

Corporate Parenting Panel Supplementary Agenda



- 6. Terms of Reference** (Pages 3 - 10)
The Terms of Reference of the Corporate Parenting Panel.
- 7. Children in Care Performance Scorecard** (Pages 11 - 12)
The Children in Care Performance Scorecard for May 2021 is attached.
- 8. Annual Report of Corporate Parenting Panel 2020-2021**
(Pages 13 - 32)
The Annual Report of Corporate Parenting Panel is attached.
- 9. Update on the South London Commissioning Programme**
(Pages 33 - 42)
An update and progress of the South London Commissioning Programme and the strategic priorities of the programme for 2021-22.
- 10. Independent Reviewing Officer Annual Report**
(Pages 43 - 48)
The Independent Reviewing Officer Annual Report is attached.

11. Children's Social Care Placement Sufficiency (Pages 49 - 56)

An update on the accommodation for Children Leaving Care and Care Leavers.

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Agenda Item 6

REPORT TO:	CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL
AGENDA ITEM NO:	24 June 2021
SUBJECT:	REVIEW OF THE TERMS OF REFERENCE, MEMBERSHIP, DATES AND FREQUENCY OF MEETINGS OF THE CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL
LEAD OFFICER:	ROSIN EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF RESOURCES AND DEPUTY
WARDS:	ALL
CORPORATE PRIORITIES 2021-2024/POLICY CONTEXT. The proposal will ensure good governance within the Council and by councillors. Good governance underpins the Council's new Core Priorities and Ways of Working: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• we will live within our means, balance the books and provide value for money for our residents;• we will focus on tackling ingrained inequality and poverty in the borough;• we will focus on providing the best quality core service we can afford. First and foremost, providing social care services that keep our most vulnerable residents safe and healthy. And to keep our streets clean and safe; and• to ensure we get full benefit from every pound we spend, other services in these areas will only be provided where they can be shown to have a direct benefit in keeping people safe and reducing demand.	
FINANCIAL IMPACT Implementation of the recommendations contained in this report shall be contained within existing budgets.	

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Corporate Parenting Panel is asked to:

- 1.1 Consider and review its Membership (including the role of the co-opted members), Terms of Reference, together with dates and frequency of future meetings as set out in Appendix 1, 2 and 3 respectively;
- 1.2 Agree any next steps required;

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2.1 The Council has determined that the Corporate Parenting Panel shall be responsible for receiving and considering reports on matters focusing on improving outcomes for children looked after by Croydon Council.
- 2.2 It is good practice for the Panel at its first meeting following Annual Council to consider and, where necessary, review its terms of reference, membership, frequency, dates and timing of its future meetings.
- 2.3 Ensuring the Panel's terms of reference are accurate and effectively supports the work of the Panel.
- 2.4 Members are therefore asked to consider these matters and agree any next steps required.

3. DETAIL

Annual establishment, terms of reference and dates of meetings.

- 3.1 At the Annual Council meeting on Tuesday 4 May the Council approved the proportionality and establishment of Committees and Panels of the authority including the Corporate Parenting Panel and appointment of Members thereto.
- 3.2 It is good practice that, following the Annual Council meeting, the committees that have been established to note their Membership, Terms of Reference (Terms of Reference), and the dates of meetings for the duration of the municipal year. The Membership is set out in Appendix 1 of this report. The Terms of Reference are set out in Appendix 2.
- 3.3 The Constitution requires for Corporate Parenting Panel to meet 6 times per municipal year as set out in Appendix 3. Meetings start at 5pm.

Membership.

- 3.4 Full Council has agreed that the Panel shall be appointed in that the Corporate Parenting Panel shall be composed of 7 Members including 6 non-voting Co-opted Members.
- 3.5 The Cabinet Member for Children and Families, Councillor Alisa Flemming, was also appointed as Chair for the municipal year at the Full Council meeting on 4 May 2021.

Terms of Reference.

- 3.6 Members will note in Appendix 2 the Terms of Reference which is re-established annually as an informal advisory body to the Cabinet Member responsible for Children and Families.

Dates and frequency of meetings.

- 3.7 Members will note from Appendix 3 that the calendar of meetings proposes that the committee meet 6 times throughout the municipal year. Members will also note that there is a separate item relating to the committee Work Programme elsewhere on this agenda.

4. NEXT STEPS

- 4.1 Members should now consider and, if necessary, review its membership, terms of reference and meeting calendar schedule from previous.
- 4.2 The Corporate Parenting Panel should make any suggested amendments to its membership to Full Council for consideration.

5. CONSULTATION

- 5.1 The proportional balance of the Council was reviewed by all members at full council on 4 May and committees and their membership duly appointed. The underlining purpose of this report is to consult the Panel's membership on the issues detailed above.

6. FINANCIAL AND RISK ASSESSMENT CONSIDERATIONS

- 6.1 N/A

7. LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 7.1 N/A

8. HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS.

There are no HR implications arising from this report for Croydon Council employees or staff. If any should arise these will be managed under the Council's policies and procedures.

9. EQUALITIES IMPACT

- 9.1 The Equality Act 2011(section 149) places a public sector equality duty (section 146) on the Council. The duty requires the Council to have due regard to *the need to advance equality of opportunity* between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- 9.2 Having "due regard" to the need to advance equality of opportunity involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to *encourage persons* who share a relevant

protected characteristic *to participate in public life* or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

- 9.3 When drawing up the schedule of dates, consideration was given to avoiding school holiday dates and known dates of religious holidays and other key/important dates around culture, diversity and inclusion where at all possible.

Approved by: Yvonne Okiyo, Equalities Manager.

10 DATA PROTECTION IMPLICATIONS.

There are no data protection implications arising from the proposal.

CONTACT OFFICERS: Michelle Ossei-Gerning, Democratic Services Officer (ext. 84246)

APPENDICES TO THIS REPORT

Appendix 1 – Membership of the Committee
Appendix 2 – Terms of Reference of the Committee
Appendix 3 – Dates of future meetings

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS: None

Appendix 1
Corporate Parenting Panel

Membership of the Panel

Councillors (including Chair):

Majority Group Members 5	Minority Group Members 2
Alisa Flemming (Chair)	Helen Redfern
Maddie Henson	Sue Bennett
Bernadette Khan	
Pat Clouder	
<i>Vacancy</i>	

Independent Co-opted Members (Non-Voting):

Virtual School Head
LAC Nurse/Doctor
Children in Care Council
Care Leaver Representative
Foster Carer Representative
Health Commissioner

Terms of Reference of the Panel

Constitution

Part 6.E – TERMS OF REFERENCE CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

Established: First established 2007 and re-established annually since then as an informal advisory body to the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Children’s Services.

Regularity of meetings: 6 times per year.

Membership: 7 Members - 5:2

5 Members of the Administration, including and to be chaired by the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Children’s Services.

2 Members of the Opposition

6 Co – Opted Members:

- Virtual School Head
- LAC Nurse/Doctor
- Children in Care Council
- Care leaver
- Foster carer
- Health Commissioner

Proportionality: Not applicable

Democratic Services & Governance Officer:

Michelle Gerning 0208 726 6000 ext 84246

Lead Officers:

- Executive Director Children, Families and Education Director of Early Help and Children’s Social Care
- Head of Corporate Parenting, Early Help and Children’s Social Care

Quorum: 3

Access to information:

Due to the nature of the work of the Panel and its Membership, meetings of the Panel are not able to be held in public, however, agenda papers and minutes are made available on the Council’s website. Agenda papers are published five clear working days in advance of Panel meetings. Councillors that are not Members of the Panel are permitted to attend meetings at the discretion of the Panel Chair.

Terms of Reference (Revised 2019):

- The Corporate Parenting Panel will focus on improving outcomes for children looked after by Croydon Council.
- To support the Council's development of a corporate parenting strategy and to monitor and review its implementation.
- To monitor performance targets and priorities so far as they relate to children looked after or young people in receipt of leaving care services.
- To consider recommendations from internal and external inspections and reviews and hear the voice of children looked after and care leavers in responding to them
- To monitor the health needs of looked after children, promoting positive engagement of health partners in Corporate Parenting.
- To monitor the education needs of looked after children, promoting positive engagement of education partners in Corporate Parenting.
- To ensure the Council actively promotes opportunities for looked after children across the whole Council.
- To ensure that the voice and opinions of as wide a range as possible of children looked after and care leavers, including those with disabilities, are heard and that their views are used to co-produce services, shape policy and monitor performance.
- To advise the Lead Member for Children's Services on issues relating to Corporate Parenting Policy.
- To report annually to the Council on the work of the Panel.

