme.

Panel Members welcomed the presentation which provided a good insight to the mentoring service and the fostering recruitment. It was also refreshing to hear of the challenging experiences in the voices of foster carers which had helped understand processes. Further, the progress of the project of the Muslim community developing was also welcomed.

In response to queries raised by the Panel, the Interim Manager for Fostering Assessment and Recruitment and the Marketing Officer for Fostering clarified the following:

- In relation to further projects and whether there was progress of recruiting foster carers within other parts of the community, officers responded that there was a staff member within the team who was delegated to do community work and had visited schools, faith groups and community groups to build relationships, where in return strong candidates were put forward.

At 5:50pm, Councillor Maddie Henson left the meeting.

- In relation to the question around the voices of care experienced young people taken into consideration within the recruitment of foster carers to ensure the right foster carers were sought, officers informed that they use the feedback from the annual review from care experienced children which were incorporated into the three-day skills-to-fostering course being delivered. The specification was warranted as the care experienced young people's experience would help provide the qualities in what would make a good foster carer with the feedback used for the recruitment process. EMPIRE highlighted that they had done a lot of work around this and would liaise with officers, further highlighted that they had previously involvement in the skills-to-fostering training and requested for care experienced young people to have a role as paid staff on the panel, which was welcomed.

The Panel **RESOLVED** to:

1. Note the evaluation of the Fostering Service as set out in the Annual Report including the CFCA's report;
2. Approve the Statement of Purpose 22/23; and
3. Endorse the key priorities for development in 22/23 as set out in this report.

The Chair thanked the officers their report and the guest speakers for their comments and shared experience. Further comments from Panel Members thanked the Service Manager for the improvements in the fostering service which had made a very huge difference today.

At 6:30pm Councillor Mike Bonello left the meeting.

27/22 Corporate Parenting Panel Annual Report 2021-2022

The Corporate Parenting Panel considered the Corporate Parenting Panel Annual Report 2021-2022, which provided an overview of the work presented to the Corporate Parenting Panel in 2021-2022 and is a celebration of the success, achievements and areas of improvement of Croydon's Children Looked After and Care Leavers. The Panel received a short presentation overview from the Head of Quality Assurance, Shaun Hanks.

In brief summary, the Panel heard that:

- Overall, in 2021-2022 year was marked by the covid-19 pandemic, restructure within the service which integrated unaccompanied asylum seeking children.
- There was a changed in the demographics which saw a reduction in looked after children, an increase in Black and Black British children and mixed ethnicity.
- 84% of children were in fostering, where 50% of the foster carers used were from Croydon.
- In terms of risk, there was 17% of young people who go missing from care and 56% of return to home interviews undertaken which needed more improvement.
- The Health Operational Group had focused on the quality of the health assessments and the timeliness of the assessments, which needed more focus.
- Two thirds of the care experienced young people were unaccompanied asylum seeking children.
- There were 75% of 17-18 years olds, and 59% of 19-21 year olds engaged in Education Employment and Training, which was slightly higher than statistical neighbours. More work was channelled around this.
- There were fourteen children are adopted.
- EMPIRE had provided outstanding service in support provided to young people and the engagement from young people.
- There was a strong independent visiting and advocacy service provided to the young people, and there were work to expand services to 18-25 year olds who equally required support.
- The priorities for 2022-2023 included reviewing the experience of care and identifying differences; reviewing the support that works for care experienced 16-18 year olds; missing children; the systemic understanding of relationships and trauma informed practice; and to increase 'local' homes in fostering which would be sufficient and close to Croydon.

Panel Members thanked the officers for the annual report which was seen as a huge improvement. The priorities going forward was welcomed.

In response to queries raised by the Panel, the Head of Quality Assurance clarified the following:

- In relation to whether there was policy in place to support care leavers up until aged 25, officers confirmed that since 2018 the legislation requested for support to be given to young people up until age 25 if this was what they required. The service was putting in better services to help the leaving care experienced young people with additional support.
- In relation to the trauma and adolescence review that was conducted, officers informed that the work had been conducted through the children's safeguarding partnership and across the agencies. Though there was an increase in crime, and there was a better understanding in trauma following the high risk assessments and multiagency approach which had taken place.
- In relation to the comment around work done to increase the number of foster carers for larger sibling groups, officers informed that within the fostering recruitment this was a focus area, additionally, a lot of the sibling groups accommodated often came from court, and the work with the legal teams and support would help review trends, ethnicity and matching. The Chair welcomed the work around this.

The Panel **RESOLVED** to approve the Corporate Parenting Panel Annual Report of 2021-2022 to be taken to Full Council in July.

In any other business, a Panel Member addressed her concern for unaccompanied asylum seeking children in the two-tier system particularly relating to the emotional wellbeing not considered [in a particular case]. It was highlighted and addressed by the Chair that children who were vulnerable and experienced trauma had received the support required, as Croydon was a borough that welcomed all children. Further, officers responded and acknowledged where there were failures and have liaised with services to ensure the system was better for unaccompanied asylum seeking children.

