



Children, Young People and Learning Cabinet Member Bulletin Councillor Alisa Flemming June/July 2018

LATEST NEWS

Our staff are continuing to work in close collaboration with representatives from our partners in health, schools, education, the police and the voluntary and community sector to move forward with our children's improvement plan. We have made some big strides against the 4 key areas in our improvement plan – Practice, people and Performance, Platforms and Partnerships:

Practice

- We have trained almost 500 staff to use the new model of social work practice, Strengthening Families, that uses a consistent approach to working with families to keep children
- Clear, concise practice standards for frontline staff and their managers have been agreed and distributed to all children's social care staff. Taken together these establish clear expectations of staff at all levels and set out how managers should be supporting frontline staff
- A cross-partnership task and finish group has overseen the drafting of our refreshed Draft Early Help Strategy, ensuring it is closely aligned with the Council's development of a new preventative approach that meets our communities' needs

People and Performance

- We will be working with Community Care, one of the leading websites for social care professionals with a wide reach in the sector, to raise Croydon's profile as a social care employer of choice. We will be developing a calendar of recruitment events and targeted campaigns to attract staff to join us on our improvement journey
- A more joined up approach to ensuring care leavers can access the right accommodation has been launched. Housing and Children's services professionals will be meeting regularly to discuss the housing needs of young people leaving care to ensure each has a clear pathway to securing accommodation

Partners

- A launch event for our partners on Strengthening Families took place on the 18th of April at St Mary's School. Around 50 people from health, education the police and voluntary sector attended. Partners were really enthusiastic about our new approach and keen to explore how they could use a more strengths-based approach in their work with children and families.
- The independent chair of Croydon Safeguarding Children Board (CSCB) is strengthening multi-agency working for the most vulnerable children, driving a partnership focus on neglect and challenging partners to identify their specific contribution to meeting the needs of more vulnerable adolescents.



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Platforms

- Targeted work is taking place to ensure that there is ‘whole system’ support for change from across the Council. Frontline staff are working with IT and change experts to think creatively about how social care staff can be freed up to spend more time working with children and families. Areas being explored are:
- How technology can reduce paperwork and support more efficient, mobile working
- How to maximise use of the systems available, including rapidly supporting the development of staff skills
- Following the decision to invest in business support capacity, further work is taking place to make optimum use of this additional capacity and improve staff skills at all levels

I am constantly impressed with the dedication, commitment and hard work that everyone is putting in to get the best outcomes for children and young people in Croydon.

Keep up the good work!

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Learning and Development

Croydon continues to have a robust recruitment process targeted at recruiting experienced children and families’ social workers. As part of our longer term strategy we continue to offer practice learning placements to social work students providing “real world” learning and professional development. Successful student social workers can apply for Newly Qualified Social Work posts at the end of their final placements and enter their Assessed Year in practice.

Despite the challenging environment for children’s services post-Inspection, we have been able to support our student social workers and NQSW’s to develop their knowledge and skills in a range of operational settings. These provide them with experience of the real issues faced by vulnerable families and individual children and young people, and to begin to develop a sound set of social work skills that will enable them to bring positive input to families going forward. In 2017/18 we supported 22 student social workers in Children’s Services and are currently looking at how we recruit a significant proportion into next year’s ASYE programme.

The DFE in its 2016 paper “Children’s Social Care Reform – A vision for change” described social work as “the profession which bears the heaviest burden of responsibility” and it is important to remember just how much we expect of our social workers when carrying out their duties, often in very difficult circumstances.

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As part of the support we offer, Children's Early Help & Social Care is reviewing all of the learning & development offers to staff as part of our unrelenting focus on retaining social workers through targeted professional development. Croydon is also a member of the South West London Social Work Teaching Partnership, which will focus on developing and growing the skills and knowledge of social workers through a range of post-qualifying programmes. This will enhance practitioner's skills and knowledge and provide a learning framework that values and promotes professional development.

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Virtual school update

On Wednesday 13th June, a small group of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) showcased their musical skills and invited guests at the interim provision for new arrivals located at St. Andrews CE High School. The 10 students from Afghanistan, Vietnam, Eritrea and Sudan have been attending lessons run by the Virtual School, since their arrival in the UK. The students who are all awaiting full-time school places, attend classes 3 days a week when they are taught a variety of lessons including, English, maths, art, sport and music. Lessons are delivered by various professionals including a qualified teacher and community organisations. One of these organisations is White Hut Studios.

