

# Agenda Item 6

<b>REPORT TO:</b>	<b>Corporate Parenting Panel September 2018</b>
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>Review of the Council's Staying Put Policy – Updated Proposal</b>
<b>LEAD OFFICER:</b>	<b>Philip Segurola</b>
<b>CABINET MEMBER:</b>	<b>Cllr Alisa Flemming</b>
<b>WARDS:</b>	<b>All</b>
<b>CORPORATE PRIORITY/POLICY CONTEXT/AMBITIOUS FOR CROYDON:</b>  <p>Croydon Children's services aims to provide stability for Care Leavers and provide them with the best opportunities to realise their potential. Staying put arrangements are a positive approach to ensure the Care leaver has a supportive home environment whilst preparing for independence, when the young person has delayed maturity, vulnerability and/or in order to complete their education or training.</p> <p>A review of the Council's Staying Put policy has been undertaken; this is an action in the Children's Services Improvement Plan in response to the Ofsted inspection recommendations.</p> <p>A report was presented to the July 2018 meeting providing proposals around Staying Put approach and rates for carers. The Panel was not able to approve because of the need to have updated proposals on arrangements for care leavers working and council tax exemptions whilst residing in other Local Authorities.</p>	
<b>FINANCIAL IMPACT</b>  <p>The Council receives a Staying Put grant from Central Government of £540k in 2018-19 – the 2<sup>nd</sup> highest in the country behind Kent County Council. Financial cost modelling based on a number of assumptions (outlined in the report of July 2018) has projected that an increase in Staying Put rates is affordable within the grant funding for up to 75 Staying Put arrangements per year; the current number of arrangements is around 45 per year.</p> <p>Based on the financial cost modelling, it is proposed that £534k of the £540k grant will be spent on the projected number of Staying Put arrangements.</p>	

## 1. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Panel consider the updated proposals of Staying Put arrangements for care leavers working and council tax exemptions whilst residing in other Local Authorities; and approve the proposals

## 2. Introduction

2.1 The July 2018 report to the Board provided proposals around the review of Staying Put arrangements and proposed changes to the approach and rates for carers.

2.2. Proposed Staying Put policy changes were discussed and approved as follows:

- Staying Put arrangements is a universal entitlement for Care leavers from ages 18 until they reach 21 years, it will not be extended past this age
- There will be no criteria applied to Staying Put arrangements i.e. Carers will not receive enhanced payments if their care leaver is in education.
- Care Leavers with enhanced needs (e.g. disability) need to be supported in the policy and carers paid an enhanced rate for providing Staying Put arrangement for these young people. Particular focus is on helping care leavers that will not meet the Care Act assessment threshold but still have significant needs that need to be supported
- Carers for young people with disability/vulnerability should not be disadvantaged and will receive a higher rate than the standard tier
- Incentivising work for care leavers needs to be key aim of the policy
- Simplifying the staying put tiers as follows:

Current Tiers	Proposed Tiers
Tier 1 – Standard	Tier 1 – Standard including in education and NRPF
Tier 2 – Care Leaver in Education	Tier 2 – Disability/ Vulnerability
Tier 3 – Disability/Vulnerability	
Tier 4 – NRPF	

2.3. Increases in Staying Put Rates for Tier 1 and Tier 2 were considered and agreed in principle:

Allowance (including Council Tax exemption)	Tier 1 (Standard)	Tier 2 (Disability/ Vulnerability)
	£	£
Weekly	347.23	365.94
Monthly	1,388.92	1,463.75
Annually	16,666.99	17,564.97

2.4 However the Panel requested that further work is undertaken around the Staying Put rates for care leavers working and council tax exemptions whilst the care

Leaver is residing in other Local Authorities.

### 3. Staying Put approach and rates for Care Leavers working

3.1 The **previous proposal** placed a differential in the number of hours the care leaver worked above and below 16 hours per week as follows:

- If a Care Leaver is working below 16 hours takes place, the Council will still pay the full housing costs as well as contribution to Staying Put arrangement at standard rate
- If a Care Leaver is working over 16 hours (regardless of income) the Council will pay 50% of the housing costs as well as contribution to Staying Put arrangement at standard rate. The young person will be expected to contribute up to 50% of his/her earned income to the carer as their contribution to housing costs. This will be a negotiated agreement between the Carer and Care leaver

This was considered detrimental for young people who are working more than 16 hours per week but who are on minimum wage (£5.90 per hour) or apprenticeships (£3.90 per hour) being expected to contribute up to 50% of wages for rent.

3.2 **Alternative approaches have been considered** including:

- Tapering the reduction of Staying Put allowance to Carer based on young person's earnings. However this has been discounted as the administrative requirements will be significant and will likely require additional administrative resourcing
- Not having a reduction in Staying Put allowances for Care Leavers working for any working hours per week. This was not considered as attractive as there is a need for care leavers to understand the requirement to contribute to living costs whilst working, particularly as they move to semi-independent and independent living

3.3. The **revised proposal is for a nominal flat rate contribution for care leavers in work of £50 per month**, if they are working over 16 hours per week.

It is proposed a £50 reduction in Staying Put allowance per month for the Carer, with the young person expected to contribute his/her earned income (if working over 16 hours) to the carer as their contribution to housing costs; through a negotiated agreement between the Carer and Care leaver

If a Care leaver is on minimum wage of £5.90 per hour their approximate monthly salary will be £895, and if on an apprenticeship of £3.90 per hour their approximate monthly salary will be £590. For a young person on minimum wage this represents a 5.5% contribution of their monthly earnings and for an apprentice this is a 8.5% contribution.

The table below details the proposed Staying Put rates for carers where the young person is working:

<b>Allowance</b> (including Council Tax exemption)	<b>Tier 1 (Standard)</b>	<b>Care leaver working under 16 hours</b>	<b>Care leaver working over 16 hours</b>
	£	£	£
Weekly	347.23	347.23	335.70
Monthly	1,388.92	1,388.92	1,338.92
Annually	16,666.99	16,666.99	16,066.99

3.4. The Panel is requested to consider the revised proposal of a nominal flat rate contribution for care leavers working over 16 hours per week.

#### **4. Council Tax exemptions**

4.1 The Panel also raised concern that whilst Care Leavers and Carers entering into staying put arrangements in Croydon are exempted from council tax, this may not be the case for Croydon care leavers who are placed outside of the borough.

This only affects those young people employed, as young people in receipt of benefits will already be exempt from Council Tax in other Local Authorities.

4.2 Currently there are 75 other Local Authorities with a policy of exempting Council Tax for care leavers and carers. **Appendix 1** details these Authorities. Croydon Care leavers and carers residing in these authorities will be exempt from council tax.

4.3 If the care leaver resides in a Local Authority without a policy of exempting Council Tax. It is **proposed that Croydon Council will reimburse Council Tax payments.**

A process for Croydon reimbursing the Carer will be established. It will be the responsibility of the Carer to claim the reimbursement from Croydon. Croydon will need to inform the relevant carers of this requirement and check that the residing Local Authority does not have an exemption policy.

This will require administrative resource to manage the reimbursement process and Social Worker/Key Worker time to support the approach.

4.4 The Panel is requested to consider the proposal of reimbursing council tax for Carers in staying put arrangements residing in other Local Authorities that do not exempt Council tax

#### **5. IMPLEMENTATION OF REVISED STAYING PUT POLICY**

If approved, it is proposed the new Staying Put policy and rates are implemented from 1 October 2018.

The **key actions and timeframes** to implement the policy and rate changes are:

<b>Action</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>
▪ Staying Put policy and guidance updated	September 2018
▪ Briefing for Foster Carers, social workers, key workers, IFAs – meetings, info materials, internet update	September 2018
▪ Briefing of Care Leavers – through social workers, key workers, Care leaver App	September 2018
▪ Carers of Croydon Care Leavers residing out of borough in LA's that do not exempt Council tax contacted to claim council tax reimbursement from October 2018	September 2018
▪ Revised payments to Carers set-up	September 2018
▪ Launch date of updated Staying Put policy and arrangements	1 October 2018

## **5. MONITORING OF THE IMPACT OF STAYING PUT POLICY CHANGES**

5.1 Regular monitoring of the impact of the Staying Put policy changes will be undertaken with review of take-up rates and monitoring of costs.

Feedback from carers and young people will be sought on how staying put arrangements are working in practice under the revised policy.

## **6 CONSULTATION**

6.1 Though the local authority are not legally required to consult on this matter it is good practice to engage with stakeholders. The review of Staying Put arrangements involved consultation with staff, foster carers and young people.

6.2 The relaunch of the policy as part of a set of activities to develop a wider publicised offer to Croydon's Care Leavers. This will include a re-launch of the policy to ensure it is well understood by carers, providers and staff.

## **7. FINANCIAL AND RISK ASSESSMENT CONSIDERATIONS**

7.1 The cost modelling, contained in the July 2018, report has been based on a number of assumptions as outlined in section 3. If assumptions around the proportion of tiers are incorrect and if the number of Staying Put arrangements per year exceeds 75, affordability will be an issue.

Croydon currently receives a Staying Put grant of £540k from Central Government, if this grant is reduced in future years affordability will be an issue.

The proposal to underwrite the costs of council tax for Carers in staying put arrangements residing in other Local Authorities that do not exempt Council tax will have a cost implication. However given that the majority of care leavers reside in Croydon and a proportion are likely to be on benefits, it is not anticipated that this cost will not be able to be funded through the Staying Put grant.

#### **8. COMMENTS OF THE COUNCIL SOLICITOR AND MONITORING OFFICER**

There are no legal implications resulting from the proposals.

#### **9. HUMAN RESOURCES IMPACT**

N/A

#### **10. EQUALITIES IMPACT**

Equalities impact will need to be considered to ensure that Care leavers are treated in a way that is clearly understood and given that young people's entitlements to public funds can differ depending on their circumstances.

#### **11. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT**

N/A

#### **12. CRIME AND DISORDER REDUCTION IMPACT**

N/A

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## Appendix 1:

### Local authorities exempting Care Leavers from Council Tax

Barnsley

Bath & North East Somerset

Birmingham

Bolton

Bracknell Forest

Bradford

Brent

Brighton & Hove

Bristol

Bury

Camden

Cheshire East

Cheshire West and Chester

Cornwall

Coventry

Croydon

Darlington

Derby

Doncaster

Dudley

Durham

Hackney

Halton

Hammersmith & Fulham

Haringey

Hartlepool

Havering

Hounslow

Islington

Kingston upon Hull

Knowsley

Lambeth

Lancashire

Leicester

Lewisham

Liverpool

Manchester

Middlesborough

Milton Keynes

Newham

North East Lincolnshire

North Somerset

Oldham



Redbridge

Richmond Upon Thames

Rochdale

Rotherham

Royal Borough of Greenwich

Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea

Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead

Salford

Sandwell

Slough

South Gloucestershire

South Tyneside

Southwark

St Helens

Stockport

Stockton-on-Tees

Stoke-on-Trent

Sunderland

Swindon

Tameside

Thurrock

Torbay

Tower Hamlets

Trafford

Walsall

Waltham Forest

Wandsworth

Warrington

Westminster

Wigan

Wirral

Wokingham

Wolverhampton

<https://www.childrensociety.org.uk/what-you-can-do/campaign-for-change/a-fairer-start-for-care-leavers>

Reporting Period	1 <sup>st</sup> April 2017 – 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2018
Report of	INDEPENDENT REVIEWING SERVICE – Quality Assurance Team Head of Service: Tom Stevenson
Report to	Corporate Parenting Panel
Report Originators	Karen Massey
Date of Report	26 <sup>th</sup> July 2018

***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 IRO and Independent visitor services and their effectiveness and impact on children's and young people's safety and care in Croydon.

It provides qualitative and quantitative data on the service for 2017/18 as required by statutory guidance.

1. Introduction

This annual report has been produced under the requirements of the Adoption and Children Act 2002. 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.

This report is prepared for those with executive responsibility for children's services and corporate parenting, to enable consideration of the services on offer, and to consider whether the local authority is achieving optimum outcomes for our looked after children. This report must be presented to Corporate Parenting Board.

This report provides an opportunity to highlight areas of good practice and areas for improvement, to identify emerging themes and trends, to report on work undertaken to date and outline the service development priorities for the coming twelve months.

2. Profile of the Croydon IRO Service

The Independent Reviewing service operates within the framework of the IRO Handbook. This is statutory guidance issued to local authorities in 2011. The IRO has a key role in relation to the improvement and quality assurance of the Care Planning for Looked after Children and for challenging any drift and delay.

IRO's 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 Independent Reviewing Service is sited within the Quality Assurance Service in Croydon. We benefit from close links with the Child Protection Conference Chairs and the Local Authority Designated Officer. There was no administrative support for the service until November 2017 when a single post was allocated to the service.

The IRO service is managed by the Quality Assurance Manager with the lead for Looked After Children's Services. Karen Massey held this role between April 2017 and January 2018 when she retired. Adam Fearon-Stanley now leads the service. The Local Authority Designated Officer assists with supervision and appraisal of 5 of the IRO staff.

The service is staffed by 14 IRO's. All but two of them are full time employees and only 3 are Agency staff. There was no staff turnover during the reporting period although two members of the team were unwell for a period. Their colleagues were able to cover their planned reviews for the most part although a few needed to be re-scheduled.

As a result of the stable staff team IRO's have strong and enduring relationships with the children and young people they review. The same IRO will tend to review all the children in a sibling group, which maintains continuity for children and parents alike. Many children have had the same IRO for a number of years. Maintaining this ongoing consistent relationship is seen as very important by children and IROs alike.

The team is predominantly female- of the 14 staff in post, 7 are women of African or African Caribbean ethnic origin and 2 women of white British ethnic origin. We have one woman of Asian ethnic origin. We have 4 male IROs all of white British ethnic origin.

All IROs have at least 5 years post-qualifying experience as a social worker and are registered as social workers with the Health Professionals Council. Several of our IRO's have previously held managerial roles in other service areas.

IROs and managers can access a diverse range of training appropriate to their development needs and the specific areas of knowledge required by the needs of the young people on their caseloads. Some of this training is bespoke, arranged by the service to meet the specific requirements of IROs, while other training is more generic accessed by a wide range of social work staff. One of the IRO's takes responsibility for maintaining a team library for the service sharing articles and publications relevant to the role and alerting colleagues to new additions.

IROs were observed chairing reviews by their managers on a number of occasions during the year. It is the intention of the service to formalise this expectation during this year to give managers the opportunity to identify good practice and offer graded feedback on the performance of all IROs.

IROs were responsible for chairing Missing Strategy meetings until June of 2017. This proved helpful in some cases where the oversight of the IRO helped identify areas where Social Workers were struggling to make coherent plans for children or young people who were particularly challenging to care for. After June 2017 the Team Managers took on the chairing role although IROs do still contribute to the meetings.

IROs have been involved in a number of training and development sessions alongside colleagues on the Strengthening Families model in the early part of 2018. One team member sits on the Adoption panel for the authority, one is part of the Fostering Panel and others regularly take part in selection panels for the Independent Visitor Service. Adam is now going to be part of the Fostering Panel.

The IRO service is represented at the London wide IRO group and has regular feedback from the sessions held.

During 2017 the IRO Manager forged links with the Court Case progressions Manager within Croydon and the CAFCASS Manager in South London. This has helped to improve links overall for the IROs with Children's Guardians appointed by the Courts for children in proceedings.

The Croydon IRO service hosted a conference of IROs and Children's Guardians from across South London in June 2018. This was a valuable training opportunity and networking event for IRO's and Guardians across the region. Judge Probyn gave a keynote speech. This was a well attended meeting and further strengthened the links between IROs and Children's Guardians which will benefit children in proceedings.

### 3. OFSTED Inspection 2017

The OFSTED inspection in 2017 identified that the service provided to children and young people in Croydon was inadequate. The Inspectors did note that there were 'unique' factors in Croydon around unaccompanied asylum seeking children. They also recognised that we were improving standards but the pace of change wasn't quick enough.

The OFSTED inspection found there was insufficient evidence of IRO challenge on children's files particularly where plans were found to be subject to unnecessary drift and delay.

It was hard to hear the message from Inspectors about the standard of service we offered in Croydon. As an IRO service staff felt they had done their best to challenge poor practice with individual staff. They also recognised that this had not always been evidenced either in recording or in changes to the outcomes for the children and young people concerned. We recognised that we had to play our part in identifying poor practice and helping the organisation move forward to improve outcomes for children.

The IRO service were active in developing the Improvement Plan as well as continuing to work with colleagues in this challenging time. At the IRO away day in October we focussed on the actions identified in the Improvement Plan for our service. We looked at our role in creating an open system where

challenge is welcomed and views are respected. We also discussed ways to listen to children and understand more about their lived experience when we met them both during and outside their reviews.

We also focussed on our away day on the importance of good quality Care Planning. As a service we believe all children looked after by Croydon benefit from a clear plan for their future. This is best achieved by collaboration between their social worker, the child or young person themselves where they are able to contribute, carers and also with family members who are able to prioritise the child's needs appropriately. We looked at how we could seek to ensure that Care Plans are coherent and relevant to the child and young person's needs and have their best interests at their centre. We recognised that we have a responsibility to identify patterns of concern that emerge in respect of individual children and collectively, and to make senior leaders aware.

As part of the Improvement Plan the Croydon Escalation Resolution Protocol which is required by the IRO handbook was re written and re-launched in January 2018. The main changes were that the informal challenges raised by IROs were now to be captured and reported on within our electronic recording system, CRS. There was also an emphasis in the document on resolving matters quickly and on making challenge as constructive as possible. We are tracking the new process to check that it is effective by producing quarterly reports on themes and results from the challenges made which are shared with Children Services Management Team.

