

# CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND EDUCATION

## Corporate Parenting Annual Report

### 2018 - 2019

**be the change**  
for children and young people in croydon

#bethechangecroydon



OUR DESTINATION



OUR PRINCIPLES



OUR PRACTICE  
FRAMEWORK



Delivering for Croydon

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## Contents

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## **1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

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

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

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

## **3. Corporate Parenting Panel**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

- 4.11 **Children missing from care:** Nearly 60% of CLA with a missing episode are local children looked after. 140 (37%) of the children who went missing were children looked after placed in Croydon. Local children looked after are twice as likely to go missing as UASC.
- 4.12 **Involvement with Youth Offending Service:** There are 29 children looked after currently working with the Youth Offending Service. 55% are from Black backgrounds, this group is overrepresented compared to the wider children looked after population and of these 75% are local children looked after.

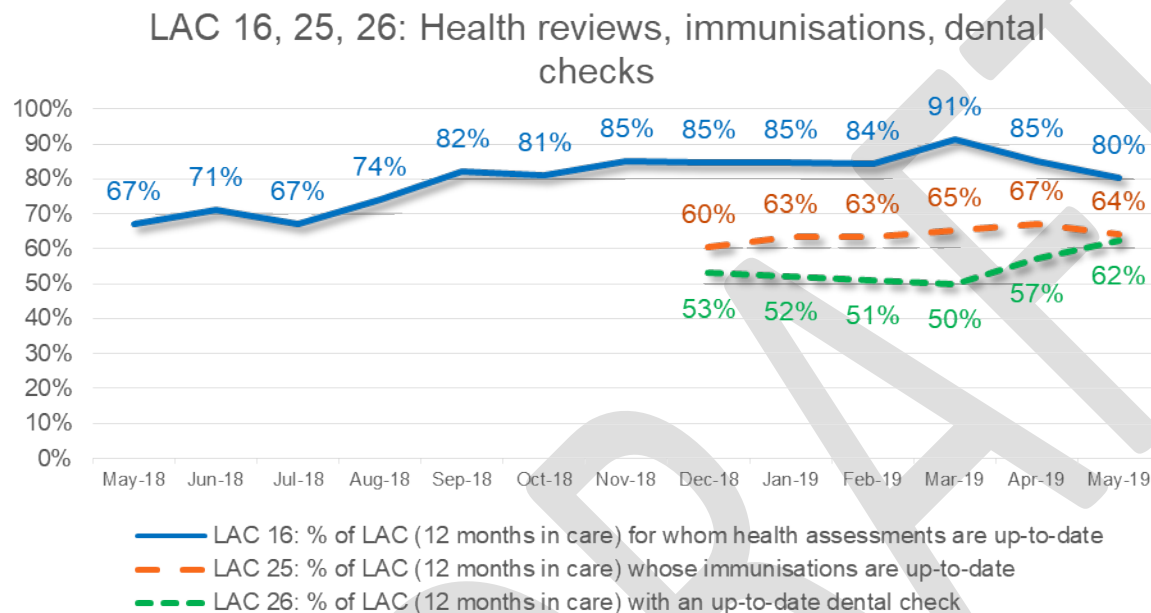
## 5. **Care Leavers: Demographic profile, health and education**