28/22 Children in Care Performance Scorecard

The Corporate Parenting Panel considered the Children in Care Performance Scorecard which provided an overview of the March month. The Panel received an overview from the Head of Quality Assurance, Shaun Hanks, who highlighted the following:

- There was an overall decrease in the number of children looked after, though there was a slight uplift in March – with 16 USAC that came.
- Visits within timescales – had a better performance with 6 weekly visits, though the 4 weekly needed improvement.
- Up-to-date reviews saw a completion of 92% of the targeted 95%.

- There was a disappointment in the figures where young people aged 16-18 with a care plan (77%) and also eligible for a pathway plan (71%). The numbers had dipped down due to staffing.
- There were a number of green performances which was good.
- The percentage of foster carers' most recent announced visit within timescales had also decreased with a 82% of the targeted 95%, which was also due to staffing.
- The percentage of 17-21 year olds and 19-21 year olds now in employment, education or training had both increased by 1% which was better than the scorecard provided in February though this still required improvement. The numbers was however statistically better than the neighbouring boroughs.

Panel Members welcomed the performance scorecard which had shown several green performances that was good and improved, though there were great concerns with the continuous red indicators.

Officers responded that there was often a gradual improvement with the red performances before the percentage would fall, and the service was continuously working hard to monitor the staffing and caseloads to maintain improvement.

29/22 How has the Panel helped Children in Care today?

It was helpful to hear from the mentoring team, also, directly from the new foster carers relating to the fostering, challenges and process of the thorough scrutiny which had brought reassurance in providing great carers.

The fostering service report highlighted good work and improvement. It was also highlighted that the work of the Croydon Foster Carers Association with the fostering service received positive outcomes making everything a better offer for the young people.

30/22 Work Programme

The work programme in the agenda had shown what the Panel had seen this 2021-2022 municipal year. The work programme was to be reviewed for the new municipal year.

31/22 Exclusion of the Press and Public

This was not required.

The meeting ended at 7.18 pm

Signed:

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Date:

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REPORT TO:	Corporate Parenting Board 23/05/2022
SUBJECT:	Independent Reviewing Officers Annual Report
LEAD OFFICER:	Róisín Madden; Director; Children’s Social Care
CABINET MEMBER:	Councillor Maria Gatland
WARDS:	All
PUBLIC/EXEMPT:	Public

SUMMARY OF REPORT:

This is a brief updating report to the Corporate Parenting Panel re-align the annual reporting cycle for the IRO Service. This report is best read in conjunction with the IRO Report covering the period October 2021 – October 2022.

FINANCIAL IMPACT: None

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Corporate Parenting Panel is asked to note the report

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 Independent Reviewing Officer Service and its effectiveness and impact on children’s and young people’s safety and care in Croydon between 31st October to 31st April 2022.

This is a brief updating report to the Corporate Parenting Panel re-align the annual reporting cycle for the IRO Service. This report is best read in conjunction with the IRO Report covering the period October 2021 – October 2022.

1. Introduction

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 refer to:

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- 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.

IROs 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.

The IRO Service

2. 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.

The service manager since February 2018 is Adam Fearon-Stanley, who also has responsibility for the Independent Visitor Service since August 2019 and continues to jointly monitor the Advocacy Service provided by Barnardo's.

After retirement of an IRO in 2021, our longest serving IRO is retiring at the end beginning of June 2022. In addition to existing underspend, this allows recruitment of 2 IRO to the service. There are 12 IRO currently in post.

All these services are migrating to the Quality, Commissioning and Practice Improvement Directorate. This aligns services purposed to quality assuring and developing practice for children across the local authority in one directorate. This will increase our ability to hold the mirror up to colleagues practice to achieve better outcomes for children and young people and strengthen the position from which to be curious, and whether required offer respectful and robust challenge. Strategically this is an opportunity to enhance the way in which children's voices inform practice, policy, and procedural development.

3. Caseloads and Children Looked After

The recommended average caseload as set by the IRO Handbook for an IRO is between 50 and 70 Children Looked After. During 2020 - 2021 the average IRO case hold has reduced to between 55 and 60 children. Part time IROs (3 days per week) case hold between 34 and 36. This continues to be the case.

The composition of the Children Looked After population continues to reduce, with numbers of local children looked after now in line with our statistical neighbours at approximately 509 children. A sustained decrease in Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children also continues to ensure that there is sufficient capacity within the IRO service.

As of April 21st, 2022, 533 children were looked after by the local authority, which continues the sustained downward trend described in the previous IRO Annual Report. The themes and practice analysed in the previous IRO Annual Report have not substantially.

There continues to be a focus on Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaires with all children and ensuring that these are used to evaluate children's emotional and mental wellbeing with them.