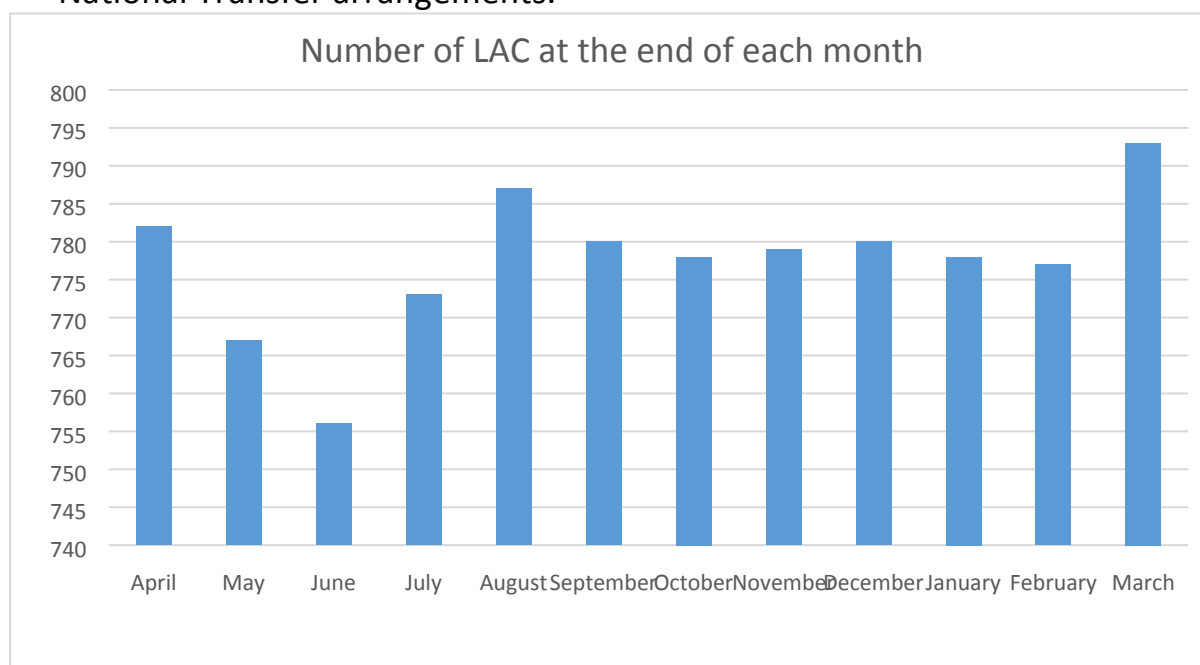
The OFSTED improvement plan identified a need for improved administrative support for the service. 1 administrator was appointed and we have initially focussed on reducing the monitoring forms activity which IROs were completing monthly. There has also been more support for assisting with scanning and uploading consultation documents which children and carers complete before the reviews.



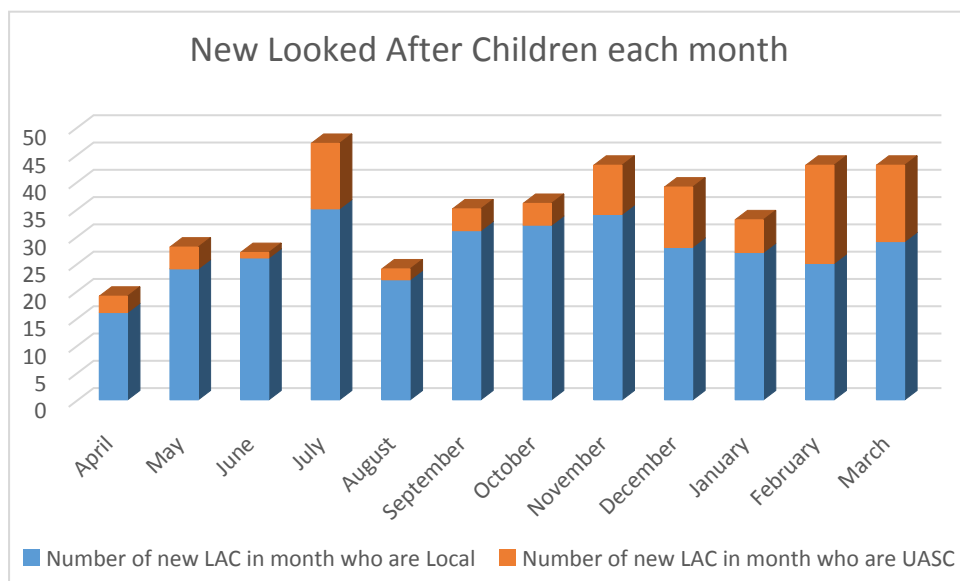
#### 4. Quantitative Information about the IRO Service in Croydon

The recommended average caseload for an IRO is between 50 and 70. Our IRO's average between 60 and 64 cases each. Numbers are not a true indicator of workload as this varies a great deal depending on the locations of placements, the number of sibling groups and the complexity of the issues for each child or young person. As the charts below show the population of Looked After children in Croydon has risen overall throughout the year peaking in March at 793.

Peaks in the newly looked after population are a challenge for the whole service including the Independent Reviewing Officers as we are required to conduct initial reviews within 20 days of the child or young person being placed. We have a local target to review children who are under 5 and their siblings within 10 days of their placement and have largely managed to meet this as long as the service has been informed of the placement (via the record on CRS) on time. The 20 day target can prove challenging when Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking children have been placed at a distance from Croydon. This has happened more often this year as part of the National Transfer arrangements.



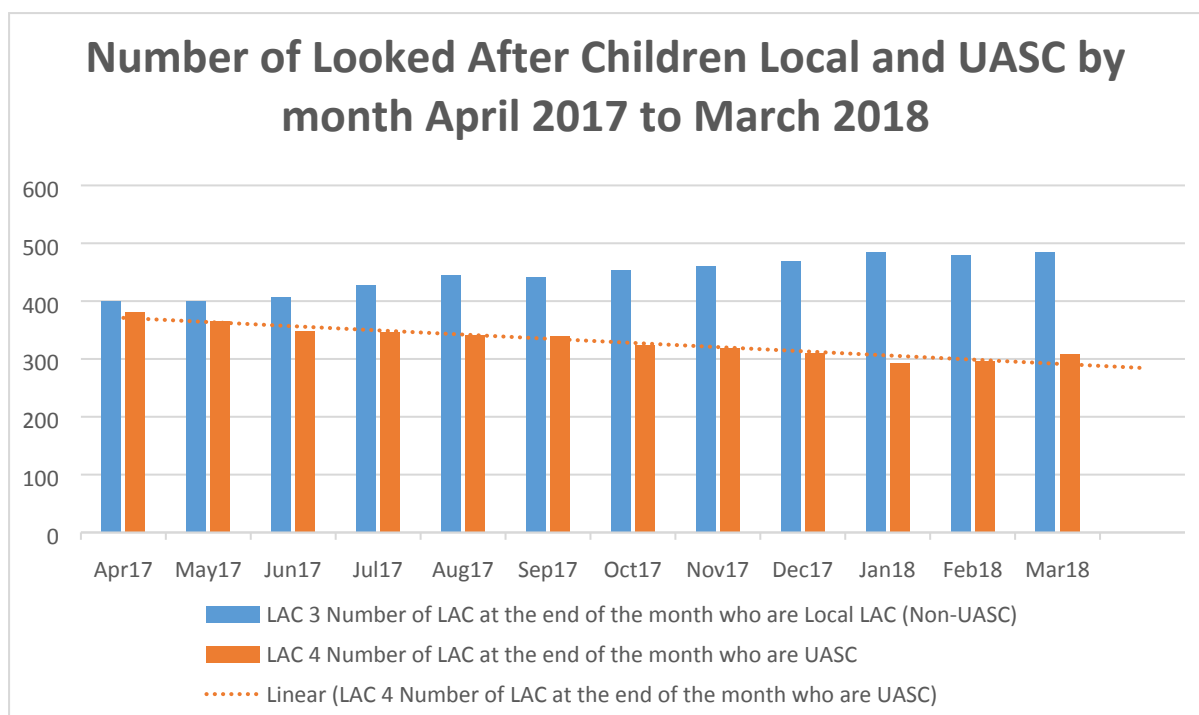
As can be seen from the chart above the number of children and young people looked after in Croydon has varied between 755 and 793 throughout the year.



In July, November, February and March the number of New Looked after children exceeded 40. In February and March this was due to a high number of new Unaccompanied Asylum seeking children needing our care whereas in July and November the number of local children entering care was higher.

Croydon’s unique position as the first place of call for all Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children under 16 seen by the Home Office in Lunar House meant that almost half the Looked After Children we cared for (49%) were in this group at the beginning of the year. The chart below shows that this has changed over the year and the proportion of UASC Looked after children is now 39% of the whole looked after population.

Care planning and reviewing for children originating from other countries brings additional levels of complexity in relation to issues of establishing jurisdiction, use of interpreters and cultural needs, all of which require additional time to ensure effective care planning. The service also conduct Age Assessments as appropriate and this adds a level of complexity to assessment, service provision and review.



This chart shows that although the number of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking children being cared for in Croydon fell steadily throughout the year this was offset by an increase in the number of local looked after children. The latest reported comparative figures for England were reported in March 2017. The average across England was 448 . Croydon local LAC for this period was 395 which is 13% less than England average and 15% less than our statistical neighbours,

#### Deaths of Looked After Children:

During the reporting year two children in our care sadly died. Both cases are subject to Serious Case Review.

## Children and Young People Leaving Care:

Table 4. Nos. of children leaving care with reasons	April 2017 to March 2018	
	Number of children	% of all leaving care
In care on remand – came to an end	8	1.79%
Adopted - application unopposed	10	2.24%
Adopted- consent dispensed with	2	0.45%
Age assessment determined UASC to be aged 18 or over	13	2.91%
Care taken over by another LA in the UK	73	16.37%
Sentenced to Custody	11	2.47%
Child died, subject to Serious Case Review	2	0.45%
Moved into independent living arrangement and no longer looked after : accommodation providing no formalised advice/support arrangements (e.g. B&B, bedsit, own flat, living with friends) query	69	15.47%
Moved into independent living arrangement and no longer looked after : supportive accommodation providing formalised advice/support arrangements (e.g. most hostels, YMCAs, and care leaver projects)	77	17.26%
Returned Home under Child Arrangement Order	6	1.35%
Return home to live with parents, relatives, or other person with parental responsibility as part of the care planning process	30	6.73%
Return home to live with parents, relatives, or other person with parental responsibility which was not part of the care planning process	47	10.54%
Special guardianship order made to carers other than former foster carers	17	3.81%
Special guardianship order made to former foster carers	10	2.24%
Transferred to care of adult social services ( Possibly some Leaving Care Service Users as well as adults with needs related to Physical or Mental Health )	71	15.92%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>446</b>	<b>100%</b>

5. Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children and the National Transfer Scheme

The National Transfer Scheme was launched in July 2016 to encourage all local authorities to volunteer to support unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) so there is a more even distribution of caring responsibilities across the country. Under the scheme, a child arriving in one local authority area already under strain caring for unaccompanied asylum seeking children could be transferred to another council with capacity.

Croydon is deemed to be a borough under strain and has been placing children on the transfer scheme according to the transfer protocol. Of the

102 Unaccompanied asylum seeking children who arrived in Croydon in this reporting period 58 were referred to the National Transfer Scheme as suitable for transfer.

Of these 58 children and young people 5 have transferred to other authorities under the scheme. 19 are placed with Foster Carers in a number of other local authorities in anticipation of their transferring to these authorities when the regions have capacity. The intention is that these children remain in their settled placements as they are placed with Independent Foster Carers. 20 children have remained in Croydon and it is deemed to be in their best interests to stay here.

14 of this group were found to be over 16 following Age Assessment and were placed by other London authorities.

The IROs have been active in ensuring that children placed on the National Transfer scheme understood what was happening to them and why. In compiling this report I have audited a number of cases on the scheme and it is clear that IROs were active in ensuring the young people concerned knew what they could expect as a result of being on the scheme. The IROs were particularly concerned that the children and young people understood that the placement they were in was a stable one. They listened carefully to concerns raised about cultural appropriateness of placements and about linguistic and cultural connections the young people wanted to make. The review proved a catalyst in a number of cases for Foster Carers and Social workers to make links with sports clubs and religious organisations in order to assist the children and young people to become involved in community as well as family life in their new home.

## 6. Local Looked After Children Themes and issues.

The rise in the number of local looked after children is concerning. Croydon has in the past had lower numbers of Local Looked After Children than the English average so this increase may have brought us more into line with national and local figures. There are measures in place to ensure that the right children are being looked after. The IRO Manager attends the Edge of Care Panel alongside a multi- agency group of professionals to ensure that all avenues to support families to stay together are explored. It is clear that the number of cases in proceedings has increased throughout the year and this is reflected in the number of children subject to Final Care Orders in the

year. Legal Planning Meetings are being convened and recorded more consistently and the progress of cases through the Courts is being monitored by the Court Case Progression Manager.

IRO's are checking the legal status of children in reviews and there is evidence that they are collaborating more with the children's guardians once cases are in proceedings. The overall increase in local looked after children subject to a care order during the year was 40 whilst the increase in local children subject to section 20 was only 16. This does suggest that the social work teams are following guidance issued in November 2018 to ensure that Section 20 powers are used appropriately and the IROs have been able to refer to this in review and challenge in cases where they believe proceedings should be issued.

Close alliance between the Child Protection Chairs and IROs in cases where children are moving from child protection plans to being looked after has resulted in greater understanding of the issues facing families.

Pre Birth Assessments and permanency decision making for children under one has been an area of focus for the Care Planning Service this year. During the reporting year 34 children under one year old came into care in Croydon. Of these all but 4 were in proceedings by the end of the year. Two babies had been placed for adoption at their mother's request. In the remaining cases IROs had challenged teams when progress in planning for permanence appeared to be drifting. A brief thematic review showed that the mothers of 17 of these babies had previously had one or more children removed from their care, often by an authority other than Croydon. Further analysis of this cohort will be undertaken this year in order to establish whether an earlier strategic intervention with these mothers would be beneficial.

## 7. Timeliness of reviews:

Data in this area is difficult to track month on month as the time lag for IRO's recording reviews is 20 days and the system reporting has been hampered by an absence of timely pre meeting reports from social workers. I undertook an analysis of LAC reviews held in the reporting period. The 903 return shows that 71% of reviews were held on time. This figure is low and reflects the fact that if a single review in the reporting period is out of timescale all reviews for that child are deemed to be late.

Analysis of the data revealed that 84% of the 2009 reviews held during the year were done on time. This was achieved by reviewing officers scheduling reviews one month early. If one review fell out of timescale subsequent reviews were scheduled to ensure they were on time.

7% of the 1019 children who had reviews during the year had three or more review meetings. For some this was because they were newly looked after in the year but for others it reflected the IRO scheduling Reviews to track and chase progress in complex cases.

The majority of reviews out of timescale were the initial reviews. This is understandable as the allocation and arrangement for initial reviews requires a fast turnaround for all concerned. Without adequate administrative support across the service arranging these initial meetings has proved challenging.

#### Timeliness of Reviews

What are we doing about it?

- Establishing an efficient IRO allocation system using reports on children becoming looked after in CRS
- One LAC Administrator has been appointed and we have requested Business Support in QA to manage the whole review process to reduce this burden on the IROs and social workers
- Working with Service Managers across Care Planning and Permanence Teams to ensure Pre Meeting Reports and Care Plans are completed so that reports can accurately flag issues where Reviews are not completed to managers.

#### 8. Qualitative Information about IRO Activity

One of the concerns OFSTED had on their visit was the lack of visibility of the IRO Service on the case records and particularly evidence of how they managed concerns and challenged poor practice. This was due to two main issues.

Recording of reviews was often done 'off system' because pre meeting reports and care plans were not being updated on the system by social workers. This practice had become embedded and needed to change. It made it difficult to manage performance of IROs in terms of timeliness of recording as well as holding the meetings.

The requirement to complete an update of the Care Plan and a pre meeting report prior to each Review had been agreed by the Heads of Service but practice still fell short of expectations. As a service we considered postponing reviews until reports were done but felt this was unfair on the children and young people. Instead IROs still reminded staff of the need to do the work but would ensure their minutes appeared on the system in case notes. Not all IRO staff have adhered to this practice throughout the year and this is an issue which is being raised in individual supervision with them. In addition Service Managers and Head of Services are made aware of outstanding Pre Meeting Reports or cases with out of date care plans by reports generated by the Performance Team and sent to them each week.

Participation of children and young people in reviews is a priority for all IROs. 81% of Children and young people over 4 took part in and contributed to their reviews last year. There is also clear evidence in the recording checked for this report that IROs are meeting and talking to children and young people before their reviews as well as in between meetings. Here are just two stories about what happened as a result of such conversations.



### *A Bigger Fish*

*In conversation at one of his reviews Rajesh (not his real name), mentioned that he had enjoyed going fishing with his Foster Carer on a trip to the sea. Rajesh was an asylum seeking child who had been in the UK for 2 years and was 16. His IRO talked to him about his experience of fishing. They agreed to meet up for the IRO to show Rajesh how to do fly fishing. The IRO took along some equipment he no longer used and gave it to Rajesh after their fishing lesson. Rajesh has continued the pursuit with support from his carers. This is his latest catch!*



---

### *Involving Parents and Listening to Children*

*One IRO had been reviewing the Care Plans for a group of siblings for several years. At one review as result of a request from their father the children started to discuss that they needed to know about their past. What they decided they wanted was to hear from their parents about why they had made the choices they had which had resulted in them needing to be looked after by the Local Authority. The IRO and Social Workers for the whole sibling group got together and with support from the different foster carers of the children and their Supervising Social workers devised a plan to make this important conversation possible. They met with the children and parents both separately and together and supported the children to have this challenging conversation direct with their father first and then with their mother. This was a cathartic process for all concerned and a real example of children being listened to and heard in their reviews.*

---

## **Dispute resolution and escalation**

A significant aspect of IRO's 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 role is about good quality conversations and appropriate challenge between the IRO and others (e.g. child/ young person/ social worker/ parent/ carer/ school). This activity is difficult to quantify, but is key in ensuring that plans progress appropriately and in a timely way.

It was recognised as part of the OFSTED oversight that not all the IROs were recording their conversations and emails with social workers and managers on the child's record in CRS. This meant there was little evidence of challenge and any changes as a result of such challenges were harder to track.

The IRO manager encouraged staff to reflect on their recording practice and there was a notable increase in the use of case notes identifying the IRO had a concern about a case or issue towards the end of the reporting year. Over 900 such notes were completed during the reporting period on various subjects. This is far more than the previous year and is reflective both of greater challenge by IROs where basic tasks are not being completed to support care planning and a more rigorous approach to recording these issues by the team.

The new Croydon Escalation and Resolution Process focusses on ensuring that issues of concern are recorded in CRS in one place. The process is intended to track initial concerns dealt with via informal meetings right through to serious issues of poor practice. Each stage can be reported on which should enable more evidence of thematic issues to be produced during the year. The IRO Manager will monitor the individual cases but also look at trends and patterns in the issues being raised which will be shared with Children Services Management Team – Director and Head of Service as well as with Service Managers.

The management of the service by one overall manager with supervisory support from a colleague does mean that themes are picked up in individual supervision across the service. IROs are pro-active in raising issues with each other and escalating these through their manager. One example of such concern is the Savings process for children and young people and the need for this to be standardised for all children as well as more transparent to them.

The new Quality Assurance Framework agreed with support of colleagues from Merton Achieving for Children for the service includes a requirement for midway monitoring process. IROs are required to complete midway reviews for all children who are looked after. They will complete a review form on each child's file on CRS. Where they are able to obtain all the information they need

from the child's record and there is evidence that the plan is progressing this will be done as a file review. The social worker and team manager will be notified that this has taken place. Where it is not possible to do this they will arrange to meet with the social worker and team manager to complete the midway review. Depending on the outcome of the midway review the CP chair or IRO may either take no further action, will agree a new work plan with the social worker/manager or implement the CERP process.