**Appendix 3
Corporate Parenting Panel**

**Dates of future meetings
Municipal year 2021/2022**

Dates of meetings

24	June	2021
08	September	2021
10	November	2021
12	January	2022
02	March	2022
27	April	2022

Indicator Number	Indicator Title	Polarity	2020/21												2021/22		RO	2021-22 Target	RAG	RAG-Based on (YTD/LATES)	2021-22 YTD or latest	Comparative Data			
			Apr-20	May-20	Jun-20	Jul-20	Aug-20	Sep-20	Oct-20	Nov-20	Dec-20	Jan-21	Feb-21	Mar-21	Apr-21	May-21						DfE Published Croydon 2019-20	Stats Nbr Average 2019-2020	London 2019-20	England 2019-20
Looked After Children (LAC)																									
CLA 1	Number of CLA at the end of the month		787	788	777	767	765	764	747	741	730	699	697	691	661	641	HD	NA	Grey	NA	641	791	509	10,010	80,080
CLA 2	Rate of CLA per 10,000 under 18 population		82.9	83.2	82.0	80.8	80.6	80.5	78.7	78.1	76.9	73.6	73.4	72.8	69.6	67.5	HD	NA	Grey	NA	68	83.0	52.8	49.0	67.0
CLA 2a	Rate of CLA per 10,000 under 18 population excluding UASC		54.6	55.0	54.6	53.8	53.7	54.2	52.9	53.2	52.9	51.1	51.2	50.7	48.0	47.6	HD	NA	Grey	NA	48	55.6			
CLA 3	Number of CLA at the end of the month who are Local CLA (Non-UASC)		518	521	517	511	510	515	502	505	502	485	486	481	456	452	HD	NA	Grey	NA	452	528			
CLA 3b	Number of Ceased CLA in the month who are Local CLA (Non-UASC)		24	9	14	21	13	21	13	17	19	18	10	12	24	9	HD	NA	Grey	NA	33	172			
CLA 4	Number of CLA at the end of the month who are UASC		269	267	260	256	255	249	245	236	228	214	211	210	205	189	HD	NA	Grey	NA	189	279	270	53	5000
CLA 4b	Number of Ceased CLA in the month who are UASC		9	5	9	5	7	9	11	7	14	22	7	7	10	18	HD	NA	Grey	NA	28	127			
CLA 5	Number of new CLA in month (total)		22	7	22	17	20	15	12	19	19	18	11	13	11	8	HD	NA	Grey	NA	19	357	219	5160	30970
CLA 6	Number of new CLA in month who are UASC		2	3	3	4	6	3	3	4	8	4	4	6	4	3	HD	NA	Grey	NA	7	152			
CLA 10	Percentage of CLA for whom a visit has taken place within statutory timescales (6 weekly Visits)	BIB	96%	93%	93%	88%	98%	93%	94%	94%	94%	95%	96%	95%	95%	93%	HD	95%	Amber	LATEST	93%	94%			
CLA 11	Percentage of CLA children with an up to date review	BIB	94%	95%	96%	97%	96%	95%	95%	96%	97%	97%	96%	95%	94%	94%	AFS	95%	Amber	YTD	94%	92%			
CLA 12	Percentage of CLA who have participated in Reviews (aged 4+) in the month	BIB	76%	68%	80%	73%	77%	68%	73%	77%	77%	82%	73%	83%	87%	83%	AFS	80%	Green	YTD	85%	73%			
CLA 13	CLA 13 - Percentage of CLA at SSA (Statutory School Age) with a Personal Education Plan (PEP) reviewed & completed in the last 6 months.	BIB	83%	85%	89%	95%	95%	94%	92%	89%	96%	97%	97%	93%	98%	97%	HD	85%	Green	LATEST	97%	87%			
CLA 14	Percentage of eligible CLA with an up-to-date Care Plan (6 months)	BIB	82%	79%	76%	86%	89%	91%	92%	91%	83%	74%	75%	85%	82%	84%	HD	95%	Red	LATEST	84%	87%			
CLA 15	Percentage of eligible CLA with an up-to-date Pathway Plan	BIB	83%	81%	81%	72%	74%	74%	78%	85%	76%	70%	70%	82%	71%	74%	HD	95%	Red	LATEST	74%	86%			
CLA 16	% of children in care for at least 12 months for whom health assessments are up to date.	BIB	82%	80%	83%	86%	88%	87%	85%	86%	89%	93%	92%	90%	86%	82%	HD	95%	Red	LATEST	82%	84%	93%	92%	90%
New	Number of children in care for at least 12 months for whom health assessments were due in the month (RHA's completed in the								42/128	47/124	20/81	17/41	28/44	27/57	14/90	13/108	HD	NA	Grey	NA	13/108				
CLA 17	% initial health assessments requested for health service within 3 working days of date child become looked after.	BIB	11%	33%	63%	42%	61%	50%	45%	50%	44%	65%	70%	43%	56%	TBC	HD	NA	Grey	NA	TBC	49%			
CLA 18	% initial health assessments delivered within 20 working days of date child became looked	BIB	56%	67%	89%	50%	65%	67%	70%	71%	71%	93%	60%	83%	43%	TBC	HD	95%	Grey	NA	TBC	67%			
CLA 19	Percentage of CLA that have been in care for 12+ months, that have had same social worker for last 6 months	BIB	69%	71%	72%	68%	71%	72%	68%	62%	67%	71%	66%	72%	73%	75%	HD	65%	Green	LATEST	75%	59%			
CLA 20	Percentage of CLA under 16 in care for more than 2.5 years: in the same placement for 2+ years	BIB	70%	70%	66%	73%	74%	72%	72%	69%	69%	73%	77%	70%	70%	74%	HD	75%	Amber	LATEST	74%	77%			
CLA 21	Percentage of CLA at end of month with 3 or more placements during the year	SIB	7%	6%	6%	6%	5%	5%	5%	6%	5%	6%	5%	5%	4%	5%	HD	8%	Green	LATEST	5%	8%			
CLA 22	Percentage of CLA placed <20 miles from home	BIB	84%	83%	84%	84%	84%	83%	83%	82%	83%	84%	83%	85%	83%	85%	HD	90%	Amber	LATEST	85%	84%			
CLA 23	Number of CLA allocated to CWD		28	29	29	29	28	26	26	28	26	24	23	23	21	21	RC	NA	Grey	NA	21	28			
CLA 24	Percentage of CLA for whom a visit has taken place within statutory timescales (Allocated to CWD teams)	BIB	96%	100%	100%	100%	100%	88%	96%	94%	92%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	RC	95%	Green	LATEST	100%	96%			
CLA 25	Number of CLA who returned home (E4A, E4B, E13, E41)	BIB	14	2	7	9	3	7	8	5	10	9	6	2	8	1	HD	NA	Grey	NA	9	72	74	1,550	8,440

Indicator Number	Indicator Title	Polarity	2020/21												2021/22		RO	2021-22 Target	RAG	RAG-Based on (YTD/LATES)	2021-22 YTD or latest	Comparative Data			
			Apr-20	May-20	Jun-20	Jul-20	Aug-20	Sep-20	Oct-20	Nov-20	Dec-20	Jan-21	Feb-21	Mar-21	Apr-21	May-21						DfE Published Croydon 2019-20	Stats Nbr Average 2019-2020	London 2019-20	England 2019-20
Fostering																									
F 1	Total number of foster carer households	BIB	234	235	240	238	235	238	236	229	227	223	222	222	221	217	BA	NA	Grey	NA	217	240	106	3,365	42,125
F 2	Percentage of DBS Checks within time	BIB	96%	96%	96%	97%	97%	96%	95%	97%	97%	97%	98%	98%	99%	99%	BA	95%	Green	LATEST	99%				
F 3	Percentage of Annual Reviews of Foster Carers completed on time	BIB	97%	98%	98%	98%	95%	95%	98%	96%	96%	97%	98%	95%	93%	92%	BA	95%	Amber	LATEST	92%				
F 4	Percentage of Foster Carers' most recent announced visit within timescales	BIB	92%	96%	94%	95%	92%	96%	95%	84%	84%	83%	85%	88%	89%	89%	BA	95%	Amber	LATEST	89%				
Adoption																									
AD 0	Number of Adoption Orders achieved in the month	BIB	3	1	1	4	0	4	1	0	2	1	0	2	2	2	IF	NA	Grey	NA	4				
AD 1	Number of children for whom the agreed plan is adoption (ADM)	BiB	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	2	1	0	IF	NA	Grey	NA	1				
AD 2	Number of children waiting to be matched to an adopter		24	24	24	20	16	13	16	14	12	13	13	11	11	7	IF	NA	Grey	NA	7				
AD 3	Number of children placed in the month	BiB	2	0	0	1	3	5	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	IF	NA	Grey	NA	1				
AD 7	Average time between a child entering care and moving in with the adoptive family , for children who have been adopted (days) (12 Months rolling average)	SIB	548	548	553	553	538	562	548	555	501	504	504	527	549	549	IF	558	Green	YTD	549				
AD 8	Average time between the LA receiving court authority to place a child and the LA deciding on a match to an adoptive family (days) (12 months rolling average)	SIB	263	263	265	253	249	262	274	277	214	208	224	223.4	238	238	IF	226	Amber	YTD	238				
AD 9	Number of special guardianship orders made in the month (from care)	BIB	1	1	0	2	2	1	3	1	1	1	0	1	5	2	IF	NA	Grey	NA	7				
Care Leavers																									
CL a	Care Leavers with an Up-to-date Pathway plan	BIB	83%	91%	91%	77%	83%	84%	78%	78%	75%	78%	75%	83%	83%	84%	MM	85%	Amber	LATEST	84%				
CL 1	Number of Care Leavers in employment, education, or training (EET) on their 17th to 21st Birthday		377	384	367	358	347	405	347	339	335	336	339	352	352	350	MM	NA	Grey	NA	350				
CL 1a	Percentage in employment, education, or training (EET) on their 17th to 21st Birthday	BIB	63%	63%	61%	60%	58%	62%	59%	57%	58%	58%	58%	57%	58%	59%	MM	85%	Red	LATEST	59%				
CL 2	Number of Care Leavers not in employment, education, or training (NEET) on their 17th to 21st Birthday	SIB	220	224	236	236	242	245	244	260	246	242	241	267	256	239	MM	NA	Grey	NA	239				
CL 2a	Percentage not in employment, education, or training (NEET) on their 17th to 21st Birthday	SIB	37%	37%	39%	40%	42%	38%	41%	43%	42%	42%	42%	43%	42%	41%	MM	NA	Grey	NA	41%				
CL 3	Number of Care Leavers in suitable accommodation on their 17th to 21st Birthday		576	585	581	572	573	573	565	577	560	557	553	597	583	565	MM	NA	Grey	NA	565				
CL 3a	Percentage in suitable accommodation on their 17th to 21st Birthday	BIB	96%	96%	96%	96%	96%	96%	96%	96%	96%	96%	95%	96%	95%	95%	MM	90%	Green	LATEST	95%				
CL 4	Number not in suitable accommodation on their 17th to 21st birthday	SIB	26	25	25	24	21	23	26	24	21	21	27	27	29	28	MM	NA	Grey	NA	28				
CL 5	Percentage in touch with the authority from 17th to 21st birthday	BIB	94%	92%	91%	89%	89%	91%	91%	93%	92%	89%	90%	97%	96%	95%	MM	95%	Green	LATEST	95%				
CL 6	Care Leavers - LOCAL (non-UASC)		335	337	333	334	352	348	344	346	336	339	340	339	325	327	MM	NA	Grey	NA	327				
CL 7	Care Leavers - UASC (non-LOCAL)		513	523	526	528	495	459	444	434	429	444	447	447	439	415	MM	NA	Grey	NA	415				

Corporate Parenting Annual Report 2020 - 2021

be the change
for children and young people in croydon



Forward



By Councillor Alisa Flemming, Cabinet Member and Chair of the Corporate Parenting Panel

Welcome to our Corporate Parenting Annual Report, which details the work of the Corporate Parenting Panel and our services to children looked after and care leavers. During the last year the Corporate Parenting Panel have been mindful of the impact of Covid 19 and the issuing of the s114 notice by the London Borough of Croydon.