4. Footprint of the IRO:

IROs convened 532 CLA Reviews October 2021 to April 2022. IROs carried out 306 Midway Reviews in the period 31st October 2021 to 31st April 2022. IROs collectively record an average of 200 case notes per month, capturing their work with children, families and colleagues.

I anticipate that our footprint will continue to change, as the number of children looked after reduces and we continue to evaluate how we record our interventions in summary and streamlined to demonstrate impact, not only tasks carried out. The number of case notes has decreased if midway reviews are used creatively to capture different strands

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of work in a short time-period for instance. Alternately midway reviews may increase for the same reasons. IRO are travelling more, hence balancing the number of meetings and monitoring activity they can undertake.

Our end of year reporting to the DFE for 2020 – 2021 shows that 95% of children had all of their CLA Reviews within time frame. Reporting to the DFE for 2021 to 2022 showed that 93% of children had all of their CLA Reviews in time frame.

CLA Reviews taking place in time frames are dependent on many factors. Some of these are outside of the IRO control most commonly where children and/or important family members and/or professionals are unable to attend on planned dates.

There is also a small number of CLA Reviews that are set outside of time frame where delay is considered purposeful with the agreement of the IRO Service Manager.

The performance indicator allows for this occurring in a proportion of children's meetings each year. To date (based on 1277 CLA Reviews per annum) this equates to 64 children not having an up-to-date review over the year.

Performance to date in the new year indicates that up to 26 children's meetings may occur outside of timescale in addition to the of 64 children's meetings that do not happen in time scale if the 95% performance indicator is not met.

Any child's meeting taking place outside of statutory time frames may impact on the outcomes for children and young people, it may be a missed opportunity for children and young people to contribute to their care plan, for networks to convene to understand the child's and young person's lived experience, for all to celebrate success and concerns or worries, and for the IRO to review the progress of children's care plans and identify delay to be addressed.

We therefore seek to minimise delay to CLA Reviews wherever we can, while also recognising that for these meetings to be purposeful for children and young people we accept that some meetings will be unavoidably late.

IRO are now travelling to carry out face to face visits and meetings with children that we began in July 2021 and increased through August and September 2021 before temporary lockdown in January 2022. While we rebalance our practice IRO Service Manager will continue to evaluate our recording, and this will be supported by the newly arriving IRO Manager as it is recognised that this is an area of performance that requires continual monitoring and improvement. The practice of meeting in parts, use of virtual platforms in addition to face-to-face meetings will also contribute to improved performance.

This work is supplemented by IRO performance indicators – CLA Review in timescale and participation of children in CLA Reviews now regularly reported on as an exception to the Executive Director and Practice Improvement Board.

Over the next 6 months there will be a renewed focus to explore the quality of our care plans for children and young people with children, social workers, and team managers. While there are many good and improving plans, IROs continue to face dilemmas

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when reviewing children's plans which they will raise with colleagues We anticipate this will be reflected in their footprint i.e., within the records of Review Meetings, Midway Reviews and case notes.

Our aspiration is that Care Plans for children will set out how a child's needs are met, in a way that recognises the child's lived experience of trauma, loss, or change. For our children's Care Plans to be co-produced and used with children and parents as dynamic documents which are timely and congruent with the child's court care plan which reflect changes in their life. To support social workers to reflect contingency planning, including parallel plans for permanence i.e., communicating the dynamic nature of planning for children where we are simultaneously assessing different permanency options.

This has been developed through team discussions, and quarterly cross service discussions with IRO, CP chair, Team Managers and Assistant Team Managers focusing on the meanings of plans, application in practice, and how we support one another to achieve both compliance – that they are completed in a timely way, and quality – that they are child and family led.

The service plan developed for the IRO Service will reflect the practice areas being focused on within children services – curiosity, fatherhood and supervision. IROs are currently discussing how we can use our position in the local authority, and the way in which we deliver children's meetings to tangibly contribute to practice development in in our own social work and in the social work of others.

5. Participation

Where children, parent, and carers feel heard, children's meetings and wider IRO involvement can be a platform for children and parents to understand children's care plans that is invaluable.

Our child participation in CLA Review's target is that 80% of children will participate in their CLA Review. This target will be increased to reflect the importance of children's participation being facilitated by IROs.

During the period April 2020 – April 2021 76% of children had participated in their CLA Review. This has continued to spike with variance as great as 86% of children participating in April 2021 for instance, and 72% in the following month. Year end participation of children was 77%

Conventional approaches to the child's looked after review as a single meeting to talk about children, where a child must be physically present throughout, may limit the ability of a child to participate. Conversely a CLA Review understood as a process where we speak with children and with others about children in a series of meetings increases the ways in which children can be included in their own meeting.