Over the course of 6 weeks, White Hut Studios through the medium of music, taught the students the how to improve their speaking, and writing skills and disciplines of music. The group worked together to write and produce a piece of music that was eventually recorded. On the 13th June, the group performed their production before an audience that included their carer's, senior officials from the council and local councillor.

The students worked exceptionally hard and touched the hearts of our audience. This was a massive achievement for all of those involved!

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DELIVERING OUR AMBITIONS

Involving Children & Young People in Commissioning Activity

Children and Young People are going to be trained as commissioners to support commissioning activity across the Council, which will include services for Children and Young People. The training will be commissioned and this will include accreditation for those participating.

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To ensure the maximum impact of children and young people's voices in the commissioning process, there will also be training for Council staff and an element of service redesign to accommodate the need to undertake activity in a different way and at different times. It is proposed that the first Children and Young People Commissioners will be trained to support commissioning activity in the Autumn term.

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Appearance before the Health Select Committee – Sharing Learning from Croydon Schools

Recently, the borough's School Food Improvement Officer was invited to be part of a panel at the House of Commons, appearing before the Health Select Committee in their review of the government's Childhood Obesity Plan. The committee was keen to hear about the successful work in Croydon schools, started as part of the Food Flagship Borough programme, improving food provision and food education for the whole school community. The appearance has resulted in Croydon being cited in the committee's final report '**Childhood obesity: Time for action**'.

Since the committee appearance, the Director of Public Health, appeared on BBC Radio 4 and talked about the fantastic work that Rockmount Primary School have done to create a whole school approach to healthy living, empowering families to make their own healthier choices.

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Children in Care Council (CiCC)

Since re-launching in October 2017, a unit of the youth engagement team embarked on a recruitment initiative with a focus on establishing working relationships with carers via the Foster Carers forum, education providers and relevant social care teams to develop the membership of the Children in Care Council. To date, 15 young people are registered as members with regular average fortnightly attendance from 10 young people.

The group have been supported in exploring the pledge by reviewing the language used in the commitments to ensure that it is accessible, meaningful to them and representative of the views of young people. The young people's views and amendments have been collated with a view to them being presented to the Corporate Parenting Panel for approval ahead of work lead by CiCC members to publish a reviewed version of the pledge in an engaging format accessible to all looked after young people.

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In addition to this work, the CiCC have developed on a social footing with regular member attendance being rewarded through recreational and experiential incentives such as trips, days out and opportunities for learning life skills such as cooking and financial independence. Furthermore, Croydon CiCC members are expected to link with the South London Commissioning Programme to contribute to a cross-borough project to explore software options employed to support the provision of care placements.

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Young Mayor's Fund

As one of the key aims of the Croydon Young Mayor scheme, the Young Mayor's Fund will invite young people to pitch their ideas to the Young Mayor, Deputy Young Mayor, and members of the Youth Cabinet this summer. Since their election in March, the scheme has been co-designed with the Young Mayor and Deputy. The respective election manifesto pledges of the Young Mayor and Deputy are central components of this scheme and prospective fund recipients are encouraged to register their applications based on these themes.

The Young Mayor is keen to welcome initiatives that place all young people's safety and distraction from crime at their heart, and projects that provide all young people with opportunities for skills growth and learning for life, whilst the Deputy Young Mayor expects to see opportunities that empower young people to make a positive impact in Croydon to emerge from this fund.

The process is designed with accessibility in mind in order to empower small groups of young people to apply for this funding. Once applications have been received, and shortlisted by a panel of the Young Mayor, Deputy and members of the Youth Cabinet, a pitch day will see young people present their bid to the panel who will determine the ideas which will receive funding and be enabled to deliver their projects. As funded projects open across Croydon, the panel will embark upon a schedule of monitoring ahead of an expected presentation of a set of outcomes demonstrating the impact young people have made in Croydon.

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Good Citizenship Award

The GCA has been running in its current format for the last two years. The team spoke to Primary Heads at the beginning of the delivery cycle in January and now have 25 schools involved this year. The team have delivered 25 interactive assemblies around the theme of Good Citizenship at Primary schools right across the borough. This is double the amount of the previous year due to a publicity drive, improved assembly

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resources and a strategic approach to contacting schools via the Education and Youth Engagement directorate.

The delivery cycle begins with an interactive assembly with Year 6 children to introduce the theme of 'Good Citizenship'. The team use this opportunity to talk about the importance of taking responsibility, showing empathy, displaying acts of kindness and taking an active role in their various communities. The school will then nominate those children that have demonstrated this over the course of the academic year and the Outreach team return to award certificates and badges.