The role of 'Corporate Parent' is a collective responsibility of the Council. Many of our children looked after care leavers will have faced difficulties in their early years that will place them amongst the most disadvantaged in our society if we do not provide the care, stability and support needed to help them achieve their ambitions.

The work of our Participation Team, specifically EMPIRE our Children in Care Council and the feedback we receive from our children and young people through various means, play an integral part in Croydon's improvement journey. Our children and care leavers voices help us to keep focussed at ground level and influence development of services in the right way.

As corporate parents we all want the best for our children. We are proud of their achievements and create opportunities to celebrate with them. I am proud of all our young people and their achievements and it is a privilege to work with them.

As a council it's so important that we take steps to be the best corporate parent and corporate family that we can be. I am committed to doing everything I can to support children and care leavers so that they can benefit from the many opportunities our borough has to offer.

Everyone can play their part in this – from businesses and the voluntary sector to families who can offer a foster home to those children who need one.

Our annual report is a summary of the work presented to the Corporate Parenting Panel in 2020-2021 and is a celebration of the success and achievements of both our staff, children and young people.

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the achievements, progress and challenges in meeting the needs of Croydon's Children Looked After and Care Leavers in 2020/2021. This was an unprecedented year in terms of the challenges for children looked after and care leavers due to Covid19 and the restrictions on society as a whole. Many children and young people experienced loss within their families and networks and the usual routines and safety networks were significantly limited.
- 1.2. Within Croydon face to face visits to children that are looked after and care leavers was disrupted. Croydon operated virtual visits throughout the year, interspersed with face to face visits when lockdown conditions allowed. From January 2021 alternate virtual and face to face visits have taken place.
- 1.3. The 2020 financial crisis within Croydon, resulting in the issuing of a S114 notice also impacted upon service delivery with a tightening of financial controls. This did impact on the payment of some providers and also recognised some areas where budgets were not at the correct level for demand in Croydon
- 1.4. As corporate parents we need to understand our strengths, our areas of challenge, and take actions to address any identified improvements. Ofsted graded children's services as Good overall in February 2020, Children Looked After and Care leavers received a grading of requires improvement. Significant work has been undertaken, within the challenging Covid19 and S114 environments to improve the level of service further for children that are looked after.
- 1.5. During 2020-2021 our efforts focused on:
 - Working towards improving the health of children looked after
 - Increasing our children access and support to remain in educational employment and training (EET)
 - Reviewing Children Social care performance to improve care planning for our children
 - Improving our children placements stability and permanence planning
 - Improving compliance with statutory requirements and good practice



2. Corporate Parenting Panel

- 2.1. The statutory guidance on the roles and responsibilities of the Director of Children's Services (in Croydon this is the Executive Director, Children, Families and Education) and the Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Learning, states that the Council has a responsibility to act as an effective and caring corporate parent for all children looked after and care leavers. There is a strong emphasis on improving educational attainment, providing stable and high quality placements and proper planning for when young people leave care. The council takes its responsibility for Children looked after and care leavers very seriously and closely monitors the services provided to these young people to ensure that all Children looked after and care leavers are safe, healthy and happy and aspire to be the best they can be.
- 2.2. The term 'Child Looked after' refers to any child or young person for whom the local authority has, or shares, parental responsibility, or for whom care and accommodation is provided on behalf of their parent/s. The term "child" can refer to any child or young person aged 0 to 18 years. The council also has a duty and responsibility to those young people who leave their long-term care from the age of 16 years until they reach the age of 25 years.
- 2.3. A cross-party Croydon Corporate Parenting Panel of elected members, looked after young people, foster carers and cross council senior officers has been in place since 2007. The panel provides governance and challenge to ensure that outcomes for Children looked after continue to improve via regular panel meetings throughout the year, meeting with young people to hear directly from them their views and experiences of service offered.

2.4. The panel will review outcomes for services to Children Looked After and Young People Leaving Care, including Management Information and Performance Indicators monitoring all aspects of Children in Care. The data details the following:

- The number and age range of Children Looked After;
- Health information;
- Distance children are placed from their home address;
- Education attainment and attendance;
- Personal Education Plan compliance;
- The number of young people not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET);
- The number of statutory visits completed within the timeframe;
- The number of Children and Young People who have up-to date plans.

2.6. Our priorities for 2021-2022 are based on the analysis in this annual report, Ofsted recommendations and our broader understanding of our children looked after and care leavers we have identified the following actions as our priorities for the year ahead that we are already working on:

- **Right to a family life**

Throughout 2020/21 there was a renewed effort to ensure that only children who need to be looked after enter the care system. Through improved work with families the number of children requiring care has reduced and a number of children have returned to their families with support.

Where children do need to become looked after the provision of care within a family environment is our priority, considering wider family and friends before placing a child with foster carers.

During 2021/22 commissioning suitable accommodation that is able to meet children's care needs and recruiting foster carers (30 for Croydon campaign) is a priority.

- **Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children**

Due to the location of Lunar House in Croydon we have always provided care and support for this most vulnerable group of children and young people. The expertise that has developed has been recognised by the home office and we are seconding a small expert team to help ensure practice develops for all UASC. We will continue to work hard to ensure that all UASC receive the care they need, whether in Croydon or through transfer to another local authority.

- **Health & Wellbeing:**

During 2020/21 the skills of the embedded systemic practitioners will be utilised across teams, enabling more direct work with families and enabling a 'Trauma Informed' approach to work, recognising the impact that Covid19 has had on many of our children and young people.

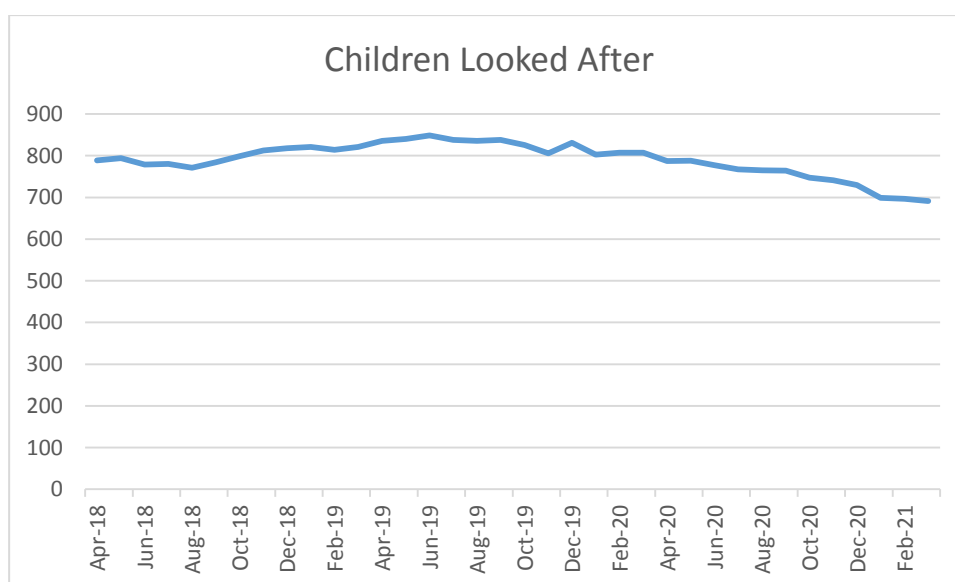
- **Transitions & care and pathway planning:** Continue to improve preparation for independence for Care Leavers and reduce the number of children and young people who experience poor outcome. Our focus has been on proactive care and Pathway planning that identifies clear routes and objectives to transition from dependent to independent lives. We would like to see clear ways for our Care leavers to access a housing pathway that will meet their need. We have updated our "local offer" and are working on updating our "staying put" policy.
- **Engaging in education or training:** 2020/21 has been unique in relation to the disruption to education for many children and young people. Our Looked After and Care Leavers population have been supported with their education throughout this period, however the challenges to on-line learning and future employment/training has impacted. Throughout 21/22 each child's education, employment and training needs will be a priority working alongside the virtual school and employers to actively promote opportunities and support.

3. Children looked after: Demographics, health and education

3.1. The number of children that are looked after has further reduced by 12% during 2020/21. With a rate of 72.8 children per 10,000 being looked after in Croydon we continue to present a high rate compared to other London authorities (52.8), however we are closer to the average rate for England (67). If Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children are not counted in this rate then a rate of 50.7 was represented at 31/3/2021.