The QA service managers will provide a quarterly report on the findings of the midway reviews to Children Services Management Team and will make recommendations for practice improvements across the services.

**Evidence of IRO activity and effectiveness:**

**What are we doing about it?**

- Revision of Croydon Escalation and Resolution Policy
- Reports on informal and formal challenge by IROs monitored by IRO Manager
- Introduction of formal mid-way monitoring process for IROs as part of the new Quality Assurance Framework.

## 9. Rights and Entitlements of Children and Young People

### **Tackling drift and delay:**

A key role for the IRO is ensuring that plans for children are not subject to unnecessary drift and delay. We are tackling this in our work plan by increasing the scrutiny opportunities for the IRO team in the coming year.

The new Croydon Escalation Policy coupled with a re- launched Permanency Planning Process and training offer to all teams will result in an increase in intelligence and understanding of the factors which result in delay and actions we can take to deal with the issues.

### **Complaints and Compliments:**

The Complaints leaflet for children and young people has been overhauled as part of the Improvement Plan with involvement from the IRO service. The intention is for the service to be active in promoting the new leaflet both as a hard copy and online for all the children they review this year. Links between the complaints team and the IRO Team Manager have been made. The intention is for the manager to be aware of any themes of complaints in the LAC service. This will enable the service to ensure relevant issues are raised with the IROs on cases where complaints have been made. The precise mechanism for this process will be developed during the next year. We have been encouraging IROs to recognise and promote good practice where they see it. An IRO has recently highlighted a social worker's dedication to a young person over time and ensured her manager was aware of this.

### **Independent Visitor Service:**

This internal service was recognised by the OFSTED inspection as offering a valuable outlet for children and young people in Croydon. The Inspectors were concerned to learn that there were children who wanted to have the service but were waiting to be allocated a visitor. As a result an expansion to the service has been agreed and an additional coordinator has now been appointed with the intention that the number of volunteers recruited and trained will increase this year and more children and young people can be matched up with a volunteer. The co-ordinators now record key events relating to the relationship on CRS so that IROs and Social Workers are aware of the service. The service also offers opportunities for Independent Visitors and the children and young people they are matched with to meet together. These events take place at least twice a year and are really positively viewed by the children and young people.

### **10. Annual work programme for April 2018- March 2019**

#### **THEME ONE: Achieve good outcomes for Looked After Children and Young People**

Service Outcome: The IRO role in improving the outcomes for children and young people is evident and valued by managers and workers across the service.

- Launch a system of mid-way reviews and checks. Ensure IROs are aware of changes in cases and have a clear mandate to check and chase progress on actions they have outlined as being needed as part of Care Planning for Looked After Children.
- Run a series of sessions with IRO's alongside partners in Camden to further enhance IRO skills in relation to recognising good quality Care Planning activity and challenging colleagues when standards are not met.
- Introduce a grading system for care plans in order to identify cases where the quality of Care Planning has not been good enough and also to recognise best practice in Care Planning.
- Monitor themes of the issues escalated by IROs to aid service planning.
- Learn from information provided by complaints, Advocacy and Independent Visitor Service about key issues affecting the lives of children and young people we look after.
- Work alongside colleagues in Care Planning and Permanence to introduce methods of gaining feedback from children and young people who are looked after via APP based technology.

## THEME TWO: Improve Timeliness of Reviews and Recording

Service Outcome: Reviews and the recording around them are a priority for all teams who share responsibility for making them a helpful part of the Care Planning process for children and young people.

- Reduce recording system dependency on sequential activity. Allow Outcomes to be entered without pre meeting reports where these have not been completed.
- Monitor completion of outcomes by IROs and identify early any issues of delay.
- Continue the focus on completion of pre-meeting reports by social work teams in collaboration with Service Managers across the service.
- Reduce the administrative load of organisation and management of review activity on Social Workers, IROs and their managers by centralising administration of reviews in Quality Assurance Business Support Team.

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# Agenda Item 8

<b>REPORT TO:</b>	<b>Corporate Parenting Panel 5 September 2018</b>
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>Care Leavers' Local Offer</b>
<b>LEAD OFFICER:</b>	<b>Wendy Tomlinson, Head of Service, Looked after Children and Resources</b>
<b>CABINET MEMBER:</b>	<b>Councillor Alisa Flemming Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Learning</b>
<b>WARDS:</b>	<b>All</b>
<b>CORPORATE PRIORITY/POLICY CONTEXT/AMBITIOUS FOR CROYDON:</b> Ambition 2 – Helping Our Residents to be as Independent as Possible - Safeguarding	
<b>FINANCIAL IMPACT: No new impact</b> Not applicable as this report is for information only	

## **1. RECOMMENDATIONS**

Not applicable as this report is for information only

## **2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 2.1 Section 2 of the Children and Social Work Act 2017 requires Local Authorities to publish a 'Local Offer' for care leavers by September 2018 covering the following areas
- Health and Wellbeing
  - Relationships
  - Education and Training
  - Employment
  - Accommodation
  - Participation in Society
- 2.2 The local offer detailed at Appendix A has been compiled in consultation with care experienced young people and will be published in September 2018.
- 2.3 The Corporate Parenting Panel's feedback is welcomed.
- 2.4 The Local Offer is a dynamic document and will be reviewed at least annually

### **3. DETAIL OF YOUR REPORT**

#### **Context**

- 3.1 The Local Offer should provide information about all the services and support that is available to care leavers from the local authority, including information about their statutory entitlements as well as any discretionary support that the local authority chooses to provide. The offer should set out what support all local authority departments will provide, having regard to the seven Corporate Parenting Principles
- 3.2 The local offer should be easily available and accessible to all care leaver, which may mean it is available in a number of formats and languages as appropriate. Personal advisers are expected to share and promote the offer with care leavers they work with and make sure they are aware of the services they are entitled to.
- 3.3 The Croydon Local Offer is intended to be a comprehensive document which goes beyond the minimum requirement of what has to be published and which can act as a directory or reference point for a range of services that young people can access. It does however outline clearly what the statutory offer is for care leavers at a range of ages and circumstances.
- 3.4 The language used is intended to be friendly for young people, and the use of a young person's journey used to illustrate how the offer works in practice.

#### **Publication and Distribution**

- 3.3 A number of methods are proposed for distribution in order to ensure the offer is accessible to as many young people as possible.
- 3.4 The online version of the offer gives the optimised way of accessing it, as this version contains hyperlinks, videos and an audio-narration. This will be uploaded to the Croydon website as soon as possible after sign-off. Personal advisers, social workers, foster carer and independent reviewing officers will be encouraged to support young people to access it in this way.
- 3.5 A print run of hard copies will be completed in order that all current care leavers can have a copy. Personal advisers will ensure all the young people they support have a copy.
- 3.6 Smaller print runs in the top 5 languages used by care leavers will be made – these are Albanian, Pashto, Tigrinya, Arabic and Dari.
- 3.7 During the autumn of 2018, progression towards launch of the Care Leavers App will be completed. This will allow young people to access key information on their smart phone or tablet, and is available off-line. This app also has a translation facility and, along with a range of other features, allows care leavers to see the local offer summarised in an easy to read and accessible way.
- 3.8 Further work will be undertaken during autumn 2018 about production of a version with symbols suitable for people with learning disabilities.



### **Next Steps**

- 3.9 Work will continue on expanding the offer wherever possible by ensuring that in line with the Corporate Parenting Principles, the whole council offer is developed. This will be done as part of the ongoing improvement journey in Children's Services and the development of a louder voice for care experienced young people.

## **4. CONSULTATION**

- 4.1 Care leavers have been consulted in drawing up the local offer in the following ways:
- Encouragement to complete feedback forms whilst attending the Turnaround Centre and engaging with their personal adviser
  - Consultation session in June 2018 about use of a Care Leaver App to assist with access to the local offer
  - Consultation session in August 2018 about the draft local offer documents
  - Attendance at the Children in Care Council to talk about the local offer
- 4.2 Care leavers have been positive about the layout, content and style of the written local offer and the provision of an audio version, and have also welcomed the moves to commission a care leaver App as a key way of knowing their entitlements
- 4.3 They have given feedback about where they see gaps in the offer, which are in relation to suitable, affordable local housing, support for emotional needs, and council tax relief for young people living in other Boroughs
- 4.4 A number of Croydon council departments and external partners have contributed to the offer, including Housing, Gateway, CALAT, Croydon Works, Early Help, Youth Participation, LAC health services
- 4.5 A presentation about the offer took place at the Chief Executive's Corporate Leadership Team on 22 August 2018 to further engage other departments in contributing to the local offer. The Corporate Parenting Panel will be updated verbally on the outcome of this meeting.

## **5. FINANCIAL AND RISK ASSESSMENT CONSIDERATIONS**

**Not applicable**

## **6. COMMENTS OF THE COUNCIL SOLICITOR AND MONITORING OFFICER**

Not applicable

## **7. HUMAN RESOURCES IMPACT**

Not applicable

## **8. EQUALITIES IMPACT**

Not applicable

**9. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT**

Not applicable

**10. CRIME AND DISORDER REDUCTION IMPACT**

Not applicable

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**CONTACT OFFICER:** Wendy Tomlinson, Head of Service, Looked after Children and Resources

**APPENDICES:**

**1. Care Leavers Local Offer**



September 2018

# LOCAL OFFER FOR CARE LEAVERS

LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN - CROYDON COUNCIL

**CROYDON** | Delivering  
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# FOREWORD

My name is Ashleigh and I am a Croydon care leaver. I am 21 years old and have been living independently since 18. I am still supported by the Leaving Care team and see my Personal Adviser from time to time. I work part time as a manager in Sainsbury's and I have recently qualified as a hairdresser after attending an adult course at college.

In my spare time, I volunteer with the Children In Care Council (CiCC) to offer support and advice to Looked After children. I wanted to come back as a volunteer so that I could use my experiences to help others and make sure that we push for positive change. Since I began my volunteering I have helped support lots of young people and have been able to provide an insight into some of the ways the care system works and can be improved. I've even spoken with the Mayor of London and Cabinet members about the sort of changes I believe would help both Looked After children and care leavers.

As part of my work helping to improve services I have read over the Local Offer and given lots of feedback on it. I think it is very exciting for us to have a document that lets us know what support we are entitled to and what services are out there. I found out a lot of very helpful information by reading through it, as I'm sure you will too.

But this is only the start!

Now that we have a Local Offer in place we have a foundation to build on so that one day we can have an even stronger offer for

young people leaving care. The great thing about the Local Offer is that now we have something to show that we know what support we are entitled to.

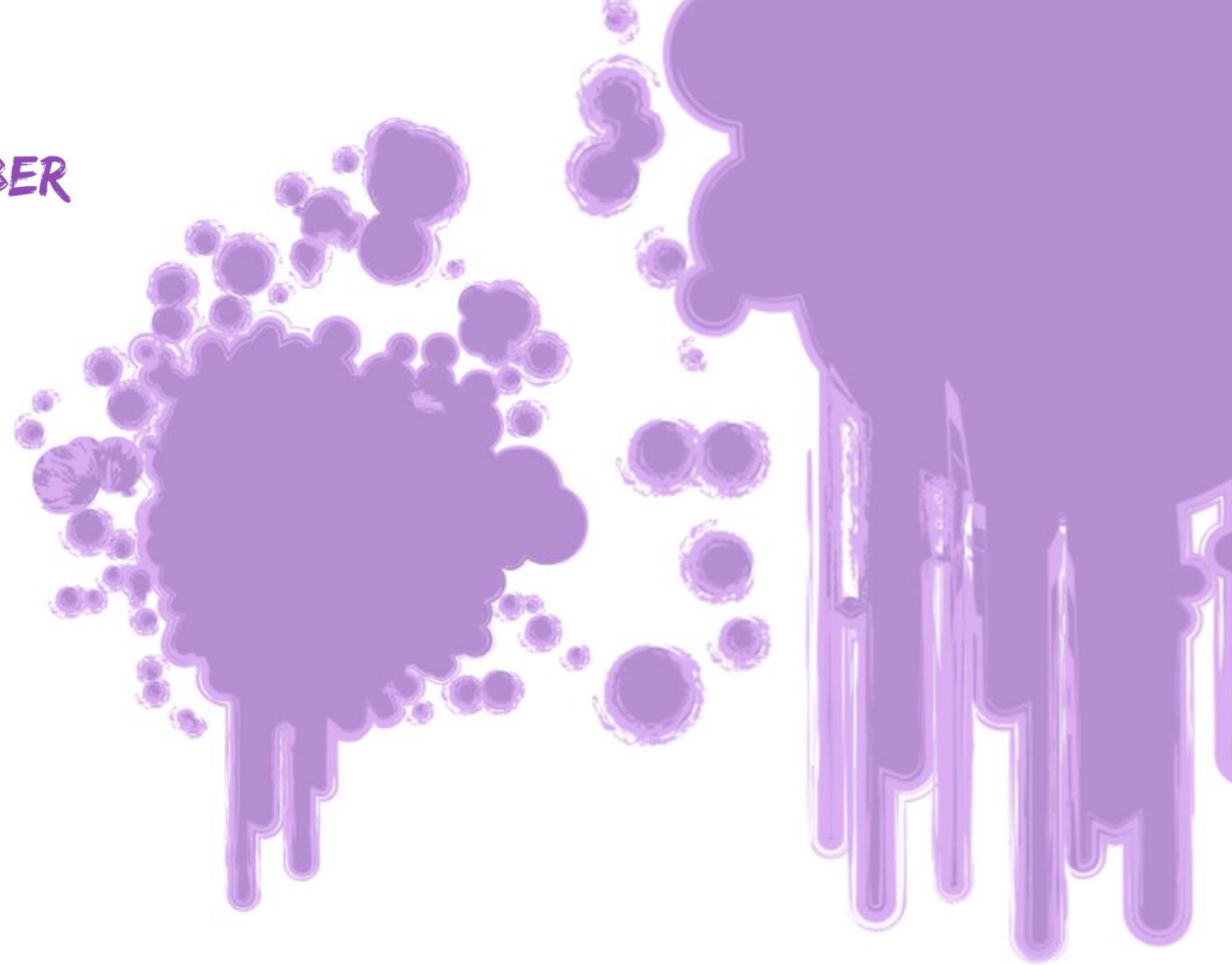
It doesn't stop there though: this is a building block for us to be able to start having conversations about change. Change doesn't happen by sitting back and waiting – it happens by taking control and not being afraid to show what you are happy or unhappy with. There is so much information in this Local Offer and it may take a little while to digest, but one of the best things that you can do is read through it, think about the things that you are happy with and things that you think could be better. Set aside the time to talk to your Personal Adviser and help me and the Council improve things for the people that are going through the same experiences as us. I'm using my experience to help others; you can too!

**Ashleigh (21), Care Leaver and Croydon Youth Ambassador**



# A WORD FROM OUR ELECTED MEMBER

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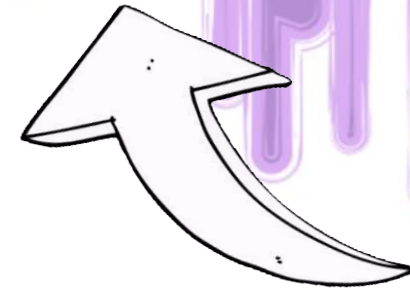


# OVERVIEW OF THE LOCAL OFFER

This Local Offer has been produced to give you, as a care leaver, an idea of what services Croydon Council provides. It has been written with the aim of outlining exactly what you can expect from our organisation: expectations against which we, as a council, can be held to account.

The need for a Local Offer arises from the introduction of the **Children and Social Work Act 2017**, which basically says that we, as a council, have to publish information about the services we provide you. However, we feel, in Croydon, that our published Local Offer should go *beyond* our legal requirement and should, rather, be a more comprehensive document. Our publication, therefore, builds upon the base requirements as stated in the Act to provide you with a more detailed overview of exactly what we offer and how we will deliver it, as well as other information about services for care leavers provided by others.

At the heart of our practice, we will aim to identify and promote what is working well in your life, while exploring concerns, assessing the impact of these and planning in partnership with you.



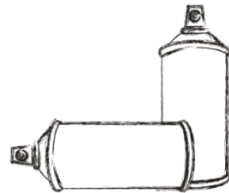
## OUR CORPORATE PARENTING PRINCIPLES

The term ‘Corporate Parent’ isn’t particularly warm, is it? But it does stand for the very positive idea that Croydon Council should act as your parent. What this means is that we have the same

hopes, wishes and aspirations for you as we would for our own children. We want you to have access to the same opportunities and chances that any other child or young person would – being care experienced does not mean you do not have

the same potential as those who are **not** care experienced.

That all sounds very nice but what does it actually mean?



It means that we have a set of principles to frame our relationship with you – principles we return to time and again to ensure that we are doing our very best as your parent. These principles are as follows:

- ✓ To act in your best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and well-being, of all care leavers.
- ✓ To encourage every care leaver to express their views, wishes and feelings.
- ✓ To take into account the views, wishes and feelings of every care leaver.
- ✓ To help care leavers gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners.
- ✓ To promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for care leavers.
- ✓ For care leavers to be safe, with stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work.
- ✓ To prepare care leavers for adulthood and independent living.





## HOW HAVE WE CREATED OUR LOCAL OFFER?

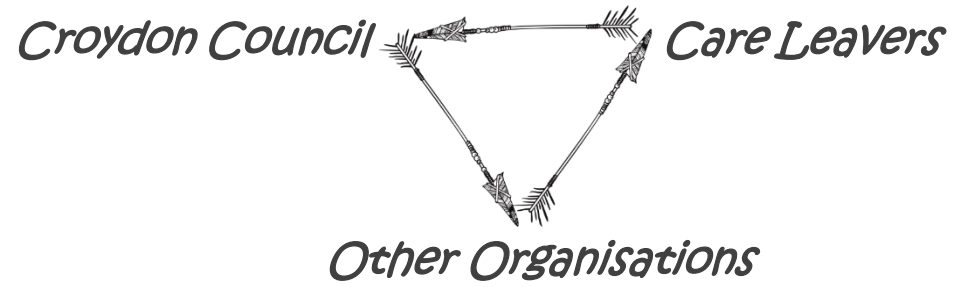
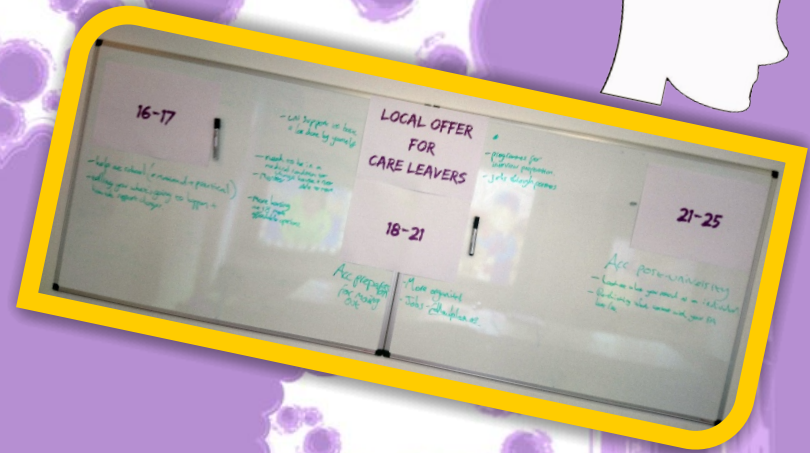


Putting together our Local Offer has involved a big discussion inside Croydon Council, as well as with other organisations in the borough with whom we work and – most importantly – listening to the care leavers we support, like you.