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

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



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

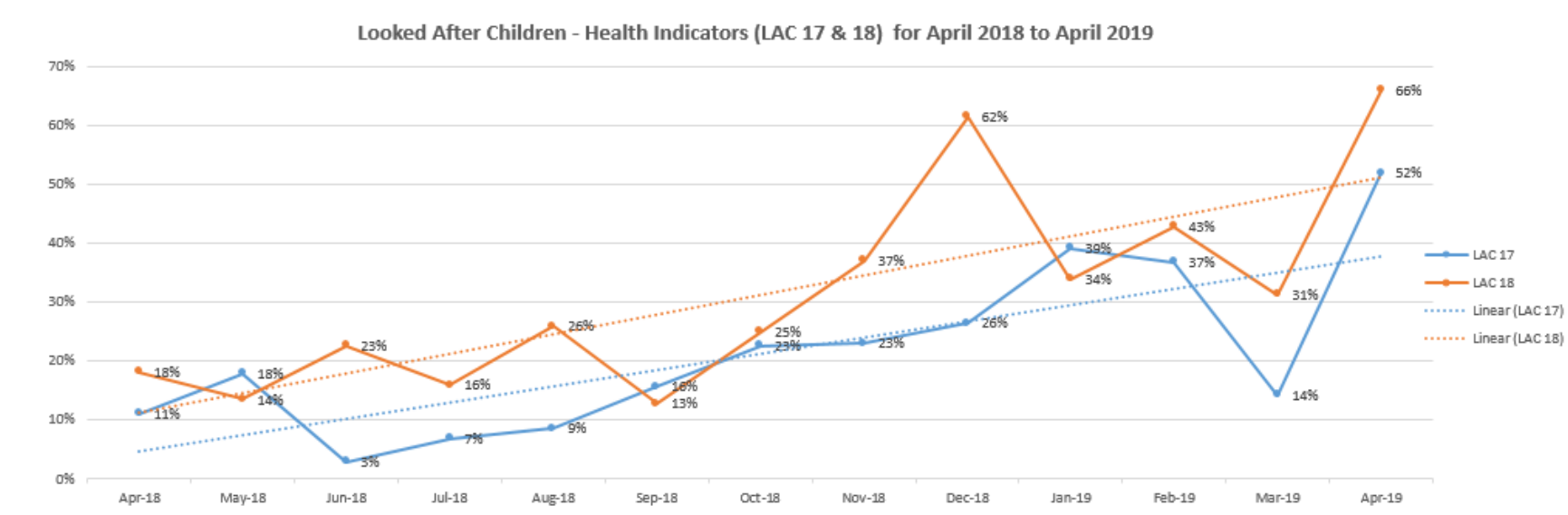


6.3 The line graph on below shows our performance against two key performance health indicators for children looked after:

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

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



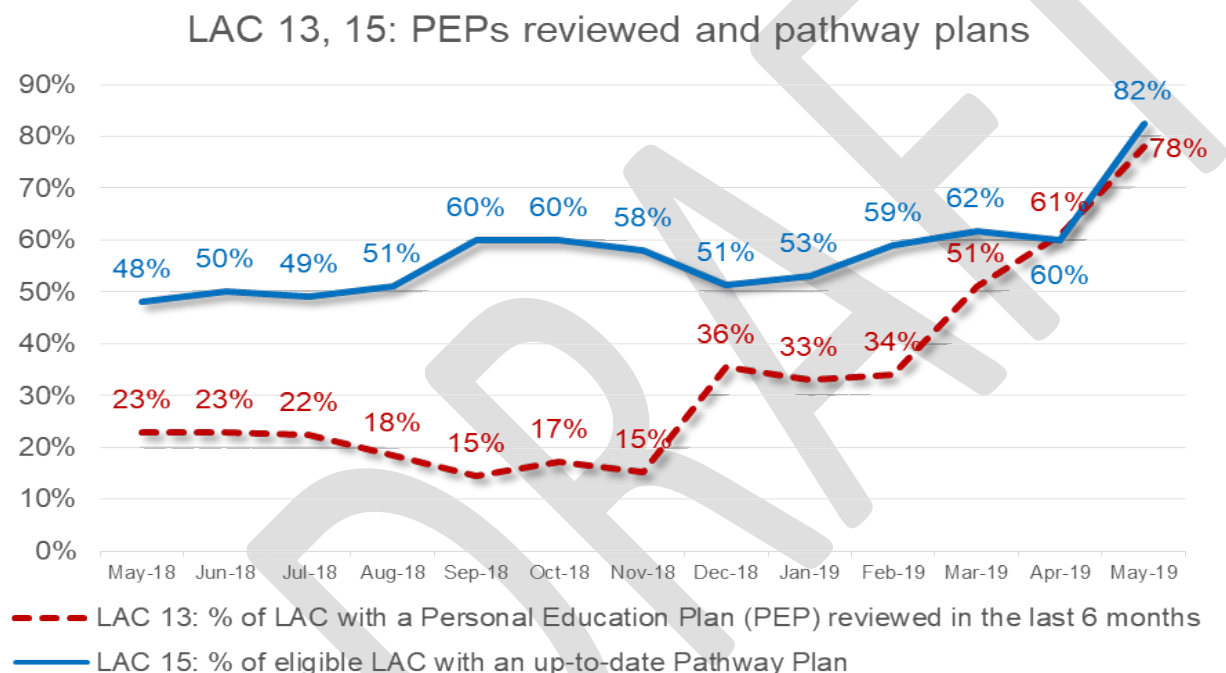


- 6.5 A recent analysis of strengths and difficulties questionnaires (SDQs) of 55 children looked after found that 64% children had low total difficulty score, 7% had a medium score 29% had a high difficulty score. A high difficulty score indicates where additional support may be needed (e.g. CAMHS).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

## 7. Education of children in care

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

## 7.11 Personal educational plans (PEPs) and pathway plans



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

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

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

### What's working well ...

*"Getting to see my family"*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

*"More help with my school"*

### Suggestions...

*"Explain things to me in more detail"*

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

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

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

## 9. Key achievements

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

**9.6 Supporting UASC: Controlled Migration Fund**

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

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

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

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

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

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

## **10 Areas for development**

### **10.1 Efficient and targeted entry into care**

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

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

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

### **10.3 Improving Permanence Arrangements**

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

10.14 Independent Reviewing Officers also assist greatly in listening and promoting the voice of the child via regular Children looked after Reviews, current these are at 82%.

## 11 **Conclusion**

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

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