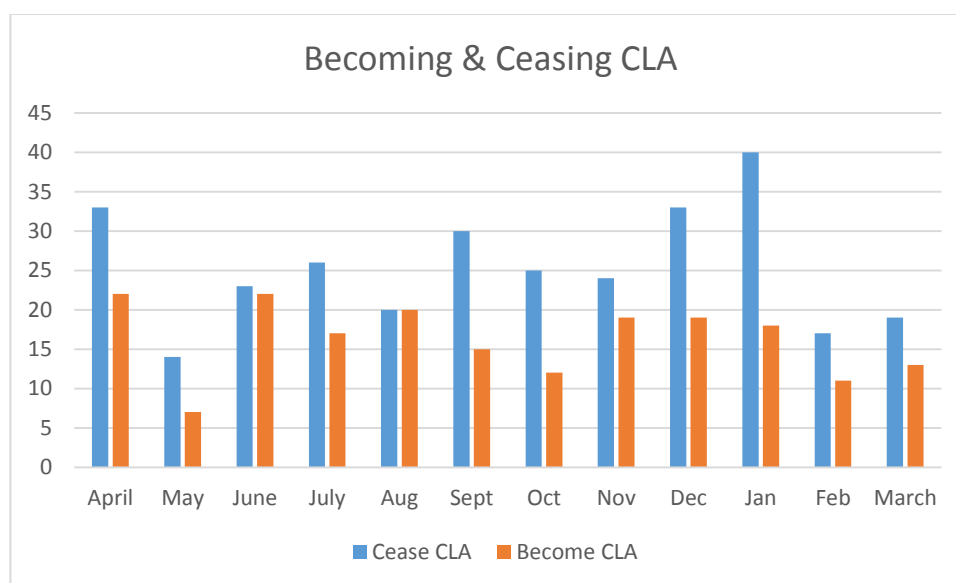


	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Croydon	87.00	83.00	81.00	86.00	85.00	72.8
Statistical Neighbours	56.30	54.20	54.60	53.70	52.8	Not available
England	60.00	62.00	64.00	65.00	67.00	Not available



3.2. During 2020/2021 there was a reduction of 22% in the number of Unaccompanied Asylum seeking children that are Looked After by Croydon, with 210 Unaccompanied children looked after at 31/3/2021.

3.3. The reduction in children Looked after can be seen in the comparison of the number of children becoming looked after alongside the number of children ceasing to be looked after. Children reaching 18 will cease to be looked after and are then supported as a care leaver.



3.4. **Age & Gender:** The majority of our CLA are between 10-17 years old. 65% of our children in care are male, 30% of which are UASC, 35% of our children are female and only 5% are UASC.

AGE AT 31 MARCH 2021			
MALE 51%		FEMALE 49%	
Under 10:	17.7%	Under 10:	28.6%
10 - 17:	82.3%	10 - 17:	71.4%

3.5. **Ethnicity:** We are looking after a wide range of children from a diverse cultural and ethnic background. 37% of our children are recorded as White or White British, 27% are recorded as Black or Black British, 19% are recorded as Asian or Asian British and the rest are recorded as mixed or other ethnic group. This reflects the CLA population in 2020 as well.

ETHNIC ORIGIN OF CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER AT 31 MARCH 2021	
White British and White Other	37%
Mixed	14%
Asian or Asian British	19%
Black or Black British	27%
Other ethnic groups	3%

- 3.6. **Type of placement:** In March 2021, 82% of our children were placed in Foster placements (compared with 72% of SNs and England Average data 2018/19). This is a 1% decrease from last year with 51% being placed with in-house foster carers. This is above the SNs 37% and England 50% rates for 2018/2019. 12% were in a Residential provision. The rest of our children were placed with prospective adopters or living with parents.
- 3.7. **Children missing from care:** Children looked after are more likely to go missing than any other children we are involved with as a council. On average, 80% of all missing children during 2020/21 were looked after. When found in average 96% of children are offered a return home interview and 73% of children and young people participated in conversations about the reasons why they go missing and complete this interview with an independent person. Children at risk of exploitation benefit from effective multi-agency information sharing. Action plans developed through the multi-agency complex adolescent's panel are increasingly comprehensive and well targeted.

4. Health for Children Looked After

4.1. During 2020-2021, the way that Initial Health Assessments and Review Health Assessments are undertaken and monitored has been reviewed by the commissioners and includes an operations group chaired by the Service manager for CLA and a monthly quality assurance meeting.

4.2. Public Health have developed an improved CLA Health Needs Assessment to enable a better understanding of Children Looked after Health needs.

4.3. Care Leavers now benefit from a 'Health Passport' which helps them to have a greater understanding of their health needs and to access information. There was a delay in rolling this out due to Covid19, however this has now been in place since August 2020.

4.4. The table below shows the timeliness of assessments as at 31st March 2021.

Looked after children	2020	2021
Percentage of children with health assessments on time @31st March	84%	90%



5. Education of children looked after

Schools: In the academic year Sept 2020- July 2021, the Virtual School worked with 644 children and young people who were in care (CLA) continually for the whole 12 months (including eligible and relevant Care Leavers.) Virtual school works on behalf of all children and young people of 'educational age' which means ages 3-18 in school years, nursery to year 13. This is 32 less CLA who were in care long term, than in the same period last year. There are a number of reasons for the reduction, including a reduced number of UASC YP during the Covid pandemic, an increased number of UASC YP have been transferred to other LA's, at least 15 who had been looked after by Croydon for over 12 months. (Currently 40 YP have ceased to be CLA during the academic year, following being CLA for over a year).

- 5.2. During 2020-2021 a total of 51% of children and young people attended schools in borough and 49% were placed in schools out of borough.
- 5.3. **Special educational needs and disabilities:** 34% of the CLA cohort between 3 and 18 years old were recorded as having SEND needs in the academic year 2020/2021. Of these, 15% had an EHCP and 19% were classified by schools as receiving SEND support. This is a slight rise on 29% in 19-20.
- 5.4. Of the total number of children looked after at the end of the academic year, 54 (7%) attended special schools, a drop on 8% last year.
- 5.5. At the end of 2020/21, 92.4% of statutory school age CLA attended schools rated by Ofsted as 'Outstanding' or 'Good'. Compared to 90% the previous year.
- 5.6. Virtual School continued to work with Croydon town school-CTS (11-16) and Croydon Town College-CTC (16-25) as our interim provisions for newly arrived young people. The provisions offer a full curriculum complement and intensive ESOL as well as school readiness and preparation for understanding how schools and education in the UK work. There are 20 places at CTS and the school was full throughout the 20-21 with a waiting list. The college had 6 places in 20-21.

Educational Attainment at the end of 2021 academic year (predicted)

- 5.7. 2020/2021 Academic Year was an unusual year with Covid19 ongoing throughout the school year and another full lockdown in the spring term that changed the way our children were able to access education. The Virtual School report presented to the Corporate Parenting Panel in September 2020 provides a detailed account of our children progress and challenges.
- 5.8. Our Virtual School noted that formal grades were not submitted to examination boards by schools for EYFS, Year 1 pupils or KS1 and KS2 pupils. Therefore data about our children progress will all be collated and analysed internally over the autumn term by the Virtual School and an updated data

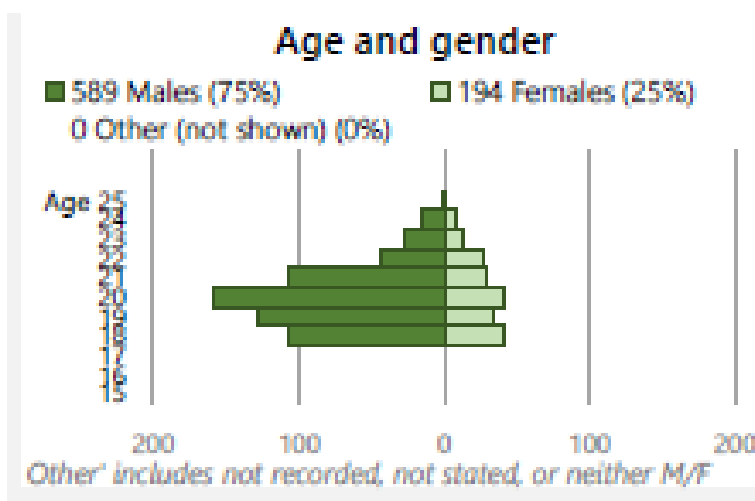
report will be presented to the Corporate Parenting panel. Some of the data submitted is hard to compare to previous years, however we are very proud of our children achievements and not least thankful to the support their carers provided to continue their learning. Currently out of the 15 KS1 pupils who have been CLA for more than a year, 13% are on track for nationally expected levels, with 53% on track for their personal targets in both Reading and Writing and 47% on track for personal targets in Maths. Of the 25 KS2 pupils who have been CLA for more than a year, 44% are on track for nationally expected levels, with 72% on track for their personal targets in Reading and 76% in Writing and 76% on track for personal targets in Maths. Out of the 73 KS4 CLA who have been in care for more than a year, 15% are on track to achieve 5+ GCSE grades including English and Maths at great 4 or above, 47% are on track to meet their own personal target in English and 51% in Maths.

- 5.9. **Personal educational plans (PEPs):** Percentage of CLA at SSA (Statutory School Age) with a Personal Education Plan (PEP) reviewed & completed on a 6 monthly basis has continued to improve during 2020/2021. The average completion and review within timescale rate was over the 85% target throughout the year. Our Virtual School designated teachers and Virtual Head teacher have been working to improve our children in care access to learning and support progress. This is currently at 96.8%
- 5.10. **Exclusions:** There have been no permanent exclusions of Croydon CLA during the 2020/21 academic year, which is a decrease on the previous year's figure of 2.