The aim of the project is two-fold. It seeks to award the positive contribution that young people make to their various communities and to support those that may struggle with their transition to Secondary school. By awarding those children who need the most support the project hopes to build resilience in young people in order to aid a smooth journey into Year 7. Participating schools also get the chance to win the 'GCA School Shield' based on how they have incorporated the theme of Good Citizenship into wider school projects.

Tuesday 19th June saw 50 children and their families plus school representatives attend a celebration event at Croydon Conference Centre with the Deputy Mayor, Cllrs and the Director of Education and Youth Engagement.

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Summer engagement programme

This year's summer engagement programme spans the entire 6 week school summer holiday. Every week there will be a specific project on offer for young people to sign up for as well as a range of park 'pop ups' for people to attend in their local neighbourhood.

The projects have been designed with young people's interests in mind and the priorities from Youth Congress firmly embedded in each. The projects range from music making, empowerment and resilience, drama, art and sport and getting your voice heard. The pop ups are positioned in parks and green spaces close to housing estates and areas experiencing youth related ASB. These aim to provide young people aged 8-19 with a range of taster activities such as laser tag, football, arts and crafts, music, advice and information. We will be joined in local parks by a host of partner agencies who will make young people aware of the services available to them throughout the year.

There will be a Town Centre pop up focussed on getting ready for school and college and support available for young people who haven't yet made suitable arrangements for September.



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As well as all this, there will be specific activities and outreach services for those young people living in temporary accommodation and those involved with the Children in Care Council.

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Engaging with hard to reach NEET young people

The council's statutory responsibility to ensure young people, aged 16 and 17, have an offer of a place in learning in September (the September Guarantee) has highlighted an issue we have over the last couple of years, done our best to manage.

We are aware that, historically, those who are NEET, not known, or in entry level jobs have a hard time finding progression pathways and/or a place in learning, and are harder to find and engage with. We undertook a piece of work where we looked at this group of approx. 190 young people and we sent them individual letters with reply envelopes, short surveys and multiple contact routes to contact the team.

Alongside this we checked with other internal colleagues e.g. 0-25 SEND, YOS and CSC to avoid duplication and to see if these individuals were being worked with. As a result of this action only 100 young people needed individual telephone calls. Youth Engagement workers then called the young people and 50 were happy to have conversations about their current situation and future plans. Some of these young people have requested further support which will be sourced from 3rd party support providers working in the borough. The remaining 50 young people are receiving home visits.

This has been an effective use of resources, skills and experience including multi-agency and cross service working; the small input from many created a more complete picture of these young people and their needs. As a new response to a complex issue we are still learning from this process and hope to have embedded the positive outcomes in the next school year.

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CALAT - Festival of Learning



The 2018 Festival of Learning is the biggest celebration of lifelong learning in England and a fantastic opportunity to celebrate the achievements of adults who have transformed their lives through learning and to encourage everyone to embrace lifelong learning.

In Croydon, CALAT celebrated the Festival of Learning, between 18th and 29th June – when 23 free taster courses were on offer to all residents, ranging from languages and computing to creative writing and interview preparation skills. This aims to showcase the breadth of courses and the quality of teaching on offer at CALAT, and

Celebration of Achievement

On 20th June CALAT held its Celebration of Achievement event at the Braithwaite Hall.

As well as being immensely rewarding, learning as an adult can also be challenging and these awards recognise and reflect the dedication, commitment and enthusiasm of all our learners and those who teach them.

CALAT staff have been nominating learners in 5 categories:

- ❖ Learning for work award,
- ❖ Overcoming barriers to learning award,
- ❖ Class of the year award,
- ❖ Inspiring others award,
- ❖ Learner of the year award.

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Learners have also nominated staff for the Staff member of the year award.

ESOL Pilot

Funding has been made available from the GLA for innovative pilots in the ESOL sector to meet the needs of learners who face additional barriers accessing ESOL provision. A successful partnership bid was submitted by Croydon, Sutton and Kingston and £23,930 funding has been allocated to a pilot project supporting new mothers with low levels of English language.

The project aims to establish specialist childcare in the place of learning to support access to learning and progression by using Children Centres and other community locations in localities. One of the key elements will be working with Health Service professionals in each of the areas and supporting the progression from the clinics when mothers no longer access these services.

The pilot will run from June 2018 to February 2019 across the three South London boroughs.

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