Practice experience during the Pandemic indicated that use of different platforms and co-ordinating smaller meetings with different participants increased children's inclusion, particularly teenagers. However, this was not reflected in the

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performance indicator that has remained consistently between 70% and 75% once we adjust for delay in recording i.e., IROs have 20 working days to record meetings which creates a lag of 1 month in accurate reporting. Performance Indicator as is, would suggest that 1 in 4 children do not take part in their meetings.

In September 2021, the definition of a CLA Review was elaborated as below

A CLA Review may be a single meeting or comprise several meetings with different participants. A child may attend some or all of these parts depending on their needs and vulnerabilities. Hence attendance relates to a child's participation in a process or may connote their physical presence in a single meeting.

Definition of the PN codes (how IRO record children and young people's participation) were also elaborated, to reflect the definition above and enable IRO to record children's participation congruent to practice.

Code	Definition	Examples
PN0	Child aged under 4 at time of Review	From 4th birthday child's views to be obtained and codes below used. Until then the child should be seen at Review by IRO if possible and this recorded as well as Code PN0
PN1	Child/young person attends virtually or physically to a whole or part of a meeting and speaks for him or herself Our current descriptor Child attended & spoke for self	Participation in the CLA Review process, where a child agrees with IRO how they will be included in the CLA Review process and which meetings they will attend and with whom. The child gives their own views in the meetings or parts they attend.
PN2	Child/young person attends virtually or physically to a whole or part of a meeting and an advocate speaks on his or her behalf Our current descriptor Child attended - advocate spoke	Child/young person attends as above but IRO or <u>advocate</u> expresses their views. An advocate is anyone the child/young person has consented to expressing their views on their behalf e.g., social worker, foster carer, Guardian, parent, friend, teacher etc. IRO must confirm that the child/young person's consent for advocate has been received and record this.
PN3	Child/young person attends virtually or physically and conveys his or her view symbolically (non-verbally) Our current descriptor Child attended - gave views nonverbally	Child/young person attends as above and uses nonverbal communication e.g., writing, sign language, drawings, Makaton This may be a more common method for some children/young people with Disabilities.
PN4	Child/young person attends virtually or physically but does not speak for him or herself, does not convey his or her views symbolically and does not ask an advocate to speak for him or her Our current descriptor Child attended without contributing	Attendance without contribution. Child/young person may attend but not express a view e.g., they may say nothing because they have special needs that make it difficult to understand what is being asked or difficult to communicate their views or they attend but do not wish to engage with the Review process. A child or young person must have been given a choice to attend or not. All children with disabilities regardless

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		of ability to participate in Review should be seen by IRO as part of Review Process if appropriate .
PN5	Child/young person does not attend but briefs an advocate to speak for him or her Our current descriptor Child not attended; advocate briefed with views	A child /young person may not be able to participate in the CLA Review process and should not be forced to do so. However, their views should be obtained. An advocate as defined in 2 above, can express Child/young person's views, with their consent . The views can be expressed to the advocate by any means - written on paper, email, or text, verbally in person, by phone, by audio /video/CD /viewpoint. Views (including 'nothing to say') expressed prior, during or after (within one month) Review Meeting are accepted. IRO will record the views and how expressed in Review Record or addendum to Record,
PN6	Child/young person does not attend but conveys his or her feelings to the Review by a facilitative medium Our current descriptor Child not attended & sent views	Child/young person expresses their views directly to Review, i.e., <u>not an IRO or advocate</u> but any other format - written, verbally, visually, symbolically as above either at or within 1 week of initial or 1 month or subsequent reviews of Review meeting.
PN7	Child/young person does not attend nor are his or her views conveyed in any way to Review Our current descriptor Child not attended & did not send views	E.g., situation where child / young person is missing, or where they been offered all or any of the above ways to convey views but do not respond or response is they do not wish to participate. However, if the child/young person's response is that they have no views to express or which they wish to have considered within the CLA Review process this should be coded under one of the above as appropriate.

This was distributed by email, discussed in team meeting, and referred to in monthly feedback to IRO about this performance indicator. The desired increase in reported participation had not occurred at last reporting which analysed December, January and February participation reporting for themes to inform actions.

Positively March participation reported at **82%** which is above performance target despite the year end culminating in **77%**

April participation currently reports at **77%** with 18 CLA Reviews to be recorded, this is 33% of all CLA Reviews this month, suggesting that when all recorded April participation could potentially report at performance target or above if IRO practice is consistent across March and April.

There will be co-ordinated work by IRO Service Manager and newly arriving IRO manager to sustain children's participation in their meetings

Dispute resolution and escalation

A significant aspect of IROs' 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

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role is about good quality conversations and appropriate challenge between the IRO and others (e.g., child/ young person/ social worker/ parent/ carer/ school).

The Croydon Escalation and Resolution Process (CERP) shows that 54 CERPs have been raised by IROs in relation to 49 children in the year ending April 2022. This is a continuing reduction by almost a third in the number of CERPs raised in the previous reporting year. Previously this reduction was attributed to the impact of increased oversight of care planning through formal panels and an improved reflective culture at midway reviews where challenge to care planning is viewed as positive and helpful.