6. Care Leavers:

- 6.1. The Children & Social Work Act 2017 introduced a new duty on local authorities, to provide Personal Adviser (PA) support to all care leavers up to age 25, if they want this support.
- 6.2. The duty commenced from 1 April 2018.
- 6.3. As of March 2020, there were 848 young adults in Croydon's care leaver population, which had seen a steady increase during 2019. By March 2021 this number had decreased and there were 786 young people supported by our Leaving Care Service.
- 6.4. **Age and Gender:** 75% of our carer leavers are male and 25 % are females. The majority of our care leavers are between 18-21 years of age. This is relatively unchanged from the previous year.



6.5. **Ethnicity:** In terms of ethnicity, 32% as White British or White Others, 31% of our care leavers are recorded as Black or Black British , 26% recorded as Asian or Asian British, 6% are recorded as other ethnic group and

Ethnic background

White	32%
Mixed	6%
Asian or Asian British	26%
Black or black British	31%
Other ethnic group	6%
Not stated	0%
Not recorded	0%

6.6. **Pathway planning:** All our care leavers should have pathway plans which details how we work together to support them in all aspects of their lives .Our performance in terms of completing the plans has dropped by 1% during 20/21 with 83% of care leavers having up to date plans. There is greater involvement of Young People in developing their pathway plans. The quality of Pathway plans has shown a gradual improvement through the bi-monthly audit process, with most now ranked as Good or above.

6.7. **Education, Employment and Training (EET):**

2020/2021 was a difficult year for many young people, with limited employment opportunities and a number of care leavers experiencing Furlough or uncertainty through zero hour contracts. Throughout 2020/21 there has been a

gradual decline in the numbers of care Leavers who are in Education, Employment or Training.

- 6.8. As at 31st march 2021 57% of care leavers were either in full time or part time Education, Employment or Training. This is an area of concern for us as we enter another year of uncertainty in relation to employment opportunities for young people.
- 6.9. During this period the support and help provided to young people by the income maximisation team has been immeasurable, assisting with housing benefit and entitlements.

7. Fostering

- 7.1. During 2020/21 the partnership arrangements with CORAM came to an end with recruitment campaigns now being managed in house. Our priority is particularly in finding homes for older children, sibling groups, children with disabilities and long- term placements.



- 7.2 As of March 2021 the Fostering Service had a total of 222 approved fostering households that offer short break care, short term foster carers and long term foster carers. This include the “Connected Persons Foster Carers” who are approved to care for specific children. At the end of the year, 314 children looked after were placed with Croydon approved Foster carers.
- 7.3.. The introduction of the two Fostering Reviewing Officers has meant that the carers’ reviews are chaired by an independent person, not the allocated Supervising Social Worker. This allows opportunities to identify support needs

for both carers and children with additional scrutiny. Foster Carers Annual Reviews completion in timescales performance was 95% for the year.

- 7.4.. The Fostering Panel was reviewed in 2019 and a new Panel Chair was appointed and took his role in April 2020. Further work to expand on panel membership and central list was also completed to increase diversity, skills and knowledge.
- 7.5. . Our Foster carers have provided fantastic care for many children and young people during an unprecedented year. The additional pressures placed on family homes due to lockdown have been evident, however the strength of the support network around fostering has helped children maintain positive experiences of being cared for.



8. Adoption & Permanence

- 8.1. Croydon Council no longer operates as an Adoption Agency. Adopt London South (ALS) is our Regional Adoption Agency (RAA) and was established in July 2019. ALS is one of the four RAAs that provides adoption services across 23 London Boroughs.
- 8.2. ALS is the largest partnership involving 9 Local Authority services: **Croydon**, Kingston and Richmond operating as AFC, Lambeth, Lewisham, Southwark, Sutton, Merton and Wandsworth. ALS recruits and assesses new adoptive families and finds families for children in partnership with the LA's.

- 8.3. ALS also provides post adoption support to families, children and adopted adults. Services are also available for birth parents and a letterbox system enables indirect contact between birth families and children.
- 8.4. During 2020-2021, 19 Croydon children were adopted compared to 11 in 2019-2020. As with the previous year an average of 17 children were waiting to be matched with a prospective adoptive family at any point during the year. Average time between entering care and moving in with an adoptive family, for children who were adopted (536 days) has reduced from the previous year(553) and is now better than our SN's(549).
- 8.5. During the year 14 children left our care after the court granted a Special Guardianship Order to their carer, family members and/or friends.



9. Voice of children and young people in our care

- 9.1. Croydon's Children in Care Council (E.M.P.I.R.E.) has an active membership and continued to meet virtually throughout the pandemic. The appointment of a Young Director and apprentices is assisting in ensure that children's views are heard and valued. The group has provided invaluable feedback throughout the year. During Practice week (October 2020) young people's experience of transitions between services was provided and has informed a service restructure. E.M.P.I.R.E. was actively involved in helping to develop the sufficiency strategy, fostering service and in Croydon's commitment to challenging discrimination following the death of George Floyd in May 2020. The group will have its own section in Corporate Parenting Panel moving forward and will be supporting service development in a number of areas:

Housing conditions; Communication & Transparency; Care Leavers experience and setting up home allowances.



10. Independent visiting & Mentoring & Advocacy

10.1. The Independent visiting service has continued to provide an independent contact for children looked after during Covid19. Many Independent Visitors maintained regular contact with children and young people, with face to face meetings taking place between lockdown periods. During 2020-2021 there was an average of 95 children and young people matched with an Independent Visitor. A recruitment campaign also took place recruiting a further 15 Independent visitors during the year.

10.2. The three Independent Visitor co-ordinators are now managed by the IRO Service Manager, building on the external scrutiny and support that the roles provide.

10.3. Many of our children looked after and care leavers, including unaccompanied minors access services from Bernardo's and other community Advocacy Services, which increases their social network and provides safety and support

10.4. Our Children access mentoring, independent visitors or community services from:

- Independent Visitor Service
- Learning Mentor Volunteer Scheme

- Young Roots- Department for Education grant funded mentoring Scheme
- Croydon Council UASC mentoring scheme (run by YP from migrant background)
- Community Services: Red Cross, Refugee Council etc.



11 Key achievements

11.1 2020-2021 has been unprecedented in the challenges faced for children, families and staff. Throughout the Covid restrictions virtual and face to face visits have continued to take place. Our use of technology has enabled different ways of engaging with many young people.

11.2. Our quality assurance activity has shown a gradual and sustained improvement in the quality of plans and work with children, although this remains a priority for us.

11.3. We have continued to limit the number of changes in social worker for children that are looked after with 72% having experienced no change in social worker over the last 6 months as at 31st March 2021

11.4. The Care Panel continues to be chaired by the Director for Children's Social care and has continued to ensure that only those children that need to become

looked after do, with improved support being provided to families to limit the need for care.

11.5. Our vulnerable children in care who are at risk of abuse and exploitation and reviewed regular via our Complex Adolescent Panel or MACE

Conclusion

12.1. The challenges presented during 2020/2021 by Covid and the S114 notice have provided a difficult environment in which to continue to support children looked after and care leavers to the extent that we would want. While everyone has managed the challenges well we know that periods without face to face support has been far from ideal. That said, we have also seen increased engagement for some young people through the use of technology for meetings and support groups which we need to learn from.

12.2 Our performance measures have shown a maintenance of provision or improvement in most areas. Looking forward we expect to see demand for more emotional and wellbeing support for children and young people and the need to develop a robust and joined up response to mental health needs.

12.3 Croydon continues to provide support and care for many unaccompanied Asylum seeking children, which we are very proud of. There has been an increase in other local authorities taking on their responsibility for these vulnerable children and young people.

12.4 The real praise needs to go to all our children Looked After and Care Leavers who have shown amazing resilience and compassion during what has been an extremely difficult year for all children and young people.

Agenda Item 9

REPORT TO:	Corporate Parenting Panel 10 th December 2020
SUBJECT:	Update on the South London Commissioning Programme – June 2021
LEAD OFFICER:	Pasquale Brammer, Head of CFE Integrated Commissioning
CABINET MEMBER:	Cllr Alisa Flemming Cabinet Member for Children, Young People & Learning
WARDS:	All
PUBLIC/EXEMPT:	

SUMMARY OF REPORT:

Corporate Parenting Panel have requested an update on the progress of the South London Commissioning Programme.

The report provides an update on the work of the programme in tackling issues for children in care on behalf of seven South London boroughs with particular reference to the London Borough of Croydon.

It also contains a summary of the strategic priorities of the programme for the period 2021-22

POLICY CONTEXT/AMBITIOUS FOR CROYDON:

The commissioning and provision of effective, safe and efficient services for children and young people who are looked after supports the following corporate objectives:

- Children and young people thrive and reach their full potential
- Children and young people are safe, healthy and happy, and aspire to be the best they can be
- Safeguarding children and young people and improve their outcomes
- Good, decent homes ensuring that all people including children have the opportunity to access a suitable home

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

N/A – Report is for information only.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Corporate Parenting Panel are asked to note the updates and progress of the South London Commissioning Programme and the strategic priorities of the programme for 2021-22

1. Background and Context

1.1 The South London Commissioning Programme (SLCP) is a collaboration of the 12 South London boroughs. The aim of the Partnership is to develop regional commissioning models which operate at sufficient size to provide economies of scale and a varied range of placement options.

1.2 SLCP was established in 2013 to support the commissioning of quality placements in the NMI special school and FE College sectors.

1.3 In 2017, SLCP was awarded a Department for Education Innovation Fund grant £1 million to establish a light touch framework Approved Provider Panel Agreement (APPA). The framework is part of a commissioning approach that is designed to secure long-term high quality placements for children in care within a stable pricing structure. Through the use of the APPA, the programme seeks to achieve the following outcomes;

- Increased placement stability;
- Children matched to the right placements to meet their needs;
- Opportunities to shape the market to deliver outcomes;
- Positive interventions for LAC through innovative joint projects, and;
- Value for money for local authorities.

