



Children, Young People and Learning Cabinet Member Bulletin Councillor Alisa Flemming October 2017

LATEST NEWS

Since the publication of the Ofsted report at the beginning of September we have been extremely busy working on implementing the urgent actions in our transitional improvement plan.

One of our key priorities is supporting and strengthening our workforce so that they can deliver high quality social work to children and families in Croydon. In September the council announced that a new retention payment of £1500 would be made to social workers as an interim measure ahead of a review of employment packages for social workers. We have also been rolling out smartphones to all children's social workers and a pilot is underway to test the use of tablets and how this technology can further enhance social work practice.

Over the past few weeks we have also held a number of briefing sessions and engagement events for staff to identify initial areas for improvement and inform the improvement programme going forward. I was really impressed to hear that over 250 staff from children's social care have taken part in the sessions so far which has generated lots of ideas for improvement. The feedback from these sessions have been collated on a 'Wall of Wisdom' which includes a 'You said, we did' section to report where actions have been progressed.



Feedback on the Wall of Wisdom

AMBITIOUS FOR CROYDON



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We have also been working on developing a new improvement plan which will set out our long term vision and ambition to improve children's services over the next 18 months.

We hosted a visit from Ofsted last week (9th October) which has helped to shape the detailed planning around this work and we expect to submit a final plan for approval by December 2017, and I will keep you updated in future editions of my bulletin on how this work is coming together.

If you have any questions about the inspection or our plans for improvement send me your questions and I will do my best to answer them. I would also like to invite you to send any ideas about how we can further improve our services to ideasforchildrensimprovement@croydon.gov.uk

ASYE

The Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE) is a programme that gives newly qualified social workers extra support during their first year of employment.

The programme aims to help them develop their skills, knowledge and professional confidence. Over the coming months we will see Croydon's ASYE programme for 2016/2017 coming to an end.

I am delighted that 21 ASYEs have recently successfully passed through panel having completed their Assessed and Supported Year in Employment, and a further 12 are currently completing their portfolios.

I am really looking forward to the graduation ceremony on 1st December taking place at Croydon Town Hall to celebrate their success.

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Croydon relaunches Children in Care Council

The voices of looked after young people in Croydon are going to be heard through the newly re-established Children in Care Council. The forum is an essential function that provides young people who have a care arrangement in place with a unique opportunity to enhance the provision of care they receive. An effort to reinvigorate the Children in Care Council will seek to establish a new cohort of looked after young people positioned to explore matters which are important to them in their daily lives and use these experiences to help create and develop strategies to continually improve the corporate parenting they receive.



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This is an exciting prospect through which we hope to see looked after young people connecting to decision making that affects them in a meaningful way. The engagement process is of paramount importance as looked after young people will have a unique perspective of the provision that Croydon offers them. From this work it is expected that looked after young people will begin to become involved in steering the production and development of services – ensuring that their voices are being heard and acted upon throughout all areas of the service.

Colleagues from the Education and Youth Engagement directive are actively seeking looked after young people to join the forum sessions which take place fortnightly at Bernard Weatherill House. The initial sessions young people join are a great opportunity to meet and make friends with people who have similar circumstances. Though creative and fun activities, common themes, issues and ideas will be identified for the group to explore over the coming weeks and months.

To support this work, the Children in Care Council will work in partnership with the Corporate Parenting Panel throughout the year, and with regular interaction, to ensure that young people's ideas and concerns are being presented to the most appropriate Council department.

An initial priority for the Children in Care Council is to review the Pledge which is an important and symbolic set of commitments proposed by looked after young people. The Corporate Parenting Panel oblige to enact through their work with looked after young people. The pledge intends to provide assurance to young people that their needs are constantly prioritised, valued and acted on for the benefit of every young person who is looked after.

To celebrate the reestablishment of Croydon's Children in Care Council, an official relaunch event is being planned to take place during half-term on the afternoon of Tuesday 24th October. Through this session, our young people will usher in a new and reinvigorated era by commencing work on reviewing the pledge and where their voices are listened to and their views, ideas and proposals serve to positively influence the direction the care of looked after young people takes in Croydon.

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DELIVERING OUR AMBITIONS

Corporate Parenting / UASC

Child B is a 15 year old Albanian male who arrived in the UK in September 2015 with a limited level of English and aspirations for a better life in the UK following the plight he faced in Albania. In the absence of his parents he was supported by this Local Authority and accommodated with a foster carer supervised by the Council. Child B settled well in his foster placement and he excelled in his academia.

During the Easter 2017 holiday period child B attended University College London where he, together with a small group of other young people, he created a robotic prosthetic arm which earned him a commendation and award for the best group. They also designed a drone that will carry vaccinations to rural parts of Africa which are not accessible. These achievements will be featured in a Scientific Journal soon to be released. Child B gave a speech to the University professors on behalf of the group about what he had learnt or gained from the experienced and he said that his aspiration was to find a cure for cancer.

Child B's other achievements include a Jack Petchey award for Public Speaking, and he represented his school for London, having taken second place. He is currently completing his Year 11 at a local Croydon School (St Mary's Secondary School) where his attainment has earned him the role of Head Boy, and he has been predicted to achieve 9 A/A* in June 2018 when he sits his GCSE's. He aspires to be a scientist and hopes to attend UCL or Cambridge University.

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Creating excellent new school places

A number of schools have recently celebrated opening new school buildings, enabling children across the borough to enjoy fantastic new spaces and facilities.

New buildings at Chipstead Valley, Heavers Farm, St John's Primary, Christchurch C of E School and Ark Oval will allow each school to expand by one form of entry (eventually there will be a new class in each year group as the schools grow each year). Chipstead Valley has also opened a new nursery facility on site. Red Gates Special School opened 2 additional classrooms to enable 22 children to start in their reception cohort this year.

Brand new school buildings have opened at Heathfield Academy and Harris Academy Primary Purley Way and Head teachers from both schools have let us know how much their children are enjoying learning in their new school buildings.

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School Admissions

The online application process is open for families applying for a reception, junior or secondary school place to start school in September 2018.

The application deadline to apply for a secondary place is **31 October 2017** and the deadline for a reception or junior school place is **15 January 2018**.

Parents and carers should apply online at www.croydon.gov.uk/admissions and we strongly encourage visits to preference schools.

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