We have done that in three ways: firstly, with feedback forms (such as the ones to the left) available for completion in

the Turnaround Centre asking for ideas on how to improve the service as well as what is working well; secondly, through an engagement group meeting with care leavers; and finally, it was quality assured by Ashleigh, who kindly provided the foreword for the document.

It's important that we're clear about something though: this Local Offer is a *live* document. What that means is that this version you're about to read is only the beginning and we will keep looking at it, building on it and really working out how we can be better for you. And we want you involved in that, so don't be shy about telling us what you think so we can offer something that we can work towards something that is not just good, but outstanding...



# GUIDANCE FOR READING THIS DOCUMENT

This document is designed to be quite easygoing with a focus on keeping things clear for you.

In a minute, you're going to be introduced to a care leaver who you can follow on his journey from the age of 16 to 25, while reading about all the services that you can access. But before you meet him, let's just review how this document works and how you can use it effectively.

First of all, you will find lots of links to other organisations, Council procedures and even other locations in this document. The links are colour coded as follows:

- **Orange:** these links will take you through to other websites and, sometimes, Croydon procedures. Use these links when you want a little more explanation on how we do things in the Council or how another organisation can help.
- **Green:** these links will send you to relevant pieces of the law and even directly to specific sections in Acts of Parliament (e.g. to Section 23c of the Children Act 1989).
- **Blue:** these links transport you to other sections in this document where relevant (e.g. you may see a link in the Keeping In Touch section to Personal Information and Data Sharing).
- **Purple:** these open up an email contact.



# THE LEAVING CARE SERVICE

## Overview

Our Leaving Care Service is the key team for you to know, as they will be your first contact point for pretty much all your needs. You will start to work with an allocated Personal Adviser or Social Worker from this team when you turn 18.

Here are some facts about Leaving Care:



## Who can receive a service?

If you've been Looked After, then that doesn't automatically mean you'll get a Leaving Care service. There are some important distinctions to make on who **can** receive a service.

The key terms to be mindful of are: **Eligible**, **Relevant**, **Former Relevant** and **Qualifying**. These are terms that can be used in different ways to describe young people aged between 16 and 25, and serve to distinguish the levels of support that will be offered.

### What do all these terms mean?

**Eligible** means the young person is 16 or 17 and has been looked after by the local authority for 13 weeks or more *after* turning 14, and is *still* being looked after.

**Relevant** means the young person *was* Eligible, but is no longer looked after and has returned home but not been settled there for more than six months. This will also include young people who were detained after turning 16 (e.g. in a psychiatric hospital, youth offending institution, etc.) and *had* been looked after immediately prior to this happening.

**Former Relevant** means the young person is aged 18 to 21 and was Eligible or Relevant. They continue to be Former Relevant until they are 25 if they remain in education.

**Qualifying** means a young person aged under 21 (or under 24 if in education) who was *not* looked after for 13 weeks or more after turning 14, but was looked after for a period when they were 16 or 17.

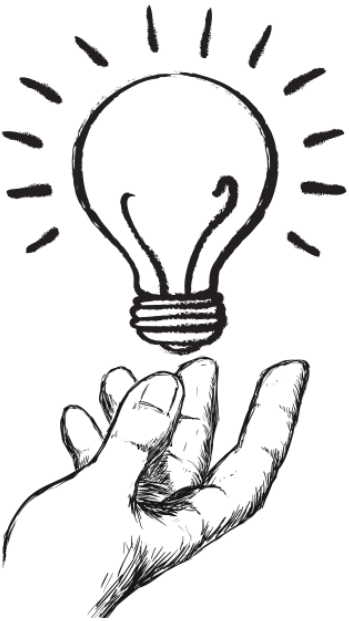


# What services are available?

This document will explain in detail exactly what support and services are available to care leavers in Croydon but, as a brief overview, young people who are eligible, relevant or former relevant can expect the following:

- ✓ Personal Adviser or Social Worker
- ✓ Needs Assessment
- ✓ Pathway Plan
- ✓ General advice and assistance

There are plenty of other entitlements, but they will relate quite specifically to areas such as housing or education and will be covered later.



But let's take a moment to give you

a bit more information on the difference between the service you will enjoy if you are former relevant or qualifying:

<b>Former Relevant</b>	<p><i>We have to:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Provide you with a Personal Adviser who visits you at least once every two months.</li> <li>✓ Provide you with and review a Pathway Plan at least once every six months.</li> <li>✓ Help you with expenses relating to getting into, or remaining in, education, employment or training.</li> <li>✓ Offer you advice and support.</li> <li>✓ Keep in touch with you.</li> <li>✓ Offer or pay for somewhere for you to live during the extended university holidays (summer and Christmas) if you have no other home.</li> <li>✓ Provide you with a £2,000.00 Higher Education Bursary and a Setting up Home Allowance (SUHA).</li> <li>✓ Provide a home for you.</li> </ul>
<b>Qualifying</b>	<p><i>We have to:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Offer you advice and support.</li> <li>✓ Keep in touch with you.</li> <li>✓ Offer or pay for somewhere for you to live during the extended university holidays (summer and Christmas) if you have no other home.</li> </ul>



## 16 and 17 Year Olds

The Leaving Care Service itself only starts to take a *leading* role on working with you when you turn 18. However, the Leaving Care 'journey' begins before adulthood, and each young person who qualifies for a service is matched to a Personal Adviser or Social Worker at the age of 16. The idea of an earlier match is to ensure you get to know the worker who will provide post-18 support *before* you become an adult. The worker will also have a much stronger idea of your support needs before you turn 18 and can better prepare for what is to come.

Work with an Eligible or Relevant 16 or 17-year-old will still be led by a Social Worker in the Permanence Service or, in some cases, a different team, but the matched worker from the Leaving Care Service will also help the Social Worker prepare for your independence.

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## What is a Personal Adviser?

A Personal Adviser is, in many ways, very similar to a Social Worker – so much so that you, as a care leaver, may struggle to make a distinction between the two in your day-to-day contact.

They will befriend you, provide general advice and guidance, and support you more intensely where you have particular assessed needs (e.g. you wish to get into education).

The key thing to note with a Personal Adviser is that the onus is very much on **you**, as a care leaver, to say *when* you need support – you are an adult, after all and more is expected of you!

## Compliments and Complaints

If you think we've done a particularly good job with helping you, or else we've done something that you're really *unhappy* about, then you can let us know using this form:

*To be embedded for final copy*



# Pathway Plan

A solid, written plan **has** to exist in order to support you properly, and that is done – as laid down in the law – through a Pathway Plan. A Pathway Plan is a document outlining how you and your Personal Adviser will jointly respond to your needs and help you develop into an independent adult. But its biggest aim is to ensure there is an ongoing and evolving conversation about how you can move forward in your life.

A Pathway Plan will talk about all your key issues (i.e. health, education, housing, money, etc.) and is as an opportunity for your Personal Adviser to say, 'Hey, what do you want to achieve and how can I help you achieve it?'. For each issue, a goal or action will be agreed with you. Each goal or action in a Pathway Plan will be SMART, so that is:

- ✓ **Specific:** clear about what needs to be done.
- ✓ **Measurable:** work out how we know when it is achieved.
- ✓ **Assignable:** tasks to achieve it can be assigned.
- ✓ **Realistic:** ensure there is a good chance it can be done.
- ✓ **Time-constrained:** state when it should be completed.

Any target that is not SMART is just going to frustrate you and make all professionals involved in setting it look a bit silly, as it simply will not be achieved. Each target will also take account of your individual strengths, allowing you to use and build upon them accordingly with necessary support brought in where you need it.

Once the Pathway Plan is written up, you will have an opportunity to read, comment on it and sign it – so long as you agree to its

content – at which point it becomes a *legally* binding document. So, signing it is kind of a big deal.

Your Pathway Plan will be reviewed at least once every six months, though it can be reviewed sooner should you wish.

Oh, and one last thing: we realise that you may be Captain Independent and think, 'A Pathway Plan? Why should I bother with such nonsense?'. Well, our thinking is that if you *are* that independent then a short plan – or one drawn up without you engaging – simply tells us that everything in your life must be pretty much perfect. However, we very much doubt that that will ever be the case!





## Turnaround Centre

The Turnaround Centre provides a single place for young people and their families to access support for a range of issues. The Centre is operated by Croydon Council in partnership with a range of expert agencies and provides a base for the Leaving Care Service, as well as several other teams.

Unique to the Centre is its Drop in Zone (DiZ) – a place where you and other young people can ‘drop in’ (hence the

name) for advice and support in a safe and secure environment. Services on offer include:

- ✓ Access to advice, information and support with housing and potential homelessness up to the age of 21.
- ✓ Access to information on local events and activities.
- ✓ Computer and internet access.
- ✓ Events and activities held by Croydon Council and CAYSH.
- ✓ Mediation for 16-to-21-year-olds provided by CAYSH.
- ✓ Family support and advice (by appointment only).

The Turnaround Centre can be contacted on **020 8760 5530**, is open Monday to Friday, from 9.30am-5pm, and can be found at **51-55 South End, Croydon CR0 1BF**.

You should also be aware that the DiZ does have appropriate security – including a guard and alarm system – and has a strict no friends and no hoods policy. The safety precautions in place are to protect staff as well as other people using the building.

## Duty System

Things usually work best for you if you are able to with your allocated worker. However, the Leaving Care Service has a ‘duty’ system for responding to you if you are unable to get in touch with your Personal Adviser and need urgent help with something. All you need to do is come to the Turnaround Centre on any weekday between 10am and 4pm, and you will be able to speak with someone. You will not have to wait any longer than an hour, though you will only be seen if the matter is urgent. Alternatively, you can speak to a duty worker by phoning the Turnaround Centre and asking for them.



# THE LOCAL OFFER

Meet **Saed Khan**...



Saed came to the UK from Afghanistan when he was 14 years old. He claimed asylum upon arrival, as several members of his family had been killed by the Taliban back home and his own life was in danger. He was accommodated by Croydon Council under the **Children Act 1989 – Section 20**.

Since arriving, he has lived with a foster family in Selsdon and his English speaking skills have grown far stronger as he has progressed through ESOL Pre-Entry and ESOL Level 1 at Croydon College. Saed loves to play cricket and enjoys regular matches with a wider group of young people with whom he is

friends. His ambition is to become a nurse as his father was a doctor when he was alive and, after his experiences in Afghanistan, he wishes to do good for people.

We're going to follow Saed's story as he becomes Eligible at the age of 16, leaves care at 18 and, finally, has his case closed at the age of 25. The idea is to see Croydon's Local Offer through the eyes of someone who actually receives the service so you not only understand the service provided, but appreciate how it is *received*.

Saed's story will run side by side with us telling you exactly what services you can expect from us as a local authority, as well as some of our partners.





# KEEPING IN TOUCH

## Overview

If you're a Looked After child, then when you reach the age of 16, our Leaving Care Service matches a Personal Adviser to you. For the moment, this Personal Adviser will be a bit of a distant figure in your life, as your *allocated* worker (that is: the lead person responsible for supporting you) remains your Social Worker and this will be the case until you reach adulthood. However, your Personal Adviser will meet with you, so you know who they are.

Contact for you as a 16 or 17-year-old is very different to contact when you turn 18, as this table demonstrates:

Age	Contact Arrangements
16/17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Visit once a month</li> <li>✓ Looked After Child (LAC) Reviews</li> <li>✓ Emphasis on Social Worker reaching out to offer you support</li> <li>✓ Professionals involved: Social Worker, Personal Adviser, Foster Carer, Supervising Social Worker and Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO)</li> </ul>
18-25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Visit once every two months</li> <li>✓ Emphasis on you reaching out to your Personal Adviser to seek support</li> <li>✓ Professionals involved: Personal Adviser</li> </ul>

Of course, the legal guidance on how regularly you should be seen should not be used as an excuse to *prevent* more regular contact, if you need it. If we were worried that you were at risk of something bad happening to you, for example, or if you needed more contact for a short time, then we'd want to see you more often – 'cos we're meant to be your parent! Remember?

## Looked After Child (LAC) Reviews and the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO)

You will have been allocated an Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) after first becoming Looked After. This IRO may very well have changed over time, but you will have IRO-level involvement until you turn 18.

The IRO's job is as follows:

- ✓ To chair Looked After Child (LAC) Reviews (more on these in a minute).
- ✓ To check the work being done by all professionals involved with you is good and ensure it all comes together nicely.
- ✓ To be an independent person to whom you can turn when you have worries.



A LAC Review is held every six months for you and ends when you turn 18.

The purpose of the LAC Review is as follows:

- ✓ To give you a chance to privately discuss things with the IRO.
- ✓ To give the foster carer or a keyworker in your care setting a chance to give feedback on how you are doing.
- ✓ To serve as an opportunity for the IRO to check all ongoing work with you relating to the key areas in your life (e.g. health, education, preparation for leaving care, etc.).
- ✓ To agree actions between everyone to better or further support you.

Your Personal Adviser will attend the last two LAC Reviews before you turn 18 and explain the process of you becoming supported by Leaving Care; they will also give you their mobile and email, and their manager's contact details too.

### *Where do we meet up?*

Before turning 18, your Social Worker is most likely to visit you where you are living though they can meet you elsewhere as well. After turning 18, your Personal Adviser will meet you wherever you're both happy to meet – be that at your house, in the **Turnaround Centre**, in a café, or elsewhere. It may be that your Personal Adviser wishes to visit your house for a particular reason – perhaps he/she wishes to see how you are managing with living independently, or maybe he/she has safety concerns – and it is

expected that you will cooperate unless there is a very good reason not to!

### *How will we keep in touch?*

Okay, here's the legal bit: your Personal Adviser has to, by law, see you at least once every two months (unless expressly against your wishes). But between visits, you'll keep in touch through other means. As it is the 21<sup>st</sup> century, contact is very unlikely to be by letter, landline or carrier pigeon; instead, contact will be via text, mobile, email, Skype and/or app.

Social media is not acceptable – nor is WhatsApp (see **Personal Information and Data Sharing** for reasons why).

Once again, the Personal Adviser will be led by your wishes on the subject. And if you want to see your worker's big smiling face more often then they'll be happy to see you too!





### Saed's Story...

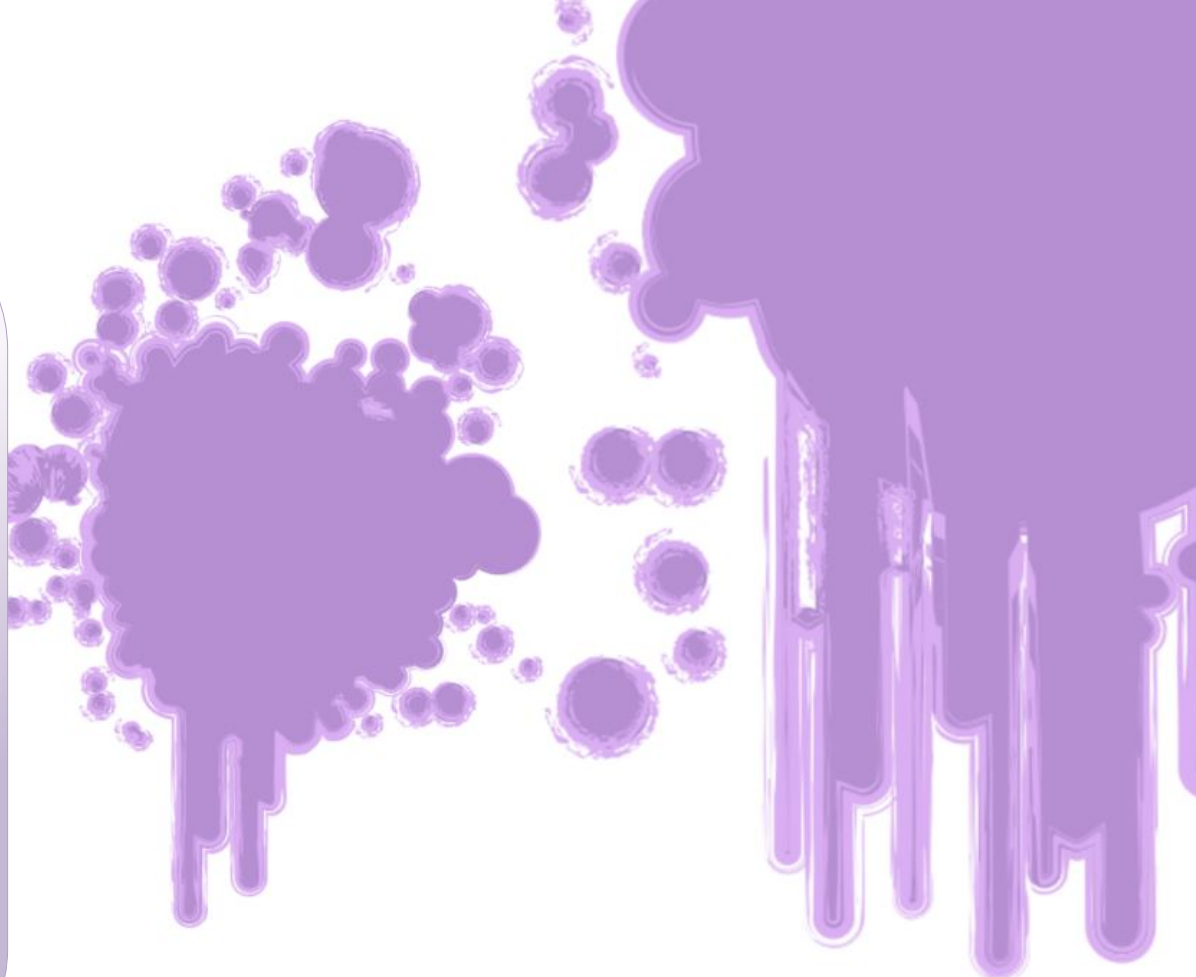
Saed, 17, walks into his LAC review, sinking into the comfy armchair in his foster home; he gets downstairs a few minutes early to secure this seat as his Social Worker competes with him for it. The IRO arrives soon after and both he and Saed accept the foster carer's offer of tea. Then the usual people file in: his Social Worker, the Supervising Social Worker and, tired from bringing in small mountains of biscuits, his foster carer takes a seat.