1.4 The London Borough of Croydon is the lead local authority for the SLCP. A further six South London boroughs form part of the children looked-after programme, comprising of Lambeth, Sutton, Greenwich, Lewisham, Merton, and Bexley. Each borough contributes £15,000 per annum for membership of the children looked-after work stream and access to the APPA framework.

1.5 Member boroughs of the SLCP annually agree the level of funding for the programme for the following year. The level of funding agreed by member boroughs of each work stream will determine the future capacity of the SLCP to further develop the projects outlines in this report.

1.6 The Strategic Programme Lead has just left the team and we are recruiting for a replacement Lead. The programme is overseen by the Head of Children's Integrated Commissioning.

1.7 Work plans for the CLA workstream for 21/22 are currently being agreed, the proposed areas of focus are as follows:

- APPA for Residential and IFA – management of and refresh
- Quality Framework and Contract Management

- In House Fostering Strategy development
- Fee negotiations with providers
- All about Me/All about Us resource
- Pan London workstreams – Delivery of the ASD/SEMH project

2. APPA Light Touch Framework for IFA Residential and Residential Care

2.1 The APPA tender was published by the South London Commissioning Programme on October 11 2019 and closed on November 11 2019. The tender was evaluated and moderated in November and December 2019.

The tender was divided into 2 lots as follows;

Lot	Service Area	Sub-Lot
Lot 1	Residential Care	1a: Standard Placements. 1b: Specialist Placements.
Lot 2	Independent Fostering Agency	2a: Standard Placements. 2b: Specialist Placements. 2c: Emergency Placements.

- 2.2 The tender is limited to providers with a 'good' or 'outstanding' OFSTED judgement overall. This is to give assurance to local authorities and children in care that all placements are with providers with a minimum of good quality services.
- 2.3 A total of 92 providers bid to join the APPA with many providers bidding for multiple lots. Due to the rigorous approach to the assessment of quality method statements and compliance requirements the total number of providers that were admitted to the various sub-lots was as follows;
- 2.4 Whilst the number of providers represented a useful start for the framework, it was hoped that a larger number of providers would have been admitted. The characteristics of the market for these services means that some providers do not wish to join multiple frameworks. This may have been due to the cost constraints of being on a framework or the administrative requirements of joining multiple procurement platforms.
- 2.5 SLCP has worked closely with member boroughs, providers, and national bodies to review the pricing model and fee uplift requirements. This has resulted in a streamlined discount model and potential annual fee uplifts for providers. These prices were advertised in a refreshed tender process which closed in November 2020.

- 2.6 A further 43 providers have now joined the APPA in the last tender refresh. The additional providers will increase the choice for member boroughs considerably, resulting in better improved matching of children to placement provider and in a reduction in the use of spot purchasing.

The following table contains the breakdown of providers for the framework.

Total Number of Providers on the APPA

Area	Total Providers
Residential Care	25
Independent Fostering Agency	53

- 2.7 Existing APPA providers also submitted revised prices as part of the tender refresh process. This was following in-year negotiation discussions with numerous providers.

Joint work with Croydon

- 2.8 SLCP is working very closely with commissioners and the placement team in Croydon. This has included the following pieces of work;
- Development of the quality framework model for children-looked after providers.
 - Ensuring that the pricing model for the tender refresh meets the needs of member boroughs.
 - Detailed analysis of placement costs.
 - Providing situational reporting from providers on business continuity, vacancies, and challenges in the Covid-19 response.
 - Negotiating with providers to secure discounts.
 - Implementation of the SLCP’s ‘All About Me’ profile to ensure the child’s voice is at the heart of decision-making.
 - Membership of Croydon’s Accommodation Strategy Group.

3. Strategic Priorities of the South London Commissioning Programme

- 3.1 The strategic priorities of the programme can be summarised as follows;
- **Managing Cost**
 - **Increased sufficiency for placements**
 - **Shared resources**

- **Quality Assurance**
- **Best Practice**
- **Innovation**

3.2 **Managing Costs;** will be reflected in the prices secured through the APPA and through future management of the market. The sufficiency of placements is very challenging and this situation was made more difficult by the Covid-19 pandemic. The APPA will secure stable prices that reflect the state of the market at this point in time.

Work is undertaken in line with borough sufficiency plans and aligning to the Croydon Accommodation Strategy and developments.

3.3 **Increased Sufficiency;** SLCP is developing a strategy for the development of in-house fostering in South London. The project is focusing on the following objectives;

- The marketing approach used by Local Authorities for recruitment, retention and professional development of foster carers.
- Creation of a closely aligned 'Benefits and Incentives' model which would attract new foster carers and reduce competition among SLCP member boroughs.
- Identifying specialist training and support that would encourage foster carers to choose to foster within for the South London boroughs, and to provide them with the skills required to meet the needs of all children in care, especially emergency and 'complex' placements
- Design innovative recruitment campaigns to attract foster carers from diverse communities that may be under-represented at present.
- Upskill in-house foster carers to enable them to care for, and meet the needs of, children and young people with specific needs

3.4 This project will seek to align good practice in South London boroughs. Where appropriate, we will coordinate recruitment to increase the number and expertise of the in-house fostering community.

All South London boroughs have a target of increasing the number of in-house foster carers. This is key to more children being able to access a suitable family-based placement, reducing the reliance on high cost residential placements. SLCP is developing a multi-borough in-house fostering project which is summarised in Section 3.12.

3.5 The programme is also working with member boroughs and providers on gaps in provision. There are future opportunities/potential for the programme to support boroughs on work around Semi Independent Accommodation and Leaving care. The APPA providers will be used to develop practice and increase capacity to meet demand for services.

- 3.6 **Shared Resources;** All member boroughs are committed to using a common Individual Child Agreement as part of the placement process. This ensure consistency between our boroughs and is used to ensure that the provider meets the needs of the child.
- 3.7 The member boroughs in the children looked-after programme regularly share best practice, information about providers, and seek support for the challenges that they face. They regularly support each other to secure appropriate placements for children with complex needs.
- 3.8 **Quality Assurance;** SLCP have developed a quality framework for non-maintained and independent special schools for the SEND programme. Visits to the 40 most commonly used schools will be carried out on a bi-annual basis from January 2021. This will provide quality assurance to the member boroughs and will focus on raising the quality of the providers.
- 3.9 The programme are working on a similar quality framework for APPA providers in 2021. This enables all member boroughs to share information on the quality and practice of key providers. A more positive relationship will be developed with the providers and they will be encouraged to respond to the needs of our children and young people and to develop their offer, where appropriate.
- 3.10 All providers on the APPA are required to be OFSTED ‘Good’ or ‘Outstanding’. This ensures that children placed through the framework are placed with a minimum standard of provider. Regular events will be held with APPA providers to further improve their practice and to develop solutions to the challenges that we are all facing.
- 3.11 **Best Practice;** the professional network which underpins the consortium approach allows for the sharing of best practice between member boroughs. This is facilitated by the SLCP and produces benefits for all concerned. SLCP is leading on a number of best practice initiatives, including the following;
- 3.12 **Covid-19 Response:** SLCP contacted all providers during the pandemic to ensure support business continuity planning, effective risk assessments, and return to school for all pupils. Regular situational reports were circulated with information on vacancies and challenges faced by providers. All of this information was shared weekly with member boroughs.
- 3.13 SLCP set up and coordinated weekly meetings of London sub-regional organisations and national representative bodies, Independent Children’s Homes Association (ICHA) and the Nationwide Association of Fostering Providers (NAFP). These meetings shared information on the response of the market, business continuity, market pressures, and access to PPE.
- 3.14 **Innovation Projects:** SLCP is constantly seeking to improve practice and enhance services for children in care. We are engaged in a number of innovative projects to advance these aims.

- 3.15 **All About Me Profile:** This profile resource was developed with children in care. It is completed by the child with support from professionals. The profile will enable each child to keep a record of their characteristics, preferences, aspirations, and cultural needs. The profile has attracted the attention of the Department for Education and the Children's Commissioner and there is considerable potential for 'All About Me' to be developed as a model of regional and national good practice.
- 3.16 The Children's Social Care services in the London Boroughs of Croydon and Sutton are both adopting the profile as part of core social work practice. These pilots will be evaluated and, if successful, funding will be sought to extend this project on a regional and national level.
- 3.17 All providers appointed to the Approved Provider List will be encouraged to partake in innovative projects with SLCP partners in the future. The aim is for the partner boroughs to initiate a number of joint projects to tackle;
- The development of specialist fostering services, including support for in-house fostering.
 - Equalities and diversity for young people, including adoption of the 'All About Me' profile for children and young people.
 - Health and well-being challenges faced by looked after children.
 - Educational and employment opportunities.
 - Children in custody and the youth justice system.
 - Gaps in the market for residential placements and foster care.
 - Key themes identified across the sub-region, including child sexual exploitation, gangs, County Lines and mental health.
- 3.18 The SLCP Strategic Commissioning Priorities 2020-24 have been agreed by the Children Looked-After Project Board. These will be reviewed annually and are reliant on contribution funding levels, staffing structure and any changes in priority areas.

4. PAN London Commissioning Solutions

- 4.1 SLCP is working closely with other sub-regional organisations in London and with the Association of London Directors of Children's Services on the PAN London Placements Panel. The Panel is focused on tackling sufficiency for particular groups of children in care. There are a number of projects being undertaken, including;
- Resettlement and alternative to youth custody.
 - Complex adolescents.
 - Provision for ASD/SEMH.
 - Mother and baby residential.
 - Secure provision.