Robust auditing led by our Quality Assurance Consultants continue to support us to identify areas of strength and also learning. IRO activity, especially where challenging practice which has been found to be inadequate continues to be a focus area. This is particularly relevant where IRO elect to use Advocacy, Complaints or exhaustive discussions as opposed to formal escalation to exert influence in children's best interests.

The current format is not effective on children's recording system, requiring several different managers to potentially complete and send information back and forth which is a barrier. While the CERP protocol drew from practice in good and outstanding boroughs when drafted, in retrospect language used within it is shaming, and inculcates blame. Neither of which promote collegiate working or invites a positive response from colleagues.

The use of the CERP protocol, also hinges on the use of authority, the degree to which IRO are confident in using that authority when we are in dispute with social work teams requires further discussion not solely with the IRO Service, but also the wider practice system to understand how the use of authority by IRO is viewed, which in turn influences the responses of others to IRO and the confidence of IRO is executing this part of their role.

Where alerts have been raised by the IRO Service this has been 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
- A child not being visited, or required reports or care plans not being completed for the Child Looked after Review

Our challenge and scrutiny continue to be present outside of the CERP process and our increased IRO footprint evidences our high support and high challenge within a continuum of IRO activity.

The strength of our relationships with colleagues, enables our challenge to collaboratively and contributes to wider discussions in networks about the care planning.

In our thematic audit, 'we found that as a service we continue to face dilemmas about when the threshold to raise a formal escalation is met. There is concern at whether these are effective ways of resolving practice issues for children and progressing children's care plans which is our highest context. This is particularly the case when the use of complaints, advocacy or informal discussion is achieving the same objectives. In this audit several issues were seen where a CERP would have been merited. This included a child not being visited in timescale and over a number of months, the repeated failure to enact previous review decision in the context of re-allocation of social workers and decision-making being made outside of the appropriate level of operational management'.

'IROs are intervening effectively on children's behalf on discrete care issues but continue to use informal means over and above formal escalation. This can obscure the impact that they have had to improve outcomes for children in care. This is also a measure of effective relationships with colleagues. These have been steadily improved over the last 2 years and accelerated by IROs' accessibility while working virtually'.

Given the above, the existing formal escalation process – CERPs – will be reviewed across Quality Assurance. Continuing discussion within the service tells us that IROs continue to wrestle with the dilemma's detailed. We wish to explore the development of an approach that privilege's collaborative working with colleagues and enables IROs to meet the expectation that they formally identify good practice and also drift and delay. The arrival of an IRO manager will give impetus to this work which will be co-ordinated with the Child Protection Chairs who also use CERPs and informed by dialogue with social work services.

6. Complaints and Compliments:

The Complaints leaflet revised in 2017-18 for children and young people is distributed by CLA admin to all children and carers who receive invites to Looked After Children Reviews. Given the time elapsed since revision it is necessary to refresh these documents for accessibility and accuracy.

Several IROs 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.

Where practice issues are raised informally, the IRO Service Manager addresses this, usually by bringing the professional network together, to explore our different perspectives and agree the best way forward.

The IRO Service Manager meets quarterly with the Children's Complaints Officer to highlight themes in complaints. They are also copied to the weekly Complaints bulletin.

We have been encouraging IROs to recognise and promote good practice where they see it. IROs praise both social workers practice with children and the quality of their written work and presentation. It is recognised by the IRO Service that alongside

challenge we need to continue to support our colleagues through recognising good work.

7. 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 to 97 children looked after or care experienced young people (as of October 2021), and this reflects the average number of children, young people and care leavers open to their service at any one time. A range of issues have been addressed including:

- Quality of housing to care leavers
- Savings and entitlements predominantly care leavers
- Supporting children and young people in CLA Reviews, or to express their views about proposed changes in living arrangements that they do not agree to.

The IRO Service Manager has supported the Advocacy Service to further raise specific children and young people with senior managers where issues being pursued continue to be unresolved.

Barnardo's Advocacy Leaflet for children and young people is distributed by CLA admin to all children and carers who receive invites to Looked After Children Reviews.

There are quarterly meetings to plan and support promotion and referral to Advocacy directly to children, and to raise awareness in the social work teams.

Feedback (below) from the most recent quarterly report by Barnardo's was extremely positive and indicated that the Advocacy provided to children and young people in Croydon is continuing to strengthen, as are the key relationships between council officers that enable this.