A knock on the door and someone new enters the living room. This person introduces herself as Saed's Personal Adviser.

'Hi Saed. I'll be at these LAC Reviews from now on – and your Pathway Plan updates. I'll be your main support when you're an adult, but I'll also be available before then if you ever fancy a chat. Let me dropcall you now so you have my number,' she says.

Before he knows it, Saed's phone is shaking along to his Justin Bieber ringtone and he has this stranger's number.

'Remember though,' Saed's Social Worker says with a wry smile,



# LIFE SKILLS AND GENERAL SUPPORT

## Overview

As a 16 and then a 17-year-old, you will be building your life skills in preparation for adulthood. Before turning 18, you have a lot of support available to you from a number of people both inside and outside the Council – linked and not linked to Children’s Social Care. The goal is to help you find your own independence. But what is ‘independence’ and how do you achieve it?

### independence

*noun*

freedom from the control, influence, support, aid, or the like, of others.

At its heart, independence suggests the idea of freedom to support yourself, but clearly no one is an island and we all need help sometimes. We aim to ensure you are well equipped to tackle the demands and trials of being an adult. These demands can range from the fairly dull, such as



being able to manage and pay utility bills, all the way up to securing the job or career you hope for.

## Who’s available to provide support?

As mentioned, there are a number of people who are potentially available to support you, depending on your circumstances.

Although not an exhaustive list, you may expect to receive support from any of the following:

- ✓ Foster Carer or Keyworker
- ✓ Social Worker
- ✓ Personal Adviser
- ✓ Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO)
- ✓ Independent Visitor (IV)
- ✓ Support Worker
- ✓ Virtual School (please see [Education and Training](#) for further details)
- ✓ Advocate

As stated, your own unique circumstances will decide exactly who is available for you – for example, a 17-year-old in semi-independent accommodation will not have a current foster carer. Formally, the Social Worker and IRO stop working with you when you reach the age of 18, but a care leaver who has a particularly strong relationship with their foster carer may very well keep in touch or ‘stay put’ (see [Home](#) for further details) – which is a good thing.



## Floating Support –

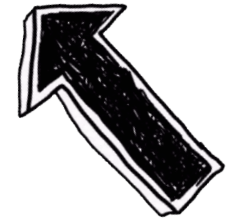
We also work in partnership with an organisation called **CAYSH** who are based in the middle of Croydon and offer a floating support service to you if you need it – no, that doesn't mean you have a support worker levitating around you; it means you have a support worker who sort of 'floats' in and out of your life as you need them but who can provide more intensive or targeted support than your Personal Adviser.

CAYSH is an organisation that supports young people in a number of ways. In Croydon, CAYSH has two workers providing floating support for care leavers who are referred to them by their Personal Adviser.

The floating support consists of:

- ✓ General day-to-day assistance, such as accompanying you to appointments, helping you set up your gas/electricity supplier, budgeting, chasing immigration solicitors, etc.
- ✓ Signposting you to other appropriate services, such as Off the Record, Turning Point and StepChange.
- ✓ Working in partnership with your Personal Adviser to meet your needs in a way that works for you.

CAYSH also has a direct link to the charity 'Mind' in South Croydon, and is commencing the first of what will be an annual skills programme in September 2018.



# Advocacy Services – Barnardo's

If you feel as though you are struggling to express yourself, or your views are not being taken seriously, then you can approach an advocacy service to support you in making yourself heard. Although there are a number of advocacy services available, Croydon has a working partnership with **Barnardo's** and will always try to work together with an advocate where they are responsibly and supportively involved. They will always be asked to provide evidence that you are happy for us to speak with them though!

Barnardo's notes that there is a growing recognition of the importance of advocacy for children and young people when plans are being made for their lives. Appreciating the views and feelings of the young person helps them feel involved and can help everyone make better decisions. Working like this is not just good practice, it is also a legal requirement.

The **Children Act 1989** says young people must be treated with respect and this means (amongst other things) that young people must be listened to. If a local authority is deciding what should happen to a child or young person they have to find out how they feel and what they want. They have to tell the child or young person what is happening and why.

Listening to children is at the heart of all Barnardo's work, but their work in advocacy especially shows Barnardo's commitment to giving children and young people a voice.

To request an advocate, phone Barnardo's on 0808 800 0017 or 020 8768 5058. Alternatively, email them on [Advocacy2@barnardos.org.uk](mailto:Advocacy2@barnardos.org.uk).



*Play Me!* 



## Support Groups –

We're proud to run a support group that brings both Looked After children and care leavers together in a friendly, safe environment where they can develop independent skills.

Esther Outreach is a voluntarily-run initiative that provides practical support, advice and advocacy to care leavers. The practical support covers everything from assistance in finding work all the way through to preparing meals. Past workshops have covered money management, drug awareness, parenting, cooking on a budget and creative art.

There are two regular groups that run at the Turnaround Centre from 6.30-8.30pm as follows:

- ✓ Young Men Meeting on the first Wednesday of every month.
- ✓ Young Women Meeting on the third Wednesday of every month.

To sign up you can phone either 07847 844 269 or 07783 894 358, or email [esthersoutreach@wwmf.org](mailto:esthersoutreach@wwmf.org).



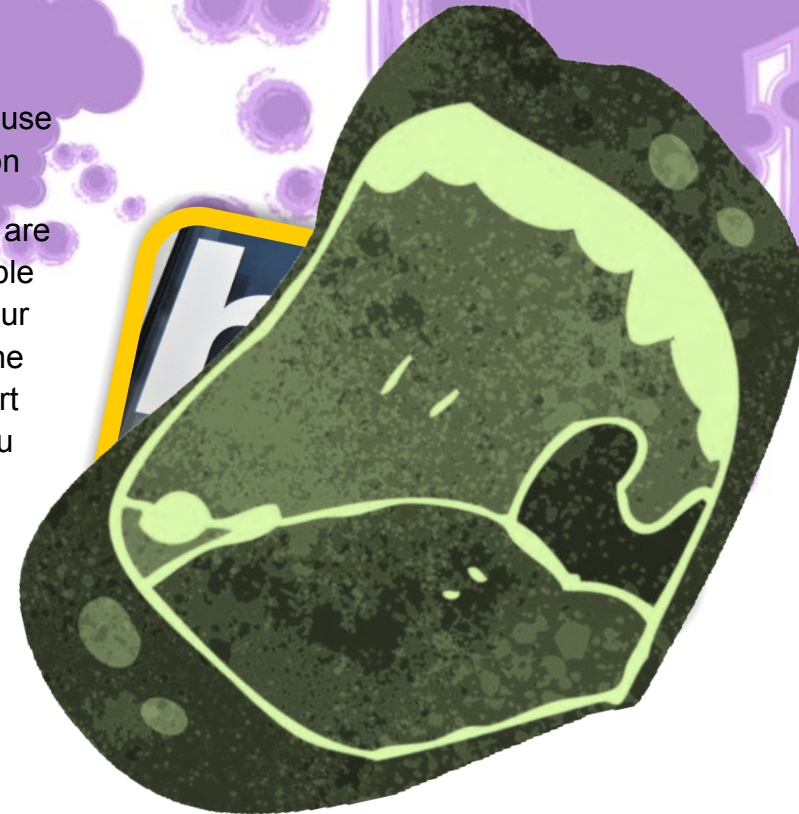
## Legal Support – Civil Legal Advice (CLA)

Sometimes the support you need is a little bolder in nature and that's when you can turn to **Civil Legal Advice (CLA)**, who may be able to offer you free and confidential advice as part of Legal Aid.

Some of the issues you can ask their support for include:

- ✓ Debt
- ✓ Housing
- ✓ Domestic Abuse
- ✓ Discrimination

If they decide you are eligible, you'll be able to discuss your issues with someone and get their expert thinking on what you can do.



## Transitions Team

It is important to let you know that we do have an enhanced offer of support for young people with physical and mental health disabilities, as well as those with learning difficulties. This support comes from our Transitions team who, in place of the Leaving Care Service, will take a lead role in providing you with a service. Instead of a Personal Adviser, your support comes instead from a Social Worker who specialises in working with young people with disabilities. However, you should know that you will still be legally entitled to all the rights and entitlements outlined in this document as any other care leaver.

Parts of your service will, necessarily, be different to that received by other care leavers – for example, you will receive enhanced support with housing. For full information on the available support, have a look at our **SEND Offer**.



## Independent Visitor (IV) Service

We also have the Independent Visitor (IV) Service, which recruits, trains and manages volunteers who meet with Looked After children one on one to build a supportive friendship. IVs give Looked After children a chance to have fun, take a break from their daily lives with someone who is just there for them, and to model positive behaviours. They also offer a form of continuity – with many matches lasting years – that often cannot be offered by professionals and carers in social care.

In terms of what they *actually* do, IVs do what you want to do! They travel with young people for cinema trips, cycling in the park, days out in London or Brighton, an ice cream or a burger – but they're really there to listen, to chat, to reflect and to care. They might meet a child in central Croydon or as far afield as Wolverhampton.

If you're 16 or 17, an IV is really worth considering and even after you turn 18, they can be in your life for a further six months. Result.





## YouTube Channel for Care Leavers – *formeR* ← Relevant

Another form of support to be aware of is the developing YouTube channel, **formeR Relevant**, which is unique to Croydon and aims to give you help on a range of issues, including housing, money and immigration. Let's be honest: production values aren't high, but it is a work in progress for you to be aware of and there may already be some content worth looking at.

## 21-25-Year-Olds' Service Offer

Now, if you are between the ages of 21 and 25 our service may look a little different to how it was when you were 18, 19 and 20. This slight change is because of the **Children and Social Work Act 2017 – Section 3** which basically means you can ask for support from us up until you turn 25, whether you are in education or not. It used to be that, at 21, if you were working or not in education, employment or training, we would say goodbye, but that is no longer the case if you still want support. Also, if we do say goodbye to each other then you can still return to us before your 25<sup>th</sup> birthday to ask for more support.



We recognise that a 21-to-25-year-old is likely to be a lot more independent than someone younger. So, as you approach your 21<sup>st</sup> birthday, your Personal Adviser will sit down with you and work out the following:

- ✓ Whether you still need our support.
- ✓ If you do need support, what tasks you need support with.
- ✓ If you do need support, how often we will keep in touch and how we will keep in touch.

After this has been discussed, your Pathway Plan will be updated accordingly. If you would like support with a lot of things, then you may require a full needs assessment; if you only want support with a couple of things – such as finding a job or accessing a scuba-diving club – then a full needs assessment is going to be overkill.

But if you decide you're happy for us to say goodbye at 21 then – guess what? – we're going to write to you on each of your birthdays until you turn 25 just to remind you that we're still here ready to support you if you need it! And, if a few years pass and you think, 'Yeah, actually I could do with a little help at the moment,' then you can come into the **Turnaround Centre** during duty hours and the following happens:

- **Request:** firstly, you tell the receptionist that you'd like to see the duty Leaving Care worker to talk about your current needs.
- **Needs Assessment:** the duty worker will talk with you about what tasks you'd like support with. Perhaps you only want help with something small or perhaps you'd like quite a lot of assistance. Either way, the duty worker will write all



the important information down. You will then provide your contact details and leave the building (unless you need emergency support).

- **Allocation:** you will be contacted within two weeks and told who your allocated Personal Adviser will be, and they will meet up with you and start providing support. We will try our best to make sure your worker is the last Personal Adviser you had before we said goodbye.



## Saed's Story...

Saed is almost 18 and he's about to say goodbye to his Social Worker, IRO and Foster Carer in quick succession. He's only left with his Personal Adviser. This adulthood business is tough...

But his Personal Adviser knows Saed's going to be feeling this way and surprises him by ringing up and saying, 'Hey! Fancy a coffee? I want to hear how you're doing.'

The café is empty but for his Personal Adviser and after they've each grabbed a coffee that *doesn't* cost more than a small yacht, they sit down together.

'Big changes, Saed! How you been doing?' the Personal Adviser asks.

'I feel a bit alone,' he says. 'I had a lot of people there when I was 17 and now it's just you – not that you're not good to have, of course.'

'I understand,' the Personal Adviser replies, smiling. 'That's why I wanted to give you this invitation' – she pulls a flyer from her bag – 'for something called the Esther Outreach group. It meets once a month for lads like yourself, and I think you could make some friends there.'

'Thank you,' Saed says, cheered at the prospect of meeting others. 'I'll give it a go.'

'Remember: you can call me at any time too!'



# HOME

## Overview

One of the key forms of support we will give you is an offer of accommodation. Housing in Croydon, to put it bluntly, is hard to come by and very expensive. There is also a big shortage of 'council houses' and 'council flats' (sometimes called social housing), and this is reflected in the fact that care leavers should expect to be renting privately for a certain period of time; therefore, you should prepare to rent privately for a number of years. However, our Housing department does find alternative homes for care leavers. In addition, there is supported accommodation available to young people who have a higher level of need, as well as housing for young people with No Recourse to Public Funds

(NRPF). Finally, looked after children aged 16 or 17 will have foster care and semi-independent homes available to them, and there is also a Staying Put option available for young people who wish to remain with their foster carers after turning 18.

## Foster Home

The most common form of accommodation for 16 and 17-year-olds in Croydon is foster care. The support of a foster carer is absolutely vital to ensuring you are ready for adulthood, and the foster home itself can be treated as a 'practice arena' for tackling issues as an adult might: for example, budgeting to limited finances; shopping for the right kinds of food; learning to prepare meals; and understanding and responding to letters and documents (e.g. utility bills, tenancy agreement, etc.). The wisdom of an experienced foster carer will make the difference to whether you make a successful start to adulthood or not.

## Semi-independent Home

For 16 and 17-year-olds who have already demonstrated that they've developed strong independent skills, a semi-independent home monitored by Croydon Council offers young people an opportunity to prove that they can not only live independently, but live independently with *other* young people under the same roof. The Council has limited semi-independent homes, but does work with several semi-independent providers to ensure that young people who are ready for this step will be given the opportunity to have a go at it.



## Staying Put

In certain circumstances, it is preferable for you to remain with your foster carer *after* turning 18. Such an agreement is called Staying Put and is usually considered as an option where there is a clear reason why there should be no disruption to your accommodation arrangement. For example, if you had a year left on your college course and intended to go to university; in this situation, you and your Social Worker might consider Staying Put as the first choice for housing once you become an adult, so as not to disrupt your learning. Or if you had a physical disability and a strong attachment to your foster carers who, in turn, had proven that they were very supportive of you; in such a circumstance, it could be considered far too disruptive for you to leave upon turning 18 and a Staying Put agreement might be considered.



## Independent Accommodation

At the age of 18, as with the majority of care leavers, you move into your own accommodation which is most likely to be a private-rented room in a shared house – or house with multiple occupants (HMO), as it is often called. Very few care leavers are fortunate enough to be offered a studio or one-bed flat and so the expectation should be that you will live with other care leavers.

The independent accommodation is offered by our Housing department and must be requested through something called a Housing Panel by your Social Worker before you become an adult. An effort is made to find somewhere in your preferred area to live – so if you were studying at Lambeth College, for instance, then we will try to find you somewhere to live nearby; however, there is never a guarantee that this can be done and you run the risk of running out of options and even homelessness if you refuse multiple offers of accommodation. Also, you will not be given the opportunity to view the room you will live in before you sign the tenancy agreement.

Oh, and on that point: what is a tenancy agreement? A **tenancy agreement** is basically a legal contract between you and a landlord stating what *your* rights are and what your landlord's rights are.

There are different types of tenancy agreement, but the most common type is an assured shorthold tenancy (AST) which means your deposit is protected under a government-approved tenancy deposit scheme and, at the end of the tenancy period (as stated



on the agreement), the tenancy will just carry on going unless you or the landlord choose otherwise.

But you may not live in an accommodation under a tenancy agreement at all – you may instead have a *licence* agreement, which is similar to a tenancy but is very specific about a (usually) *short* period of time you can live in a property. Generally speaking – and being perfectly honest – you tend to have less rights with this type of agreement, so be careful!

Accommodation will also be found by us for young people with NRPF, though there are some key differences between how their property is handled versus how property is handled for local care leavers and those with recourse to public funds (please see **Money** for further details).

You will have to sign and maintain your tenancy agreement, but should make sure you read it through first to be certain you are comfortable with it. You will also be expected to pay rent on the property in a timely manner and will be able to access a Setting Up Home Allowance (SUHA) to furnish it (again, please see **Money** for further details).

Finally, support from Housing to find independent accommodation will not stretch to 22, 23 and 24-year-olds, and so they will have to access **Croydon's Independent Living – Young Adults Support Page** for advice. However, you can approach the Council for support with a deposit or rent in advance (please see **Money** for further details).

## *Supported Accommodation*

Supported accommodation is, as the name suggests, housing where there is some type of on or off-site support. There are occasions where it is more appropriate for you to be offered this type of accommodation – perhaps you have learning difficulties and do not feel confident living independently right now, but were unable to enter into a Staying Put agreement. Alternatively, we might be worried that you are at



risk of sexual exploitation or drug misuse and feel you would benefit from a higher level of support. All of the supported accommodation that the Council uses is located within the borough of Croydon.

## *Council Houses and Council Flats*

Owing to high local pressures on limited housing stock, we – in Croydon – cannot guarantee you a council property and you should be prepared to rent privately, at least for a time. However, we *will* support you to apply for a place on the Housing Register; if you were previously on the Housing Register, you may have been removed and should ask your worker to confirm this for you,



so we can look at getting you added again. If you live outside of Croydon, we will happily explore whether living in a council house or flat is a possibility and help you apply.

### *Vacation Accommodation*

Legally, we have to offer accommodation to care leaver university students during the extended holiday periods (Christmas and summer) if they have nowhere else to live. If you are at university and your accommodation is not for 365 days a year, then you will be entitled to support from us. Alternatively, if you find somewhere yourself for the holiday then you could be given up to £400.00 per month as a contribution towards your rent. Other care leavers may be able to make arrangements with family members or friends, however, and will not need support. Remember: this duty also applies to care leavers at university who are qualifying, as opposed to former relevant.

### *Release from Custody*

If you are in custody – be it a prison or a young offender institution (YOI) – we will make plans for where you will live once you are released, so long as you are still entitled to a Leaving Care service. We'll begin by liaising with Offender Management in your prison who will update us on your release date. Your Personal Adviser informs our Housing department and they will find you an

appropriate home. We will take into account the fact that there may be areas in which you may not be safe – perhaps because of gang affiliation – and find supported accommodation if you require it.