- 4.2 The resettlement and alternatives to youth custody project has attracted funding from the Youth Justice Board. An agreement with an established provider will result in the provision of 20 residential placements for young people who have been or are due to go into custody. Once suitable premises are secured there will be accommodation for 5 young people in North, South, East and West London.
- 4.3 SLCP is involved in all of these projects and leads on the ASD/SEMH project. The aim is to increase the availability of appropriate good quality placements for children in care that are in the groups set out above.
- 4.4 Directors of Commissioning and Social Care for the member boroughs were invited to a meeting to discuss the future options for the programme. A popular suggestion was for SLCP to consider working with other regionals and potentially under the Pan London Vehicle work in the LIA in the future to create join up and avoid competition.
- 4.5 **ASD SEMH Project:** SLCP is leading an ALDCS PAN London Placement Panel project to tackle issues relating to ASD/SEMH. Funding has been secured from the London Innovation and Improvement Alliance.
- 4.6 This project has particular emphasis on young people with significant social emotional and mental health needs. Research will be carried out into the criteria for access to specific services, residential educational provision, key worker preventative services, and diagnostic pathways.
- 4.7 The project has the opportunity to improve good practice by determining the most effective community, family-based and residential services. Following the research stage of the project, SLCP will present a set of recommendations to the London Innovation and Improvement Alliance in March 2021.
- 4.8 The ALDCS PAN London Placements Panel is taking the initiative to develop regional solutions to the challenges of finding high quality services for children in care in London. SLCP will continue to seek solutions for our member boroughs through the work of the Panel.

5. CONSULTATION

- 5.1 SLCP holds regular meetings and events with providers and national representative bodies. This work has contributed to the development of the framework model, in terms of focus, quality, and price.
- 5.2 The SLCP Engagement Manager works closely with groups of children and young people on many aspects of the programme. This has included development of the All About Me profiles, the expectations contained within the tender specification, and feedback on the performance of providers.

- 5.3 Consultation with service users, foster carers, and service providers if being undertaken for the in-house fostering, equalities and diversity, and ASD/SEMH projects.
- 5.4 As part of the development of the quality frameworks for SEND and children-looked-after providers consultation takes place with the providers of these services.

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IRO Thematic Audit May 2021

Purpose:

The IRO thematic audit was undertaken;

- 1) To understand everyday practice with children and families
- 2) To identify themes across the IRO Service
- 3) To explore learning to help the IRO Service continue to improve the service to children and families

The IRO thematic audit is best understood in conjunction with the IRO Annual Report which relates to our practice between April 2019 –September 2020, and provides quantitative data and the IRO Service Independent Management Report to the Serious Case Review for Chloe which was submitted in January 2021.

This will provide the reader with the context of continual improvement in the IRO's practice while recognising the impact of the Covid Pandemic

A strengths based approach is favoured, highlighting practice dilemmas for the IRO and offering reflections for future learning.

Methodology:

Four Quality Assurance Managers observed 14 Child Looked After Reviews in the month of April and May 2021. The views of children, parents, carers and social workers were sought where possible and every IRO was observed at least once. To gain a wide sample of practice 24 dip samples of children's records were undertaken alongside the observations.

IRO involvement in a child's life, is less frequent than many professionals given the expectations of cyclical meetings to monitor the progress of children's plans over time. IRO are required to convene change of circumstances CLA Reviews whenever there is a significant change of care plan – such as a change of care arrangements – hence they often meet with children whilst they are experiencing significant life events and transitions. IRO focus may also change in respect of permanency and transitional points in care as children's legal status changes (for instance from being accommodated with the agreement of their parents under S20, to being subject of Care Orders under S31, or deprived of their liberty when sectioned or subject to Secure Accommodation) The child's age is also significant. For this reason the sample of children included children at every stage of their journey in care, albeit young adults who had left care were not included.

The templates used by the auditors were written to support auditors focus on relationship based practice and impact. The templates used are attached in Appendice. Having concluded auditing and gathered feedback the auditors met to distil findings and identify themes and learning. A narrative approach has been purposefully adopted to provide the reader an overview of practice, with a qualitative focus on IRO activity.

Strengths

We see preparation for children's meetings. Working virtually continues to support IRO linking with the network before meetings. This also facilitates a level of continuous monitoring through IRO inclusion in key meetings and Panels which was not possible when all practice was face to face. Social work teams actively update IRO's about significant changes in children's circumstances and find IRO's more accessible.

Consultation documents when completed by children, carers and parents are used by IROs. There are better quality Progress Reports that are also more available from social work services but less often shared with participants before the meeting itself.

Without exception IRO went to great lengths to support children to be part of their meeting. IRO used various approaches to achieve this based on the wishes and feelings of children and their professional judgement. Older children often stayed in the entirety of their meetings with younger children having separate meetings or joining parts. Wider professional participation is frequently facilitated by using a series of meetings, to keep meetings that children are in smaller, and it is apparent that the concept of the child looked after review as a single meeting does not always reflect our practice.

Where children and young people were included they told us that they heard nice things about themselves and that it was helpful to get things they needed. Another child commented that listening at the meeting was helpful.

IROs spoke with parents before or after the child's meeting and wherever possible included them in children's meetings. We saw IRO's recognising important people in children's lives by including an uncle and privileging the relationship between a young parent and their previous foster carer (who is now caring for their child looked after) IRO are thoughtful about how to involve parents. They appreciate the impact that parent's presence can have on dynamics in meetings between children and carers and are conscious of the requirement to divert what could be distressing interaction between important adults in the child's life outside of the meeting.

Where a parent had been supported to attend her child's meeting, after a very difficult initial child looked after review, they commented that the IRO had changed the way the meeting was led. They felt genuinely heard and that they were respected as a parent. Another explained that the meeting was helpful and the auditor identified that the parent valued the overview of her child's care that the meeting provided her with.

There is a focus on children's health, education and social relationships and IRO consistently discuss the key areas that the IRO handbook stipulates they should address.

Good quality decisions were seen to capture not only the discussions within the child's meeting, but the continuous monitoring of IRO's over the child's journey in care. We saw examples of Midway Reviews being used to track the progress of plans for children and IRO's commenting on the quality of care plans. IRO footprint continues to be maintained and in the majority of children's records the IRO presence can be felt.

IROs show interest and care for children and their wellbeing. This was evident in their interaction with children and warm language. We saw IROs carefully listening to children's body language via MS teams. There was a sense of IRO ownership of their role and of wanting the very best for children in our care. After a period of change in the IRO staff group many children still continue to benefit from a consistent IRO.

IROs speak with children and practitioners about the child's story and there were examples of careful thought about how children understand what is happening now and how they might understand their story as care experienced adults. Social workers report that discussions with IROs are helpful and suggest different approaches and other ways of approaching difficult issues without supplanting the social worker and team manager relationship.

Connected to this there is a continuing improvement in letters to children with good examples focusing on key messages to the child (a maximum of 3 issues), often supported by images or emoticons and using age appropriate language. There are examples of letters to several children with disabilities that are bespoke using PEC symbols and/or a combination of photos of the children themselves. This continues to be supported by input from Speech and Language Therapist Emma Carwardine, and sessions facilitated by Hendrix Hammond, who is a qualified family therapist.

Dilemmas

To ensure that IROs cover all the areas required of them by the IRO handbook, there was a similarity in agenda across children's meetings. This brought a focus on key areas such as health, education and social relationships that overall was positive.

This can also bring a focus on ensuring that process or task were on track e.g. 'has the PEP happened?', 'has the health assessment happened?', 'has the SGO assessment progressed?', or 'contact reviewed' 'refer for CAMHS'. Whilst it is vitally important that the IRO performs this quality assurance role, this can unintentionally divert from exploratory conversations with children, parents and the network that focus on trauma and how to support the child and carers to manage trauma. This can also introduce language that is unhelpful to children as it has no meaning to them.

At times, this process focus meant that the higher context of the plan's direction was not always explored i.e. the potential return of children home or the barriers that prevented the securing of a Special Guardianship Order. Nonetheless IROs were sighted on the progress of the plan overall.

When these questions were explored in CLA Reviews it could be difficult. Social workers, while valuing the contribution of IRO to care planning and discussion outside of CLA Reviews, in one instance felt blamed by the IRO identifying that there had been drift and delay during the meeting when a parent was present. More often these bigger questions were explored entirely separately from the meeting with the child but did not always appear in recordings of the review itself. All IROs could readily explain the direction of travel for the children that they worked with. We also saw key interventions by IROs in care planning, such as a return home which had not been sufficiently assessed, contact proceeding without the relevant contact assessment, and a delayed International Adoption.

The increased participation of children and adults can amplify these effects as IROs will sensibly avoid distressing conversations in the context of the child's meeting unless they are confident that the child can be held emotionally in that moment by them or others. This is another moment when a process or task may be suggested for others rather than an exploration with the child of the meaning of their distress or behaviours. The impact of Covid can be felt here. There is some understandable uncertainty in IROs about the strength of their relationship with newly allocated children whom many have only ever met virtually and even then infrequently. With children that IROs have a good relationship with discussions in children's meetings are more discursive and this can be seen in some letters to children and decisions. Overall we are struggling to capture the nuance of our work with children particularly the preparation and planning that is undertaken and the way in which we record the CLA Review as a process rather than a finite event.

Consultation Documents are required as part of the CLA Review process and evidence participation of others and inform planning of children's meeting. These are regularly distributed by CLA admin. However our current documents are not consistently used and returned to IROs, with mixed feedback about how helpful or accessible these are for those completing them or IRO using them.

The reviewing of previous decisions is routine in all CLA Reviews, this is important in demonstrating accountability of the local authority. We also saw that these decisions did not always (and admittedly not all would be expected to) become part of the child or young person's Care or Pathway Plan. This creates a disconnect between what the IRO is reviewing in the meetings (s) and what is recorded as the child's stated plan. We saw that Care Plans are not always the central document to a CLA Review albeit IROs consistently seek their availability and their updating especially Pathway Plan Reviews to support transitions'.