Good News

- *This quarter we have seen timely responses to complaints.*
- *We have seen three long-standing housing cases resolved, and young families housed.*
- *After drawing the attention of the care leaving service to young people being blocked from receiving PA support on request, clear action has been taken and 5 young people have been assigned PAs.*
- *I would like to thank J- B this quarter as she has been extremely proactive in escalating the needs of young people who are facing homelessness and are rough sleeping.*
- *I would also like to thank LF who has been very patient and has proactively sought solutions for young people with housing issues or young people who have required PA support.*
- *Service manager, AF-S has also been extremely helpful in supporting difficult meetings with children looked after teams when managing complex situations requiring careful management and a joint response.*

Non-Executive Template

- *DD (CLA Service Manager) continues to be very positive about the advocacy service and always welcomes our involvement.*
- *A high number of cases were closed, 2/3 of which were successfully resolved.*

Conclusion:

The IRO Service in Croydon is adapting to practice where face to face working is not restricted by the Pandemic, and we are continuing to understand how our footprint is changing in this context.

The staffing profile of the service is changing as is our management structure, simultaneously the service is moving into a new directorate.

We continue to hold in mind learning that was explored in our previous Annual Report and this should be read in conjunction with that document

There remain areas of development as identified in the October 2021 – October 2022 Annual Report which have progressed in terms of plans, participation, and advocacy. Relaunching the CERP protocol or an equivalent approach has become more pressing, and our move to a new directorate is an opportunity to reset this and refresh material that supports children's complaints.

I am confident that the changes the service face are an exciting opportunity to grapple with these in a different way and with renewed energy for children and young people.

Author: Adam Fearon-Stanley (IRO Service Manager)

Report agreed:

Dawn West (Acting HOS Safeguarding & QA)

1. CONSULTATION

N/A

2. LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

N/A

3. HUMAN RESOURCES IMPACT

N/A

4. EQUALITIES IMPACT

N/A

5 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

N/A

6 CRIME AND DISORDER REDUCTION IMPACT

N/A

7 DATA PROTECTION IMPLICATIONS

7.1 WILL THE SUBJECT OF THE REPORT INVOLVE THE PROCESSING OF 'PERSONAL DATA'?

NO

8 Approved by: Róisín Madden Director Children's Social Care

CONTACT OFFICER: Adam Fearon-Stanley; Service Manager; adam.fearon-stanley@croydon.gov.uk