### *Homelessness*

The protocol for supporting you if you're homeless differs depending on your age. If a Looked After 16 or 17-year-old presents as homeless, then we will find appropriate accommodation as follows:

- ✓ Night stop-type or short-term supported lodgings in homes of trained and vetted hosts.
- ✓ Emergency beds in specialist young peoples' supported accommodation services.
- ✓ Other specifically designed crash pad services with on-site support.
- ✓ Emergency foster home.

However, if you are aged 18 to 21 and homeless you should present at the **Turnaround Centre** as early in the day as possible and your application for emergency support will be completed by a member of staff in the Drop in Zone (DiZ). You will then be able to attend a same-day appointment with a member of our Housing department at Bernard Weatherill House (BWH). Depending on



the reasons for homelessness, we may offer emergency accommodation until housing issues can be resolved.

However, if you are aged 22, 23 or 24, although unable to declare yourself homeless at the **Turnaround Centre**, you will still be able to declare yourself homeless at BWH and be assessed the same as anyone else.

It's been a few days since he turned 18 and Saed has now signed his tenancy agreement for a room in a shared house in Thornton Heath – ideally, he'd liked to have remained in Selsdon, near his Foster Carer, but it wasn't to be.

He arrives at the new place in a cab with his bags and find his Personal Adviser waiting for him. She helps him unload and, together, they go inside.

There are three other boys living in the house and he meets two of them immediately: both seem pleasant and he shares a language with them, which is a good start! They show him around and he sees the shared kitchen, living room and bathroom. His room is at the top of the house and they leave him with his Personal Adviser to look at that together.

Fortunately, he's got a double bedroom, presented clean and tidy with a view out onto the street. But something's missing...

'No bed? Or furniture?' Saed says to his Personal Adviser.

'Don't worry. I've ordered a double bed, mattress, chest of drawers, desk and wardrobe: they'll be delivered in a couple of hours. You'll also have a "starter pack" which has bedding, towels, pots and pans, and a few extras.'

'Thanks,' Saed says. 'It all feels quite strange.'

'It will', his Personal Adviser replies. 'But, in time, it will start to feel like home.'

## Emergency Duty Team (EDT)

If you find yourself homeless outside of office working hours (9am-5pm / Monday to Friday) then you can get an emergency bed and breakfast room by going to the Corporate Reception at BWH. These really are for emergencies only and you must make contact with your Personal Adviser as soon as possible to advise them of your situation and follow the homelessness procedure (see above).



Saed's Story...



# MONEY

## Overview

Becoming an adult and becoming independent is financially challenging for anyone, but you may face the extra challenge of having few or no blood relations to support you. We take our financial responsibilities to you very seriously and do our best to make sure that you do not have to go to bed each night wondering

where the next meal is coming from because your bank account is empty. Financial support does not mean that we pay you money every week – no matter how much we'd like to; it instead describes a range of ways in which Personal Advisers and other Council employees are expected to help you

get your money situation looking

healthy.



## Financial Entitlements

There are several legal entitlements for you to be aware of with regards money. So, here's what you can expect to receive from us:

- ✓ **Four weekly payments** of £50.00 (£200.00 in total) upon turning 18 to help you out until benefit payments can commence, which will be deducted from your Setting Up Home Allowance (SUHA) (see below).
- ✓ **Setting Up Home Allowance** of £1,000.00 to be used for furnishing your first home.
- ✓ **A Higher Education Bursary (HEB)** of £2,000.00, usually paid in instalments of £666.67 over the three academic years of university (obviously, you have to be at university to get this!).
- ✓ **A Graduation Fund** of up to £200.00 towards the cost of gown hire, graduation photos, mortar, etc. when graduating from university.
- ✓ **No Council Tax to pay** if you live in Croydon.
- ✓ **Expenses** linked with accessing and remaining in education, employment or training (for example, the cost of a suit for an interview).
- ✓ **Support to open a bank account** if you've not already done so.
- ✓ **Support to get a National Insurance (NI) number**, which you will need for any benefit applications and work.
- ✓ Potentially, a **financial gift on birthdays and/or holidays** if you qualify and you're under 18.





# Budgeting

Budgeting is a vital skill and you need to be developing it from as young an age as possible. Help is at hand though. You can expect advice from your Personal Adviser on how best to use your money and how to make sure you're getting all the money you're entitled to. This support will be ongoing, but in times of crisis it will be more focused, and you will have a **Triple A Financial Assessment** to look very carefully at what is going on with your money – this is how it works:

- ✓ **Assess:** firstly, we work out all your regular income and outgoings using this exciting form:
- ✓ **Analyse:** secondly, you and your Personal Adviser will work out where the problem areas are and decide what needs to change.
- ✓ **Amend:** finally, the Personal Adviser will help you 'maximise your income' (e.g. looking at whether there are any extra benefits you can claim, or whether there are any bursaries for which you are eligible); and you will start to make changes to your spending habits, else you'll be eating tins of baked beans forever.



# Income Maximisation

Income maximisation is the term we use when we talk about helping you get all the money you're entitled to. Now, your financial entitlements will depend on a few things, including your legal status, your age and whether you're a student, working or neither of these. However, some of the support that *may* be offered to you is outlined below:

- ✓ **Benefits:** referral to our friendly Income Maximisation Team who can help sort out any issues with your benefit payments through direct links with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) (they're the guys who manage the Jobcentre). They can also work out whether there are any other benefits you can claim that you didn't already know about.
- ✓ **Bursaries:** there are several bursaries available to which you may be entitled, including the **16 to 19 Bursary Fund**, which can be accessed while you're at college. Again, the sheer range of bursaries reflects the fact that everyone's situation is different. We will also consider other bursary or grant options, such as **Buttle UK** or the **Jack Petchey Foundation**.
- ✓ **Ongoing Support:** in exceptional cases, we *might* consider offering you temporary financial support – usually when we are worried about your immediate safety (please read on for specifics).



## Croydon Council Gateway Service

We simply *have* to mention our Gateway service (it's won awards, y'know!), which is all about solving problems with money and housing as early as possible to stop things getting worse for you. If you have any benefits questions, you can phone them on 0800 731 5920 or go to a **benefit surgery**. And if money is still tight, you can consider applying for some form of **discretionary support** to help with general living and housing payments, including a **deposit or rent in advance**.

## Leaving Care Discretionary Payments

As a rule of thumb, we will not make any ongoing payment to you – nor to any other care leaver with recourse to public funds – as it is expected that if you are not earning you will be accessing benefits (**Universal Credit** in Croydon) to support yourself. However, there are exceptional circumstances where we think you may need some help – but we make our decision by thinking about the following ideas:

- ✓ Are there genuine safeguarding concerns and you would be placed at immediate risk if you do not receive financial support?
- ✓ Is there a SMART plan in place (ideally reflected in a Pathway Plan) of how you and your Personal Adviser will try to overcome your current money issues?
- ✓ Have you provided a bank statement to confirm that you have nothing in your account?

- ✓ If your Universal Credit payment has stopped, have you tried to fix the issue and/or access an **Advance Payment** from your local Jobcentre?

If we decide to help you, you will be offered one or more of the following:

- ✓ Food Vouchers (Tesco or Iceland)
- ✓ Food Bag
- ✓ Referral to a food bank
- ✓ Direct payment to your bank account

Your request will be entered into your Pathway Plan as well, so there is a record. But, more importantly, there will be a discussion, within your Plan, of your money situation and how we can work together to improve it.

And another thing: if we do offer to pay money to your bank account you will not receive the payment immediately; it will take at the very least a week owing to the way our financial systems work. There is nothing your Personal Adviser can do to change that.

## General Ledger Savings, Child Trust Fund and Junior ISA

Okay...that doesn't sound exciting, but you may want to pay attention, because this is important: as a Looked After child, and then as a care leaver, you'll be able to access three different types of savings:



1. **General Ledger Savings** are savings Croydon itself keeps for you and will be paid to you when you turn 18. The Council will set aside the sum of £5.00 per week for you while you are in care and 0-10 years old, and £10.00 per week while you are in care and 11-18 years old. Previously, it had been that you only received these kinds of savings if you lived with a foster carer, but that has changed and these savings now apply to all Looked After children (though they will not be paid retrospectively).
2. The **Child Trust Fund** is another form of savings that Croydon takes care of for you and you can request the money from it by speaking to your worker when you turn 18. However, the fund will only be available to you if *all* of the following criteria apply:
  - a. You were born *between* 1st September 2002 and 2nd January 2011.
  - b. You were looked after by Croydon before 3rd April 2011.
  - c. You were living in the UK.
  - d. You weren't subject to any immigration restrictions or, if you were, your restrictions were no longer active before 3rd April 2011.
3. The **Junior ISA** is sorted out by the Share Foundation on behalf of the Department for Education (DfE). When it's set up for you, £200.00 is put in it by the government (thank you very much) and, over time, that amount grows a little. At the age of 18, you can request for some or all of the money to be paid to you. However, the ISA will only be available to you if *all* of the following criteria apply:

- a. You must have been born *before* 1st September 2002 or *after* 2nd January 2011.
- b. You must have been in care for at least 12 months uninterrupted.
- c. You must be under the age of 18 (on application).

No



### *Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF)*

The financial arrangements for care leavers with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) is very different to the arrangements made for everyone else. Let's imagine a scenario where you have NRPF: you are unable to access benefits and housing, and are very likely to not be legally able to work as well (please see the [Settler Support](#) section for full clarification on NRPF). In such a position, you would be extremely vulnerable and, given that we

have a duty to support care leavers – even those with NRPF – we make the following provision:

- ✓ The **provision of a prepaid card** to be used in place of a normal debit or credit card.
- ✓ **Weekly subsistence payments** of £45.00 to be used for food, drink, toiletries, clothing and other essentials.
- ✓ **Weekly subsistence payments for your children** if you have NRPF, as follows:
  - £40.39 per child *under* the age of 1.
  - £38.39 per child aged between 1 and 3 years.
  - £35.39 per child aged *over* 3.
- ✓ **Fully subsidised rent and utility bills** in accommodation sourced by Croydon Council.
- ✓ **Travel payments for getting to college** as this should not come out of your weekly subsistence.

However, this support with money is conditional, which means we can stop paying you in the following circumstances:

- ✗ You fail to comply with a Removal Order.
- ✗ Your application for extended leave is refused.
- ✗ Your appeal against refusal is dismissed.

Oh, and we *do* expect you to stay in contact with us if we're providing you a subsistence payment so that we know you still need our support.

And here's the legal bit: we have made this decision in line with the **Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 – Schedule**

3. A Human Rights Act assessment will be conducted by the local authority to assess eligibility for further support.

### Care Leavers in Prison

Care leavers who are in prison receive no financial support from us, as it is expected that the prison itself will be providing food, drink, clothing, etc. You can also take up work inside prison to pay for any additional items you want.





## Saed's Story...

It's been four months since Saed turned 18; in that time, he has struggled with money – after all, he only receives £251.77 in Universal Credit each month. At least he has his college bursary. However, there's been some kind of error with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and his benefits have been reduced to only £170.00 a month.

Fortunately, his Personal Adviser has booked him an appointment with one of her colleagues: an Income Maximisation Officer, who he sits down with one afternoon at the Turnaround Centre.

'Nice to meet you, Saed,' the Officer begins. 'I've had a look at your Universal Credit online account and can see that a mistake has been made. But we're going to try and sort that all out.'

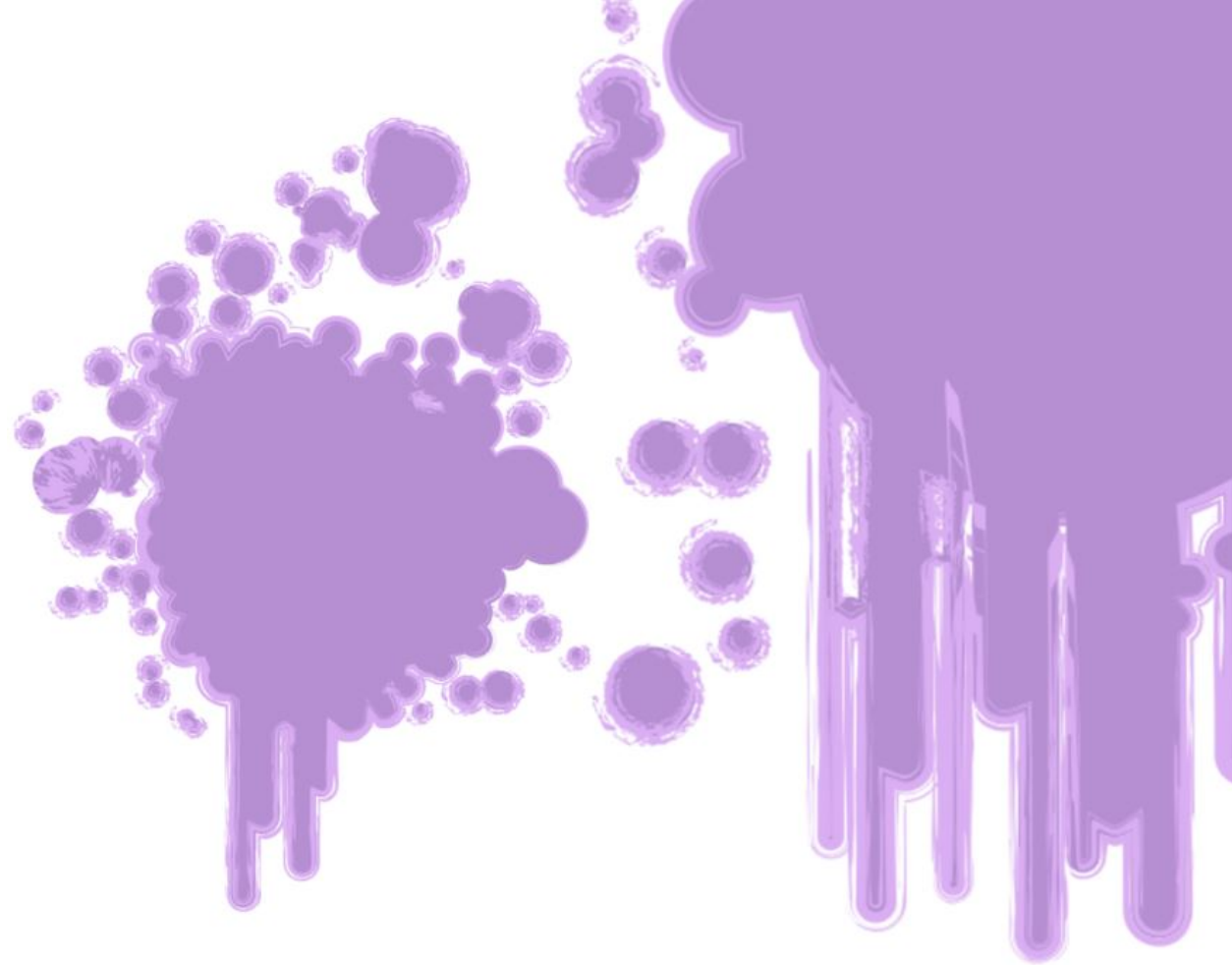
The Officer rings the DWP and, after waiting for 20 minutes for it to be answered, he gets through to someone. Another 20 minutes later, and the Officer has an answer for Saed...

'All sorted, Saed. They accept that they'd made an error and it will be corrected – you'll get the money you were owed.'

'Thanks,' says Saed. 'But even the full amount is difficult to live on.'

'That's where I come in,' says his Personal Adviser, stepping into the room. 'Let's do a Triple A Financial Assessment, work out if you can change your spending habits and think about some serious budgeting.'

'Thanks,' says Saed again. 'That would be a big help.'



# MIGRANT SUPPORT

## Overview

Croydon is home to people from a range of different backgrounds: some families have lived here for generations; some are high-flying professionals who have been attracted by the borough's ambitious plans for the future; and others have made a home for themselves after claiming asylum at Lunar House, headquarters for the UK Visas and Immigration division of the Home Office. When unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) come to Croydon, we look after them and give them a home with a foster carer. Once they reach the age of 18, they too receive a Leaving Care service.

Many of our Personal Advisers and Social Workers are extremely knowledgeable about immigration, bringing with them a great deal of experience in the field. They understand immigration law and procedure and they do their utmost to support you if you are subject to immigration control. Let's have a look at what that support looks like.



## *No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF)*

Some of the young people we support have No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF), which means that they are not entitled to benefits or housing and, in the vast majority of cases, they are not permitted to work either. In fact, if you're reading this and you either know or think you may have NRPF, then check your biometric residence permit (BRP) – if it says **FORBIDDEN FROM TAKING EMPLOYMENT** then you will be treated by us as having NRPF.

Much of the overall support you, as someone with NRPF, will receive from us is going to be the same as for someone who is local or has recourse to public funds. So, you're going to have a Personal Adviser, a Pathway Plan and general advice and assistance. In fact, the main differences are only financial (see the **Money** section), accommodation (see the **Home** section) and work-related (see the **Jobs** section).

The reality for you if you have NRPF is that you are going to have to return home at some point; some people do successfully fight and overturn this status once the Home Office has issued it, but very few achieve that. The best way we can support you is to help you plan what will happen once you return to your country of origin and though you may not like to think about this, it can make all the difference if you are picked up by the Home Office and sent back home. In your Pathway Plan, therefore, you can expect discussion around the following:

- ✓ Who you have to support you back home (if anyone).
- ✓ What dangers you may face.



- ✓ Where you could stay and what you could do for work or education.
- ✓ How you could engage in education/training in the UK to give you skills for use back home.
- ✓ How you will comply with any Home Office conditions, such as attending weekly meetings at Lunar House.
- ✓ What voluntary return schemes there are and how you could take advantage of these.

And so one thing you do need to know about – but will probably not enjoying reading – is...

## Deportation

Under UK immigration law, a Deportation Order may be made against a foreign national, such as yourself if you have NRPf, and this not only allows for you to be removed from the UK but also means you can be kept in custody until you are removed. The Order also means you can't return to the UK, so long as it remains in force – it doesn't matter what previous leave to remain you may have had.

A Deportation Order may be made for any of these reasons:

- ✗ It's been decided that it would be in the public's interest for you to be removed from the UK.

- ✗ You are the spouse, civil partner or child of someone who has a Deportation Order.
- ✗ You are over 17 years old, have been convicted of a crime which carries a prison sentence and the court recommends you be deported after you've served your sentence. The prison sentence can be bypassed altogether and you are simply deported – the more serious the crime, the more likely this is to happen.

A Deportation Order should not be made if it breaches your **Human Rights** or **The 1951 Refugee Convention**.

Once a Deportation Order has been made against you, you may be held in a detention centre without any warning, but you will also be advised of your right to appeal. This will be particularly unnerving if an Order has been made against you and you also have a child. The reality is that your child would also be at risk of being removed with you, unless they live separately with the other parent and **they do not** face deportation – in such circumstances, the child may avoid deportation.