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

IROs are experienced practitioners and they bring this to their role and approaches. This creates diversity which is valuable. That diversity is apparent in our diverse understanding of the CLA Review process for children. This is indelibly influenced by our individual positions of what the IRO role means in practice and in the local authority context. This manifests itself most commonly in the extent to which IROs will push the boundaries between reviewing and co-producing care plans at risk of authoring a plan.

Impact of IRO Service

IROs seek to ensure that children, parent, carers feel heard. Children's meetings and wider IRO involvement can be a platform for children and parents to understand children's care plans.

IRO's are contributing to the stability of care arrangements for children by focusing on health, education and social relationships. Many children appear settled and well

IRO's support colleagues to think about the child's story within the CLA Review process.

Midway Reviews support progress when used well and where IRO's are specific in linking the progress of care plans to outcomes for children. Overall there is a higher level of oversight and IRO's continue to contribute to practice by supporting discussions about relationship based practice and focusing on children's needs in the context of care planning.

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

Conclusion with area's for development

Despite the impact of the Covid Pandemic the IRO Service has continued to develop. There is evidence of much good practice with children, parents, and professionals within the CLA Review process. There continues to be a spectrum of practice amongst IRO which is predominantly Good or Requiring Improvement. Examples of Inadequate practice are raised through individual management.

Our concerted focus on facilitating the participation of children and families in the CLA Review process over the last year and a half has raised compelling questions about our practice, the use of virtual technology and how IRO's execute their role.

To continue to develop our service there are area's outlined below that are well supported by our improved relationships with colleagues in operational area's and those that support practice such as the systemic practioners and Speech and Language Therapists. We need to continue to recognise that IRO's as individuals have different strengths but all have extensive experience with which to support best practice.

- Exploration of expectations around preparation and recording of preparation for CLA Review to show our 'working out'
- Developing consensus around what we expect our recording of the CLA Review to capture, particularly where we are using multiple meetings and modes. Our purpose in reviewing children's plans in this way and whom our primary audience is.

- Exploring how we balance the dilemma of procedural expectation laid out in the IRO handbook with the empowerment of children in their meetings, supporting an exploratory focus on children's trauma, narrative approaches in letter writing and reflecting on the learning from the Serious Case Review for Chloe.
- Consistent use of Consultation Documents by IRO, and review of Carer and Parent Consultation Documents in line with existing review of Child Consultation Documents by Ashleigh Searle and the Young Directors.
- Supporting IRO to formally raise concerns or issues while maintaining our collaborative approach to working with colleagues.

Recommendations

- Use of weekly groups and team meeting to workshop around the area's identified, particularly how a trauma based approach can be relevant to IRO practice.
- Inclusion of IRO in learning events by Croydon Safeguarding Partnership in respect of Chloe.
- Explore further peer learning between IRO to generate consistency of practice and build on buddying introduced as part of letter writing workshops and IRO involvement in audit activity
- Extend involvement of Hendrix Hammond in facilitating discussion around narrative approaches in the context of the Child Looked After Reviews and Letter Writing.
- Revise Foster Carer and Parenting Consultation forms in parallel with review of Child Consultation forms being led by Ashleigh Searle and Young Directors
- Revision of existing CERP's in conjunction with CP chairs and operational services.
- IRO Service Manager to share thematic audit with peer's IRO Service Managers in different borough's to seek feedback and new idea's

Corporate Parenting Panel

CLA and Care Leaver Accommodation Update
June 2021

- Croydon Sufficiency Strategy and Plan
- Croydon CYP Accommodation Strategy:
 - In House Fostering, Independent Fostering Agencies, Residential Children's homes, Semi Independent Accommodation, Supported Housing and Care Leavers
- Housing, Gateway, Adults and Children's Social Care – Whole Council Approach to meet Corporate Parenting Responsibility
- Opportunities across Local Authority and CCG – joint approach
- Savings programmes attached to accommodation and placements
- Key decisions to be made, next steps set out here

- 30 For Croydon - a strong strategy designed to bolster the service we are able to give children and make us less reliant on commissioned providers
- Support from SLCP across LAs to develop and improve fostering recruitment
- We have a core foster carer population that is aging and more retirements will therefore follow over the next five years
- For the next 3-5 years, we will need to work in partnership with IFAs to meet need
- Also a possibility that we will have a larger number of new, less experienced carers who may struggle with higher needs placements for a few years

- In terms of supporting our in-house delivery, what must we consider the IFA market to mitigate this? Options could include:
 - a parallel 'in house search' opportunity for an IFA, with a payoff of lower prices and the same allowance structure for children
 - An offer that is targeted to a particular group of children and young people from IFAs, again at a capped cost

Original plan to look more to IFAs for UASC, however it is highly likely that we will have less UASC numbers over the next few years

- We are currently looking to deliver specialist, high needs services in house, but the numbers of in-house carers we have may mean we need other options – should we look to develop this within the market as well?
- The difficulties around staying put, and the impact on sufficiency – every staying put placement is a great success for that child, but is also a fostering vacancy that no longer exists – Looking at Supported Lodgings as a potential answer

- Croydon's numbers are low for residential in comparison to our neighbours; a lot of efforts are made to keep children out of residential, step children down from residential, and return children home
- Our APPA has had more referrals at more favourable rates
- Small number of local providers on APPA and local placements – engagement sessions taking place with the eight children's homes that operate in Croydon; this appears to have led to some placement offers
- Highest needs cohort; we consistently struggle to regulated placements – often due to intense aggression or mental health concerns beyond foster carer's confidence levels or abilities.
- Spot purchased referrals are consistently failing to meet these needs, leading to suggestions for different approaches; options include:
 - Directly commissioned home – where we contract with a provider to set up and run a home for us in borough
 - In-house home which the local authority run

- Current plan is to consider and design an accommodation pathway similar to ones used in Southwark and Camden that accommodates 16-18 year old CLA, 16-18 year old homeless young people and care leavers in a more young-person friendly way – however this will need further scoping and a large amount of design

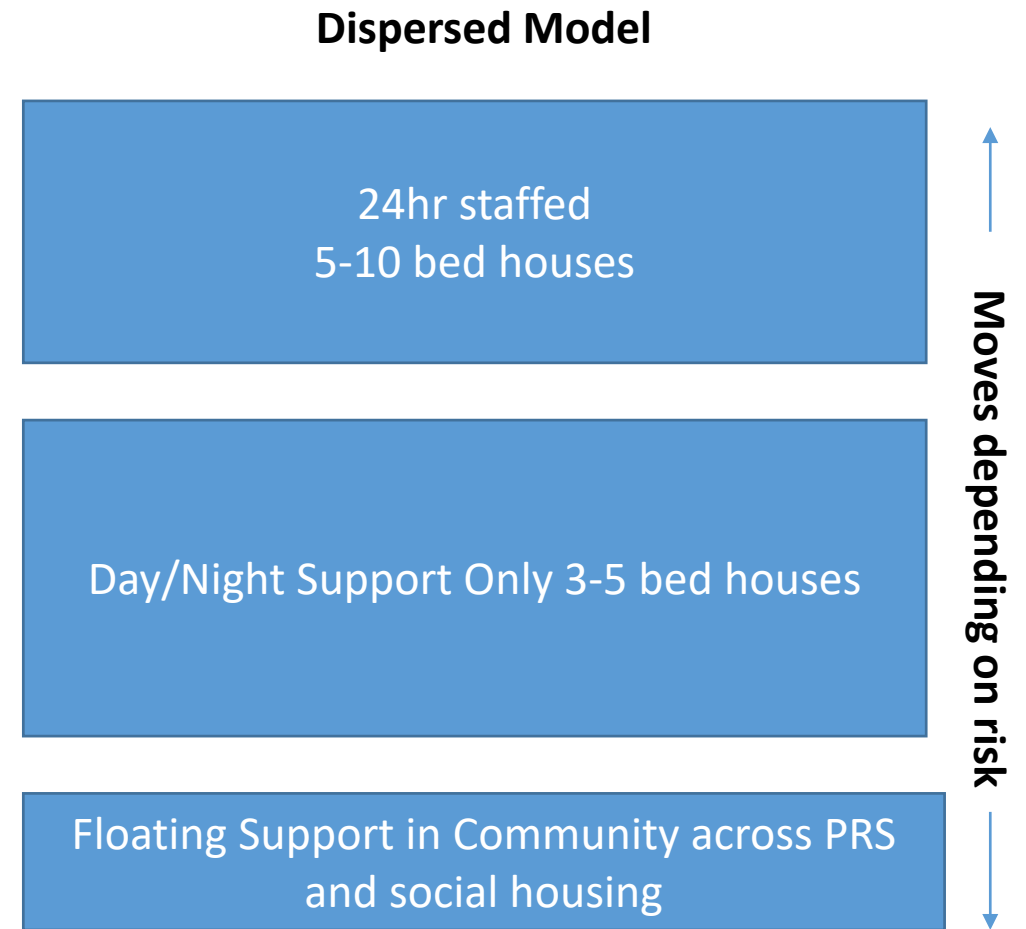
This is more likely to attract registered social landlords, and is designed to reduce the reliance on spot purchased semi-independence; reducing risk and cost

- Large changes afoot in terms of legislation; DfE currently out to consult on regulation for Supported Accommodation for 16-18 year olds
- Consideration will be needed in light of the legislation change, as to what we may wish to do locally

Supported Housing and Supported Lodgings

- Current offer for supported housing is being re-commissioned for a year (with the option to extend for a further year) to enable robust re-commissioning and re-design work to meet projected need
- Plan for a model of Supported Housing Delivery that is smaller, more dispersed, more home-like and more young people focussed; this is likely to be more expensive than the current offer, but also safer and more likely to be able to accept young people.
- Supported Lodgings development is also part of this plan – homelessness focussed service has been re-commissioned for a year, to consider robust re-commissioning/in-housing assessment

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