Indicator Number	Indicator Title	Polarity	2021/22										2022-23					RO	2022-23 Target	RAG	YTD/LATEST	2022-23 YTD or latest	DfE Published Croydon 2020-21	Stats Nbr Average 2020-21	London 2020-21	England 2020-21
			Jun-21	Jul-21	Aug-21	Sep-21	Oct-21	Nov-21	Dec-21	Jan-22	Feb-22	Mar-22	Apr-22	May-22												
Children Looked After (CLA)																										
CLA 1	Number of CLA at the end of the month		633	622	616	595	589	570	575	547	540	559	545	544	SH	NA	Grey	LATEST	544	683	500	9,670	80,850			
CLA 2	Rate of CLA per 10,000 under 18 population		66.4	65.3	64.6	62.4	61.8	59.8	60.3	57.4	56.7	58.7	57.2	57.1	SH	NA	Grey	LATEST	57.1	72.0	51.8	47.0	67.0			
CLA 2a	Rate of CLA per 10,000 under 18 population excluding UASC		48.5	49.2	49.3	48.1	47.3	46.9	47.3	45.6	45.4	46.7	45.9	46.6	SH	NA	Grey	LATEST	46.6	51						
CLA 3	Number of CLA at the end of the month who are Local CLA (Non-UASC)		462	469	470	458	451	447	451	435	433	445	437	444	SH	NA	Grey	LATEST	444	69%						
CLA 3b	Number of Ceased CLA in the month who are Local CLA (Non-UASC)		12	16	16	17	13	29	23	14	13	6	13	7	SH	NA	Grey	YTD	20	31%						
CLA 4	Number of CLA at the end of the month who are UASC		171	153	146	137	138	123	124	112	107	114	108	100	SH	NA	Grey	LATEST	100	211	36	1,330	4,070			
CLA 4b	Number of Ceased CLA in the month who are UASC		26	21	12	11	13	19	11	19	8	9	8	10	SH	NA	Grey	YTD	18	116						
CLA 5	Number of new CLA in month (total)		15	26	19	15	15	20	27	24	15	36	13	24	SH	NA	Grey	YTD	37	195	187	4,250	28,440			
CLA 6	Number of new CLA in month who are UASC		3	6	8	4	12	6	6	11	2	16	4	5	SH	NA	Grey	YTD	9	51						
CLA 7	Rate of adolescents entering care per 10,000 (13-17 year olds) population excl. UASC – New		29.0	35.1	29.0	26.6	24.2	25.4	26.3	26.6	28.2	29.4	29.0	33.9	SH	NA	Grey	LATEST	33.868236							
CLA 8	Rate of adolescents leaving care per 10,000 (13-17 year olds) population excl. UASC- New		8.1	12.1	13.5	13.7	13.8	16.9	16.1	16.9	17.6	19.4	38.7	26.6	SH	NA	Grey	LATEST	26.610757							
CLA 9	Percentage of the under 18 years population who are UASC – New				0.15%	0.14%	0.14%	0.13%	0.13%	0.12%	0.11%	0.12%	0.11%	0.10%	SH	0.07%	Grey	LATEST	0.10%							
CLA 10	Percentage of CLA for whom a visit has taken place within statutory timescales (6 weekly Visits)	BIB	96%	94%	93%	95%	94%	95%	90%	87%	92%	92%	89%	92%	SH	95%	Amber	LATEST	92%	95%						
CLA 11	Percentage of CLA children with an up to date review	BIB	94%	93%	91%	91%	95%	93%	92%	93%	96%	92%	93%	92%	DW	95%	Amber	YTD	93%	95%						
CLA 12	Percentage of CLA who have participated in Reviews (aged 4+) in the month	BIB	68%	74%	76%	73%	78%	76%	71%	74%	75%	82%	77%	76%	DW	80%	Amber	YTD	77%	75%						
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	96%	97%	97%	94%	87%	77%	97%	98%	97%	91%	95%	92%	SH	90%	Green	LATEST	92%	93%						
CLA 14	Percentage of eligible CLA with an up-to-date Care Plan (6 months)	BIB	87%	77%	69%	66%	74%	92%	88%	82%	81%	77%	74%	85%	SH	90%	Amber	LATEST	85%	85%						
CLA 15	Percentage of eligible CLA with an up-to-date Pathway Plan	BIB	79%	73%	65%	57%	57%	74%	70%	66%	69%	71%	76%	72%	SH	90%	Red	LATEST	72%	82%						
CLA 19	Percentage of CLA that have been in care for 12+ months, that have had same social worker for last 6 months	BIB	62%	57%	57%	54%	55%	53%	57%	56%	56%	65%	57%	57%	SH	65%	Red	LATEST	57%	72%						
CLA 20	Percentage of CLA under 16 in care for more than 2.5 years: in the same placement for 2+ years	BIB	72%	70%	72%	72%	73%	73%	72%	72%	72%	71%	70%	72%	SH	75%	Amber	LATEST	72%	70%						
CLA 21	Percentage of CLA at end of month with 3 or more placements during the year	SIB	5%	6%	5%	5%	5%	3%	6%	5%	6%	6%	6%	6%	SH	8%	Green	LATEST	6%	5%						
CLA 22	Percentage of CLA placed <20 miles from home	BIB	83%	82%	84%	84%	84%	83%	85%	84%	83%	85%	85%	83%	SH	90%	Amber	LATEST	83%	85%						
CLA 23	Number of CLA allocated to CWD		22	22	22	22	20	18	16	16	16	16	16	16	RC	NA	Grey	LATEST	16	23						
CLA 24	Percentage of CLA for whom a visit has taken place within statutory timescales (Allocated to CWD teams)	BIB	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	94%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	RC	95%	Green	LATEST	100%	100%						
CLA 25	Number of CLA who returned home (E4A, E4B, E13, E41)	BIB	5	7	7	5	4	3	2	3	4	2	11	1	SH	NA	Grey	YTD	12	39	40	810	4,610			

Indicator Number	Indicator Title	Polarity	2021/22										2022-23					2022-23 YTD or latest	DfE Published Croydon 2020-21	Stats Nbr Average 2020-21	London 2020-21	England 2020-21	
			Jun-21	Jul-21	Aug-21	Sep-21	Oct-21	Nov-21	Dec-21	Jan-22	Feb-22	Mar-22	Apr-22	May-22	RO	2022-23 Target	RAG						YTD/LATEST
CLA Health																							
CLA 16	% of children in care for at least 12 months for whom health assessments are up to date.	BIB	84%	86%	86%	89%	84%	82%	85%	88%	87%	93%	95%	92%	SH	95%	Green	LATEST	92%	95%	92%	94%	91%
CLA 16a	Number of children in care for at least 12 months for whom health assessments were due in the month (RHA's completed in the year to date/Health reviews due in the year from April to date)		23/105	38/107	22/99	25/79	24/100	37/121	29/93	33/87	21/75	31/60	21/41	24/54	SH	NA	Grey	LATEST	24/54				
CLA 16b	Percentage of children in care for at least 12 months for whom health assessments were due in the month (RHA's completed in the year to date/Health reviews due in the year from April to date) (New *)		22%	36%	22%	32%	24%	31%	31%	38%	28%	52%	51%	44%	SH	TBC	Grey	NA					
CLA 17	% initial health assessments requested for health service within 3 working days of date child become looked after.	BIB	44%	50%	67%	64%	60%	50%	19%	37%	31%	38%	13%	TBC	SH	NA	Grey	NA	TBC	43%			
CLA 18	% initial health assessments delivered within 20 working days of date child became looked after.	BIB	89%	53%	88%	55%	100%	82%	41%	38%	43%	28%	14%	TBC	SH	85%	Grey	NA	TBC	83%			
Fostering																							
F 1	Total number of foster carer households	BIB	218	216	213	212	210	209	211	207	204	203	202	199	202%	NA	Grey	LATEST	199				
F 2	Percentage of DBS Checks within time	BIB	99%	100%	100%	99%	98%	97%	97%	99%	98%	98%	97%	97%	97%	95%	Green	LATEST	97%				
F 3	Percentage of Annual Reviews of Foster Carers completed on time	BIB	93%	95%	93%	93%	90%	92%	93%	98%	99%	95%	92%	95%	SH	95%	Green	LATEST	95%				
F 4	Percentage of Foster Carers' most recent announced visit within timescales (6 weekly)	BIB	95%	92%	90%	87%	87%	87%	87%	93%	89%	82%	91%	90%	SH	95%	Amber	LATEST	90%				