Where a Deportation Order is usually reserved for someone who has been convicted of a crime, Administrative Removal is another term you may hear and it is exactly the same as a Deportation Order except it is for someone who breached the conditions of their leave to remain or who obtained permission to stay in the UK through deception. You



can appeal an Administrative Removal decision if you have the right to do so, else you can choose to leave the UK. There is some additional helpful information available on the **Citizens Advice** website.

Now, if you're reading all of this and you recognise it as your situation, then you may be tempted to 'go underground', which is to go into hiding in the UK. It's illegal to hide from the Home Office, but even if you did it successfully life will always be difficult for you. You'll never be able to legally work, you won't be able to open a bank account, rent a flat, buy a house and you will always be looking over your shoulder, because if the Home Office find you they will remove you. So, it's your choice, but we strongly urge you not to do it and will never support you in your decision to do it. You need to be clear about that.

Anyway, if you're subject to a Deportation Order or to being removed, one day you are likely to be...

### *Detained*

You'll only be taken to a detention centre when you're going to be deported in the near future, unless the Home Office thinks you might try to avoid it. You're most likely to be taken into detention when you visit your reporting centre, but it can happen at any time. If you have children they'll be detained with you, so it's important to prepare them.

Once you're in detention, you won't be deported for at least 72 hours. You should be given information in your own language explaining your rights while you're there. If you don't receive this, you should ask for it.

Here are your rights though:

- ✓ Have visitors, receive post and telephone calls.
- ✓ Apply for bail.
- ✓ Keep your personal property.
- ✓ Communicate with the outside world – for example, to tell people in your home country that you may be returning.
- ✓ Live in accommodation with your family, if they are detained with you.

You can also ask to see a legal adviser while you're in detention. They'll help you apply for bail and make further appeals if new information about your situation is uncovered.

### *Other Agency Support –*



There are a number of organisations that are able to offer more support to you with regards your immigration claim.

The **Refugee Council** is one of the leading charities in the UK offering support and advice to people who are seeking asylum.

The charity offers a range of helpful services to asylum seekers and refugees, including **destitution support** to those with NRPF and **therapeutic services** that encompass the following:





- ✓ Psycho-social Groups
- ✓ Creative Focus
- ✓ Safer Refugee Women
- ✓ Epione Project
- ✓ Mother & Toddler Group
- ✓ Training
- ✓ Volunteers and Student Placements

The Refugee Council also offers practical support that, in addition to other services, includes:

- ✓ Signposting to helpful services for asylum seekers by phone, in person or through its online resources directory.
- ✓ Classes to help with learning English.

Finally, it is involved in a great deal of policy work, research, parliamentary work and campaigning to try and improve the lived experiences of all young people who have claimed asylum in the UK.

## *Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR) and British Citizenship*

For those of you with the legal right to stay in the UK, you'll be considering making an application for **Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR)** once your Refugee status expires. We'll be right behind your bid to get the permanent right to live in the UK and will be able to offer you a long list of immigration-specialist solicitors who can help you make an application. We anticipate most of you

will be able to access Legal Aid to fund the application and ask that you be as patient as you can, as it takes the Home Office six months (give or take) to make a decision. When you send off your application, you'll have to return your expired Biometric Residence Permit (BRP) – so please be aware of that! We are not able to fund your application if you are not able to access Legal Aid.



The absolute pinnacle of settling in the UK, however, is getting **British citizenship**; once you have this, you will have all the same rights as anyone who was born in the UK – that includes the right to vote and the right to get a passport. However, there

are two big obstacles you need to be aware of: the cost and the test. To apply, you will need to pay around £1,250.00 out of your own pocket (Legal Aid does not cover the cost and we will not pay for it either). You will also need to sit a test to see if you can tell your Arsenal from your Eltham. Here are a few genuine examples of questions you can expect to test your **vital** knowledge of this country:

- ? What charity works to preserve important buildings, coastline and countryside in the UK?
- ? Who was the tribal leader who fought against the Romans?



? What is the day when jokes are published in newspapers and telecasted on TV?

You'll probably be pleased to hear that there are apps available for you to do some practice questions – try testing your Personal Adviser and see if they'd be granted citizenship.

Saed is now 19 years old and his Refugee status is set to expire. He rings his solicitor and explains that he wants to apply for Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR).

'That's no problem at all,' the solicitor says. 'If you wish to apply for Legal Aid to cover the costs you'll have to provide me with some documents though.' And he lists the documents needed.

A week later, Saed meets up with his solicitor, face to face, and, an hour later, the application has been made.

'Remember,' the solicitor says. 'It could take up to six months for the Home Office to make a decision, so try to be patient.'

But at the back of Saed's mind is one question: what if the Home Office *don't* give me ILR?

He speaks to his Personal Adviser and they arrange to meet.

'Tell you what,' she says to Saed. 'Let's update your Pathway Plan with plans for what we do *if* the Home Office say "no". That way we are prepared and can immediately challenge the decision. If the worst should happen, I'll be here to support you and we'll fight it together.'

Saed thanks her after they're done. He realises that he won't be able to completely remove the worry from his mind, but he feels more comfortable knowing there is a plan if the worst should happen.

If you're successful, you can expect to enjoy a ceremony commemorating your achievement, which will involve singing the National Anthem while looking at a picture of the Queen's face (left).



Saed's Story...



# HEALTH AND STAYING SAFE

## Overview

The most important thing you have is your health and because of that we do offer a range of support options to you. Some of that support is offered at quite a 'local' level by Personal Advisers, but plenty is offered at a more 'corporate' level too. The Council has a number of initiatives already up and running that will benefit care leavers. It also has links with organisations in Croydon who are ready with some important help should you ever need it. As a starting point though, you can find a complete directory of services available in the borough by going to the **Croydon Health Services** website.



## Personal Adviser Support

Every care leaver will have different support needs when it comes to health and it will be for you to ask your Personal Adviser for help where you need it. For example, if you feel there are things in your past that you really need to talk to someone about, then your Personal Adviser can direct you to services and perhaps attend some of the initial meetings with you, if you'd like some moral support.

However, there are some key things that you might want to consider asking your Personal Adviser to help you with:

- ✓ **Registering with a GP, Dentist and even an Optician** if you have not done so already or if you have moved to a new area. You have the right to choose your primary healthcare providers and cannot legally be refused treatment based on any outstanding application for leave to remain in the UK. To check for your nearest health service go to the **NHS Service Search** tool.
- ✓ **Signposting** you to appropriate services for your physical, mental and sexual health.
- ✓ **Attending hospital appointments** with you for non-routine health concerns, as these can often be stressful and so it is good for you to have someone there with you. Also, if you do end up as a patient at hospital then your Personal Adviser should come in and see you.
- ✓ **Advice on healthy living** which will include anything from being smart about having safe sex all the way through to having a balanced diet.



*Local Support* –  **Croydon Health Services**  
NHS Trust

In Croydon, we have the expertise of someone called the designated Looked After Children (LAC) Nurse who supports you until you turn 18. They are responsible for several things, including booking you in for your annual health assessment and sometimes even travelling up to 20 miles out of the borough to visit you if there is an urgent need (this is discretionary though).

Shortly before you turn 18, the LAC Nurse will put together a Care Leaver Summary, which is basically your health autobiography with details of all the major events in your life that relate to your physical and mental health, as well as other important information for you, such as:

- ✓ NHS records
- ✓ LAC Health Assessments
- ✓ Current GP

The LAC Nurse, after putting together the Care Leaver Summary, will send it out directly to you before you reach adulthood.



*Croydon University Hospital (CUH)*

We're lucky enough to have a big, local hospital here in Croydon with a brand new state-of-the-art Accident and Emergency department, a very well-respected maternity unit and a whole host of other services.

**Croydon University Hospital** can be contacted on 020 8401 3000 and is open 24 hours a day, 365 days of the year. It can be found at **530 London Road, Croydon CR7 7YE.**



# Mental Health Services



Just as we all have physical health, *everyone* has mental health: sometimes it is pretty good, but other times it's *not* so good. We are experienced in supporting care leavers with a very wide range of diagnosed conditions, including:

- Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)
- Anxiety Disorders
- Bipolar Disorder
- Schizophrenia
- Dissociative Disorders
- Personality Disorders

If you also happen to have one of these diagnoses – or another diagnosis – then your Personal Adviser will ensure that the support offered is suitably tailored to something that works for you.

You may also be able to get longer-term support.

**Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT)** is a free service provided by the South London and Maudsley (SLaM) NHS Foundation Trust and is a popular way of accessing 'talking therapy' for more manageable mental health conditions, such as depression and anxiety.

All you need is to be registered with a GP in Croydon and at least 18 years old. You can self-refer or ask your GP to do it for you and a member of the service will contact you to make an initial phone assessment, before deciding what support would be best for you – whether that is with IAPT or someone else.

And there's more...

**Off The Record Youth Counselling Croydon** was founded in 1994 to provide free, independent and professional counselling for 14-25 year olds in the Croydon area. Since then the charity has expanded to include further areas of work including Black and Minority Ethnic group and mental health work; a young carers service offering support to young people under 26 who are caring for a parent or sibling; a specialist counselling service for young refugees; online counselling and workshops; and counselling services for young people in the boroughs of Sutton and Merton.



To discuss the possibility of receiving their support, call 020 8251 0251 or email them at [croydon@talkofftherecord.org](mailto:croydon@talkofftherecord.org).



## Sexual Health Services

We encourage you to be smart about sex and your Personal Adviser will discuss this issue with you in a non-judgemental way – so be prepared for it! As with any other health matter, your Personal Adviser will be supportive of you and happy to offer their advice, but the borough does have ample support for its residents in the form of the **Croydon Sexual Health Centre** based at Croydon University Hospital (CUH). Croydon’s sexual health team also do ‘drop ins’ at local colleges to talk with young people about keeping safe. Croydon also has its own **Condom Distribution Scheme** called the C Card, which will allow you to pick up free condoms from a number of places in the borough. Remember: if you’re having sex, always be prepared!

## Drugs and Alcohol –



Again, we encourage you to be smart about drugs and alcohol and your Personal Adviser will discuss this as well in a non-judgemental way, but if you ever have issues along these lines then we will urge you quite strongly to get the help you need. Once again, we value your health and hope you would too.

Croydon is fortunate enough to have specialist support available if you do ever have need of it. **Turning Point** is a national service that provides support across a broad spectrum

but, in Croydon, it runs the Croydon Recovery Network, which includes a service for substance misuse.

The organisation will provide you with a support worker who links you to other organisations who can help you turn things around. Nothing changes if you don’t put in the hard work as well, but there is always someone there to help and guide you.

## Healthy Eating

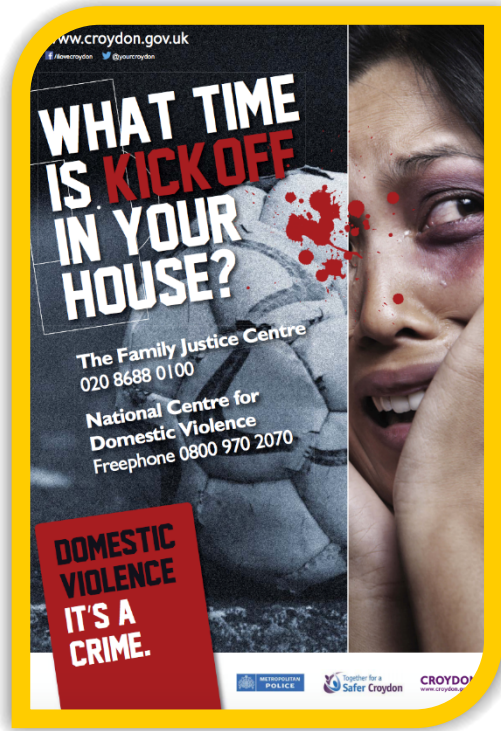
Your Personal Adviser will talk to you about shopping for a balanced diet, ensuring you’re getting enough fruit and veg and the importance of not stuffing your face with a takeaway every night...and yes, Croydon does have a lot of takeaways, unfortunately, but it does also have **Surrey Street Market**, where you can pick up good food every day.



Nom, nom, nom, nom...

If you’re interested in finding out more about healthy eating then the **NHS Eat Well** site is definitely worth a look.





## Family Justice Centre

The Family Justice Centre brings together different people who can help you if you're a victim of domestic abuse and/or sexual violence (DASV). This service is open to all those experiencing abuse and can offer support at any stage of need. The Centre offers you all the support you need in one place so you don't have to go from

agency to agency, telling your story over and over, in order to get help.

The Family Justice Centre is run by a multi-agency team that helps you access support by:

- ✓ Listening and responding to your needs in a safe environment.
- ✓ Helping you access a wide range of DASV expertise, support and services.

The team itself provides:

- ✓ Fully-rounded assessment of need and risk.
- ✓ Advice and support on all aspects of DASV.
- ✓ Legal advice and support to obtain injunctions.
- ✓ Support and advice to access emergency safe accommodation.
- ✓ Support to access specialist services and advice for:
  - No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF)-related issues.
  - Support for children.
  - Rape and sexual abuse.
- ✓ A drop-in and appointment service.
- ✓ A domestic abuse helpline for survivors and practitioners.

The Family Justice Centre can be contacted on **020 8688 0100**, or emailed at [familyjusticecentre@croydon.gov.uk](mailto:familyjusticecentre@croydon.gov.uk). It is open Monday, Tuesday and Friday, from 9am-5pm, and Wednesday, from 8am-5pm. It can be found at **Park Lane, Croydon CR0 1JD**.



## Saed's Story...



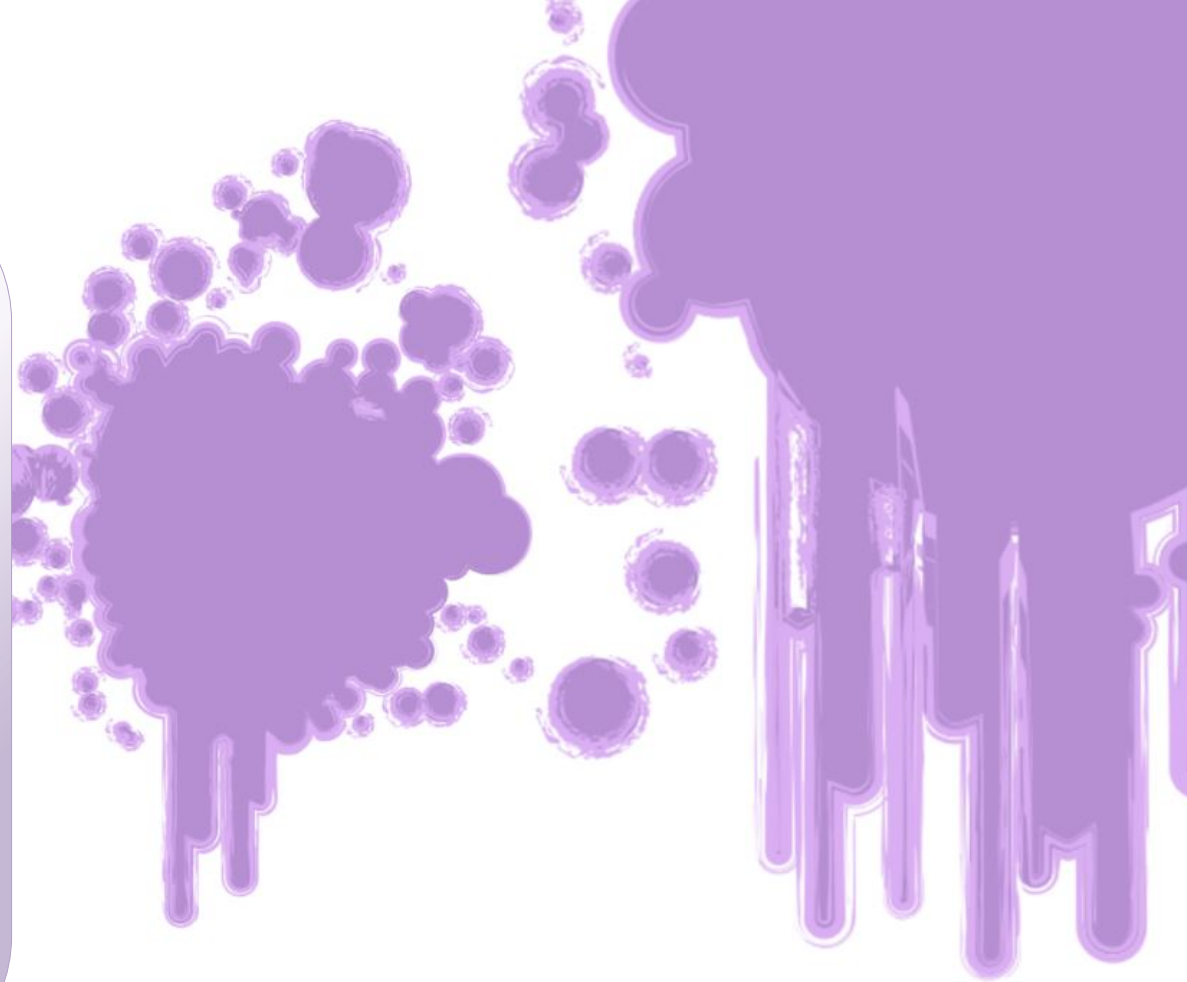
Saed has now been granted Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR) and he is delighted. But all this worry has taken its toll on him and, more and more, he has been remembering bad things from Afghanistan. It's started to affect his college attendance, his sleep and his appetite.

'You should talk about it, Saed,' his Personal Adviser recommends. 'Might do you some good just to go over it with someone. I know just the people.'

She assists Saed to refer himself to Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) in Croydon. A week later, someone from IAPT rings him and he spends 40 minutes on the phone answering some questions. At the end, he's told that he will be able to get some support from them.

Three weeks on from the phone call, Saed goes to his first face-to-face appointment with a talking therapist. The room they're in is plain, clean and quiet. The therapist is easy to speak to and Saed finds himself willing to speak.

'In your own time, Saed. Just tell me anything that comes to mind.'





# EDUCATION AND TRAINING

## Overview



We're keen to see you achieve all you can through education, as it provides the foundations for finding a higher-skilled job but, more than that, education helps build your overall knowledge, teaches you new skills and lets you meet

other like-minded people. If you are not in education or work then we will do everything in our power to change that, as you can't get through life doing nothing – plus, you'd be bored silly if you just stayed at home all day.

Croydon itself has a number of local colleges and other opportunities for studying. Croydon College, for example, not only runs further education courses, but also offers some higher education courses. You don't have to be academic and acing exams to get something out of education, and there are more than enough vocational courses available too – so whether you want to be a particle physicist or a construction worker, we're right behind you and we'll do our best to see you achieve your goal.

## Personal Adviser Support

As ever, your friendly neighbourhood Personal Adviser will be your main supporter in finding a course of education or training, or indeed being there to advise you if you're already doing it.