Indicator Number	Indicator Title	Polarity	2021/22										2022-23					RO	2022-23 Target	RAG	YTD/LATEST	2022-23 YTD or latest	DfE Published Croydon 2020-21	Stats Nbr Average 2020-21	London 2020-21	England 2020-21
			Jun-21	Jul-21	Aug-21	Sep-21	Oct-21	Nov-21	Dec-21	Jan-22	Feb-22	Mar-22	Apr-22	May-22												
Adoption																										
AD 0	Number of Adoption Orders achieved in the month	BIB	1	1	0	2	0	1	3	2	0	0	1	2	SH	NA	Grey	YTD	3							
AD 1	Number of children for whom the agreed plan is adoption (ADM)	BiB	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	3	SH	NA	Grey	YTD	1							
AD 2	Number of children waiting to be matched to an adopter		11	10	10	8	11	11	13	12	12	9	9	8	SH	NA	Grey	LATEST	8							
AD 3	Number of children placed in the month	BiB	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	SH	NA	Grey	YTD	1							
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	545	492	492	461	437	449	449	492	491	491	488	520	SH	558	Green	LATEST	520							
AD 8	Average time between the LA receiving court authority to place a child and the LA deciding on a match to an adoptive family (days) (12 months rolling average)	SIB	233	205	206	201	191	191	190	192	171	171	172	159	SH	226	Green	LATEST	159.3							
AD 9	Number of special guardianship orders made in the month (from care)	BIB	0	0	2	4	0	9	2	0	2	0	2	1	SH	NA	Grey	YTD	3							
Care Leavers																										
CL a	Care Leavers with an Up-to-date Pathway plan	BIB	80%	83%	73%	75%	75%	79%	74%	76%	81%	86%	82%	79%	SH	85%	Amber	LATEST	79%							
CL 1b	Number of Care Leavers in employment, education, or training (EET) now aged 19 to 21 (New*)	BIB			259	255	253	261	254	256	254	265	265	270	SH	NA	Grey	LATEST	270	273	165	3950	16900			
CL 1c	Percentage in employment, education, or training (EET) now aged 19 to 21 (New*)	BIB			63%	61%	60%	61%	58%	58%	59%	60%	60%	62%	SH	85%	Red	LATEST	62%	42%	56%	55%	52%			
CL 2b	Number of Care Leavers not in employment, education, or training (NEET) now aged 19 to 21 (New*)	SIB			153	163	153	153	164	167	163	157	154	146	SH	NA	Grey	LATEST	146	234	108	2590	13260			
CL 2c	Percentage not in employment, education, or training (NEET) now aged 19 to 21 (New*)	SIB			37%	39%	36%	36%	38%	38%	38%	36%	35%	34%	SH	NA	Grey	LATEST	36%	36%	36%	36%	41%			
CL 3b	Number of Care Leavers in suitable accommodation now aged 19 to 21	BIB			399	405	391	396	402	410	405	409	407	400	SH		Grey	LATEST	400	476	254	6110	28870			
CL 3c	Percentage in suitable accommodation now aged 19 to 21 (New*)	BIB			95%	95%	92%	93%	92%	93%	93%	93%	93%	92%	SH	90%	Green	LATEST	93%	74	87	86	88			
CL 5a	Percentage in touch with the authority now aged 19 to 21 (New*)	BIB			98%	97%	97%	98%	98%	98%	98%	98%	98%	98%	SH	95%	Green	LATEST	98%	77%	90%	90%	91%			
CL 6	Care Leavers - LOCAL (non-UASC)		280	239	258	262	254	245	242	252	231	254	253	262	SH	NA	Grey	LATEST	262							
CL 7	Care Leavers - UASC (non-LOCAL)		455	477	441	438	409	429	428	438	448	426	429	428	SH	NA	Grey	LATEST	428							
CL 8	Number of young people who have Appeals Rights Exhausted New *				6	6	7	5	4	4	3	5	2	2	SH	NA	Grey	LATEST	2							

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