But what exactly can they help you with? Here's an overview:

- ✓ **Signposting** you to education and training opportunities that match your interests.
- ✓ **Planning** your overall route from education to employment with you and assisting you in your applications for further or higher education where you need any help.
- ✓ **Attending parents' evenings and college/university open days** with you so your Personal Adviser stays an active participant in your educational progress.
- ✓ **Liaising with college/university tutors** to provide more joined-up support to you while you are on a course of further or higher education.

## Personal Education Plan (PEP)

If you're 16, 17 or 18 you can expect to have a Personal Education Plan (PEP). A PEP is a good opportunity for your Personal Adviser and your college or 6th form tutor to meet to discuss and review your academic progress and identify any other form of support you'd like and/or you are entitled to. The Virtual School will also track and monitor your attendance and progress to enable us to intervene and advocate when required.



## Virtual School

Like many other local authorities, we have a Virtual School in our Education department. What is a Virtual School, you might say? Well, it sort of suggests some kind of big cyber classroom with computer-generated teachers. As badass as that would be, it's not the case.

The Virtual School is a small team of people who ensure you get all the help you want to make informed decisions about what you want to do next in education, taking into account your aspirations, skills and potential. They also make sure there are termly PEP review meetings until you turn 19.

The team's experienced Education Advisors will support you to find up-to-date information about careers, jobs, education courses, volunteering and training opportunities – so you'll never be short of help!

## Local Support



Croydon  
College



Croydon is brimming with education opportunities and it would take quite a while to list them all, so we're going to give you some of the key possibilities that might interest you – however, please do speak to your Personal Adviser, as they will have plenty more!

First up, **Croydon Adult Learning and Training (CALAT)** is a local authority adult learning provider, delivering a wide range of academic, pre-vocational and vocational courses. Courses are offered in three main locations (Central Croydon, New Addington and Strand House in Thornton Heath); two of these centres are located in areas with pockets of high deprivation to reach priority groups. Targeted provision is also delivered at children's centres, schools and community venues to support access to learning and family learning. A key focus is to prepare learners for employment, through embedding employability skills across the curriculum. The service also works with businesses and employers to raise the skills level of employees.

CALAT currently delivers a programme of apprenticeships in:

- ✓ Business Administration
- ✓ Early Years
- ✓ Health and Social Care
- ✓ Teaching Assistants (this area is being developed further and the service is working in close collaboration with Croydon's Employment Pathways Team).

Another key education provider in the borough is **Croydon College**, which is situated close to East Croydon Station and takes in 8,000 students each year. It has an Ofsted rating of 'Good' and provides both college and university-level courses. The courses can be studied part-time, full-time or in the evenings and, as well as academic pursuits, there are vocational or industry- and work-based options too.



Qualifications on offer include:

- ✓ Skills for Life
- ✓ ESOL Certificate
- ✓ Foundation Learning
- ✓ BTEC Level 1, 2 and 3 Diplomas
- ✓ NVQ Level 2 and 3
- ✓ Intermediate, Advanced and Higher Apprenticeship
- ✓ Higher National Certificate (HNC)
- ✓ Foundation Degree (FdA)
- ✓ Bachelor's Degree (BA)

The college also offers an **Enrichment Programme**, which lets you get involved in a number of different activities both locally and

more widely. There is also the all-important **Employability Hub** which is there to help you take your next steps after getting a qualification. If you fancy support with job hunting, completing a CV, applying for university through UCAS or preparing for an interview, then all you need to do is ask.



to

So, whether you want to liven up your language skills, beef up your bricklaying or hop into health and social care, Croydon College has something for you.

A huge campus isn't for everyone, and for smaller classes with more personalised support, you can't go wrong with **Sutton and District Training**, which has sites in Croydon, Sutton, Rosehill and Brighton and supports up to 250 learners at a time. Course delivery includes Construction, Health & Social Care, Customer Service, Employability, Floristry, Hairdressing, Beauty Therapy and English & Maths, and you can enrol at **any** time in the year.

The teaching is tailored to what works for you and the atmosphere is relaxed, with a focus on how training with Sutton and District can help you on your way to college, employment or an apprenticeship.





Saed's Story...

Saed makes progress with his talking therapy and returns to regularly attending college. At the age of 20, he finishes his Access to University – Nursing course at Croydon College and tells his Personal Adviser, 'I want to apply to university to do BSC(Hons) Adult Nursing!'

He and his worker sit down together and make an application through UCAS to various universities. Come March, Saed receives a reply from the first: it's a no. Then the second: it's a no. This isn't looking good. But then, his first choice university, Kingston, gets back to him...it's a yes!

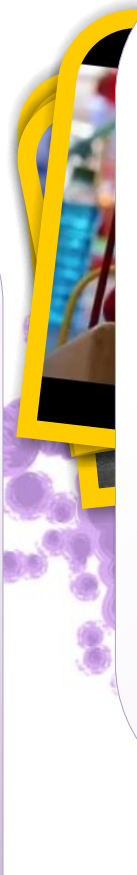
The summer seems to last forever.

'You'll live with other students when you're there,' his Personal Adviser tells him, 'in student halls. Because you're a care leaver, you'll be able to stay there all year long – and they'll give you a Care Leavers' Bursary each year, which is pretty sweet. That should make money less of a worry and let you get on with the important stuff: studying!'

September comes and Saed packs his bags. He's gotten on well with his housemates over the last few years, but it's time to move on with his life and university is a dream come true.

He goes down with a college friend who has a car and they help him settle in.

The campus is big. There are lots of new faces. But Saed feels right at home already.



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It's two weeks until Saed's 25<sup>th</sup> birthday and the end of his Leaving Care journey. His career is wonderful, he feels happy, his relationship is going well and he's even getting on with his partner's daughter!

He thinks of all he has been through – both the good and the bad – and wonders what his workers have made of it, over the years. He sits down and sends an email to Croydon's Data Protection team with the following message: I want to access my file.

He receives the files a few weeks later and starts reading them, finding the information he most wanted: how he seemed when he first entered the UK. Reading the Social Worker's notes, he realises that he was only a boy – scared and alone. Blaming himself for leaving Afghanistan behind suddenly doesn't seem the crime he had believed it was in his own mind.

'I suppose this is goodbye,' Saed says, two days before his birthday.

'You're always welcome here,' his Personal Adviser replies. 'Don't forget that, 'cos it isn't goodbye.'

Later that evening, he receives a call: it's the Red Cross, and they've made contact with his mum. Can he come in to Wimbledon tomorrow to speak to her?

He hardly sleeps that night. And when tomorrow comes and the phone is held out to him, he shakes, but puts the phone to his ear.

'S-Saed? Tell me everything...'

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Indicator Number	Indicator Title	Polarity	2018/19				Target Owner	2018-19 Target	RAG	2018-19 YTD or latest	RAG Methodology	Comparative Data							
			Apr-18	May-18	Jun-18	Jul-18						2017-18	2016-17	Croydon 2016-17	Croydon 2015-16	England 2016-17	England 2015-16	Stats Nbr Average 2016-17	Stats Nbr Average 2015-16
MC LAC 1	Number of missing episodes from Care in the month involving LAC children	SIB	164	178	182	152	HD	NA				871	63	525 (all missing incidents not single episodes)	105	399.5 (average) Experimental	57 (Average)	543 (average) Experimental	59
MC LAC 4	% of Found episodes in the month involving LAC children where an RHI was completed (New for Feb 2018)	SIB	56%	55%	54%	34%	HD	NA				44%	11						
LAC 1	Number of LAC at the end of the month		789	794	779	780	WT	NA		780		793	793	785	800	478.09 (Average)	Average 463	507 (Average)	517 (Average)
LAC 2	Rate of LAC per 10,000 under 18 population		84.8	85.4	83.8	83.9	WT	NA		83.9		85.3	83.0	83.0	86.0	62.0	60.0	54.1% (average)	59 (Average Rate)
LAC 2a	Rate of LAC per 10,000 under 18 population excluding UASC		51.8	53.1	53.5	54.1	WT	NA		54.1		52.0		42		42		48	
LAC 3	Number of LAC at the end of the month who are Local LAC (Non-UASC)		482	494	498	503	WT	NA		503		484	400	396	370	448	Average 436	457	468
LAC 4	Number of LAC at the end of the month who are UASC		307	300	281	277	WT	NA		277		309	393	390	430	4560 (Total) 30 (Average)	4300 - average 28	51 (Average)	395
LAC 10	Percentage of LAC for whom a visit has taken place within statutory timescales (6 weekly Visits)	BIB	90%	92%	90%	85%	WT	95%		89%	95% or above Green 87%-94% Amber 86% and below Red	88%	89%		90%				
LAC 11	Percentage of LAC children with an up to date review	BIB	61%	77%	78%	82%	AFS	95%		75%	95% or above Green 87%-94% Amber 86% and below Red	68%	82%		80%				
LAC 12	Percentage of LAC who have participated in Reviews (aged 4+) in the month	BIB	80%	79%	78%	75%	AFS	80%		78%	80% or above Green 71%-79% Amber 70% and below Red	78%	79%	Need to establish data source	91%		78%		
LAC 13	Percentage of LAC with a Personal Education Plan (PEP) reviewed in the last 6 months (Need to get the EPEP Number from the Virtual teams)	BIB	62%	58%	59%	58%	GM	85%		58%	85% or above Green 77% to 84% Amber 77% and below Red	66%	55%		70%				
LAC 14	Percentage of eligible LAC with an up-to-date Care Plan	BIB	95%	95%	89%	87%	CW	95%		87%	95% or above Green 87%-94% Amber 86% and below Red	92%	97%		n/a				
LAC 15	Percentage of eligible LAC with an up-to-date Pathway Plan	BIB	49%	48%	50%	49%	CW	80%		49%	80% or above Green 71%-79% Amber 70% and below Red	48%	45%		52%				
LAC 16	% of children in care for at least 12 months for whom health assessments are up to date.	BIB	62%	67%	71%	67%	AT/WT	75%		67%	75% or above Green 68%-75% Amber 68% and below Red	62%	60%	66.5%	86%	89.4%	90%	94.2%	93%
LAC 18	% initial health assessments delivered within 20 working days of date child became looked after.	BIB	33%	11%	13%	Under Review	AT/WT			19%		15%							
LAC 19	Percentage of LAC that have been in care for 12+ months, that have had same social worker for last 6 months	BIB	62%	61%	64%	65%	WT	60%		65%	60% or above Green 53%-59% Amber 54% and below Red	65%	79%						
LAC 20	Percentage of LAC under 16 in care for more than 2.5 years: in the same placement for 2+ years	BIB	74%	72%	76%	74%	WT	75%		74%	75% or above Green 68%-75% Amber 68% and below Red	73%	72%		71%				
LAC 21	Percentage of LAC at end of month with 3 or more placements during the year	SIB	9%	9%	9%	9%	SD	8%		9%	8% or below Green 8.1% - 8.9% Amber 9% and above Red	9%	8%	9%	8% (2015)	10% (average - 2016)	10% (2015)	11.6% (average - 2016/17)	

Indicator Number	Indicator Title	Polarity	2018/19				Target Owner	2018-19 Target	RAG	2018-19 YTD or latest	RAG Methodology	Comparative Data								
			Apr-18	May-18	Jun-18	Jul-18						2017-18	2016-17	Croydon 2016-17	Croydon 2015-16	England 2016-17	England 2015-16	Stats Nbr Average 2016-17	Stats Nbr Average 2015-16	
LAC 22	Percentage of LAC placed <20 miles from home	SIB	81%	81%	83%	<b>81%</b>	SD	90%		81%	90% or below Green 90%-98% Amber 99% and above Red	81%	87%	42%	92% (2015)	74.2%	86% (2015)	68.4%		
LAC ED1	Number of Permanent Exclusions where the pupil is Looked After	SIB	Annual Indicator - see 2016/17 for latest data					0%					0	0						
LAC ED2	Number of Fixed Term Exclusions where the pupil is Looked After	SIB	Annual Indicator - see 2016/17 for latest data										452 in Croydon Schools 185 Outside LBC							
LAC ED3	Percentage of LAC with a Statement or EHCP		Annual Indicator - see 2016/17 for latest data										2%	19.8%		26.7% (average-2016/17)		28.9% (average-2016/17)		
LAC ED4	% Croydon Funded KS1 LAC meeting expected standard in Reading, Writing and Maths	BIB	Annual Indicator - 2016/17 data available shortly DfE have confirmed that due to low numbers data for Key Stage 1 attainment for Looked After Children (2016-17) will not be published										13.3% (2015/16)	N/A		50% Reading 37% Writing 46% Maths (actual-2016)	33.2%	N/A		
LAC ED5	% Croydon Funded KS2 LAC meeting expected standard in Reading, Writing and Maths	BIB	Annual Indicator - 2016/17 data will be available in May 2018										19% (2015/16)	X		32% (2016/17)	25.7%	41.5% (2016/17)		
LAC ED6	% Croydon Funded KS4 LAC meeting Progress 8	BIB	Annual Indicator - 2016/17 data will be available in May 2018										-1.62 (2015/16)			-1.14% (average score)	-1.46	-0.99% (average score)		
LAC ED7	% Croydon Funded KS4 LAC meeting Attainment 8	BIB	Annual Indicator - 2016/17 data will be available in May 2018										15.5 (2015/16)			22.8% (average score)	20.9	24.3% (average score)		
LAC ED8	Average attendance of Croydon LAC	BIB	Annual Indicator - 2016/17 data will be available in May 2018										92.09% (2015/16)							
LAC ED9	Percentage Croydon LAC with greater than 95% attendance	BIB	Annual Indicator - 2016/17 data will be available in May 2018										62.04% (2015/16)							
F 1	Total number of foster carer households	BIB	236	235	229	<b>228</b>	SD	NA		228		239	254	260 Households (2016/17)	390 (total number of approved foster carers).	288 (average 2016/17)	292 (average 2016)	152 (average 2016/17)	170 (average 2016)	
F 3	Percentage of Annual Reviews of Foster Carers completed on time	BIB	87%	92%	93%	<b>92%</b>	SD	95%		92%	95% or above Green 85%-94% Amber 84% and below Red	81%	65%							
F 4	Percentage of Foster Carers' most recent announced visit within timescales	BIB	80%	76%	78%	<b>75%</b>	SD	85%		75%	85% or above Green 77% to 84% Amber 77% and below Red	77%	62%							

Indicator Number	Indicator Title	Polarity	2018/19				Target Owner	2018-19 Target	RAG	2018-19 YTD or latest	RAG Methodology	Comparative Data							
			Apr-18	May-18	Jun-18	Jul-18						2017-18	2016-17	Croydon 2016-17	Croydon 2015-16	England 2016-17	England 2015-16	Stats Nbr Average 2016-17	Stats Nbr Average 2015-16
AD 0	Number of Adoption Orders achieved in the month	BIB	0	2	5	2	HD	NA		9		9	20	Need to establish data source		28.6		26	
AD 1	Number of children for whom the agreed plan is adoption (ADM)	BiB	48	49	0	1	HD	NA		98		431	41		28				
AD 2	Number of children waiting to be matched to an adopter		22	27	19	19	HD	NA		19		18	27		19				
AD 7	Average time between a child entering care and moving in with the adoptive family , for children who have been adopted (days)	SIB	682	543.2	521.22	521.22	HD	558		567	558 or below Green 559 to 613 Amber 614 and above Red	309	395	696 (2014-17) 3 yr average	1073 (2016) AND 779 (3 Year Average)	520 (2014-2017) 3 yr average	558 (2013-2016) 3 yr average	554.5 (2014-2017) 3 yr average	604 (2013-2016) 3 yr average
CL a	Care Leavers with an Up-to-date Pathway plan	BIB	74%	74%	82%	86%	WT	95%		79%	95% or above Green 85%-94% Amber 84% and below Red	69%							
CL 1a	Percentage in employment, education, or training (EET) on their 17th to 21st Birthday	BIB	63%	63%	63%	61%	WT	60%		63%	60% or above Green 54%-59% Amber 53% and below Red	60%	58%	53% (19-21 yr olds)	60% (345) (2016)	50% (average 19 to 21 yr olds)		50.2% (average 19 to 21 yr olds)	
CL 3a	Percentage in suitable accommodation on their 17th to 21st Birthday	BIB	84%	84%	85%	83%	WT	85%		83%	85% or above Green 76% to 84% Amber 77% and below Red	85%	83%	77% (19-21 yr olds)	77% (2016)	84% (19-21 yr olds)	83%	81.5% (19-21 yr olds)	83%

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**Corporate Parenting Panel Work Programme 2018/19**

<b>Proposed Dates</b>	<b>Tues 17 July 2018 5pm</b>	<b>Wed 5 Sept 2018 5pm</b>	<b>Wed 21 Nov 2018 5pm</b>	<b>Wed 16 Jan 2019 5pm</b>	<b>Wed 6 Mar 2019 5pm</b>	<b>Wed 8 May 2019 5pm</b>
<b>Standing Agenda Items</b>	Update on actions agreed at previous meetings  Children in Care Performance Scorecard  Work Programme  How has the Panel helped Children in Care today?	Update on actions agreed at previous meetings  Children in Care Performance Scorecard  Work Programme  How has the Panel helped Children in Care today?	Update on actions agreed at previous meetings  Children in Care Performance Scorecard  Work Programme  How has the Panel helped Children in Care today?	Update on actions agreed at previous meetings  Children in Care Performance Scorecard  Work Programme  How has the Panel helped Children in Care today?	Update on actions agreed at previous meetings  Children in Care Performance Scorecard  Work Programme  How has the Panel helped Children in Care today?	Update on actions agreed at previous meetings  Children in Care Performance Scorecard  Work Programme  How has the Panel helped Children in Care today?
<b>Proposed Agenda Items*</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The Role of Panel Members &amp; Terms of Reference</li> <li>2. Staying Put</li> <li>3. Children and Social Work Act 2017</li> <li>4. Review of Fostering Services</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Independent Reviewing Officer – Annual Report</li> <li>2. Leaving Care and Housing (Inc. care leaver core offer)</li> <li>3. Staying Put Update</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Placement Stability, Sufficiency; Permanence and Population</li> <li>2. Engagement and Achievement (Inc. Complaints and Learning opportunities)</li> <li>3. Children missing from Care</li> <li>4. Annual Report of Adoption Service and Panel</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Health of Looked After Children</li> <li>2. Education &amp; Employment, NEET (Not in Education Employment or Training) Young People</li> <li>3. Annual Report of the Virtual School</li> <li>4. Review of the Fostering Allowances</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Fostering                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Annual Review of the Statement of Purpose</li> <li>- Recruitment and De-Registration</li> <li>- Fostering Action Plan update</li> <li>- Adoption Statement Purpose</li> </ul> </li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Annual Report of Corporate Parenting Panel</li> </ol>

\*All proposed items to include a short section detailing 'how it relates to the Improvement Plan'

\*All proposed items to include a short section detailing '*how it relates to the Improvement Plan*'