

Corporate Parenting Panel Agenda



To: Councillor Alisa Flemming (Chair)

Councillors Janet Campbell, Jerry Fitzpatrick, Maria Gatland,
Maddie Henson, Shafi Khan and Helen Redfern

Co-optees:

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

A meeting of the **Corporate Parenting Panel** which you are hereby summoned to
attend, will be held on **Thursday, 19 July 2018 at 5.00pm in F9 Town Hall,
Katharine Street, Croydon, CR0 1NX**

JACQUELINE HARRIS-BAKER
Director of Law and Monitoring Officer
London Borough of Croydon
Bernard Weatherill House
8 Mint Walk, Croydon CR0 1EA

Michelle Gerning
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www.croydon.gov.uk/meetings
Wednesday, 11 July 2018

Members of the public are welcome to attend this meeting.
If you require any assistance, please contact the person detailed above, on the right-
hand side.

N.B This meeting will be paperless. The agenda can be accessed online at
www.croydon.gov.uk/meetings

AGENDA – PART A

1. Apologies for absence

To receive any apologies for absence from any members of the Panel.

2. Minutes of the previous meeting (Pages 5 - 8)

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 22 March 2018 as an accurate record.

3. Disclosures of interest

In accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct and the statutory provisions of the Localism Act, Members and co-opted Members of the Council are reminded that it is a requirement to register disclosable pecuniary interests (DPIs) and gifts and hospitality to the value of which exceeds £50 or multiple gifts and/or instances of hospitality with a cumulative value of £50 or more when received from a single donor within a rolling twelve month period. In addition, Members and co-opted Members are reminded that unless their disclosable pecuniary interest is registered on the register of interests or is the subject of a pending notification to the Monitoring Officer, they are required to disclose those disclosable pecuniary interests at the meeting. This should be done by completing the Disclosure of Interest form and handing it to the Democratic Services representative at the start of the meeting. The Chair will then invite Members to make their disclosure orally at the commencement of Agenda item 3. Completed disclosure forms will be provided to the Monitoring Officer for inclusion on the Register of Members' Interests.

4. Urgent Business (if any)

To receive notice of any business not on the agenda which in the opinion of the Chair, by reason of special circumstances, be considered as a matter of urgency.

5. The Role of Panel Members & Terms of Reference (Pages 9 - 10)

The Role of Panel Members & Terms of Reference is attached.

**6. Review of the Council's Staying Put Policy - Proposal
(Pages 11 - 18)**

The report of the review of the Staying Put arrangements is attached.

7. Children and Social Work Act 2017 (Pages 19 - 22)

The report includes the seven corporate parenting principles.

8. Review of Fostering Services (Pages 23 - 46)

The report serves to update the progress being made to improve the Local Authority Fostering Service.

9. How has the Panel helped Children in Care today?

For the panel to consider how its work at the meeting will improve services for children in care.

10. Work Programme 2018/19 (Pages 47 - 48)

To consider and approve the Panel's work programme for the municipal year 2018/19.

11. Exclusion of the Press and Public

The following motion is to be moved and seconded where it is proposed to exclude the press and public from the remainder of a meeting:

“That, under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act, 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information falling within those paragraphs indicated in Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended.”

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Corporate Parenting Panel

Meeting of held on Thursday, 22 March 2018 at 5.15 pm in F9 - Town Hall

MINUTES

Present: Councillor Alisa Flemming (Chair);
Councillors Maria Gatland, Bernadette Khan, Shafi Khan and Andy Stranack

PART A

8/17 **Minutes of the previous meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 10 January 2018 were agreed as an accurate record.

9/17 **Disclosures of interest**

There were none.

10/17 **Urgent Business (if any)**

There was none.

11/17 **Educational Outcome - Interim Update**

The Chair explained that the update report was in response to request from the Board following the Virtual School annual report presented at the previous Panel. It was noted that unfortunately the Head Teacher of the Virtual School had sent her apologies due to ill-health but it was agreed that comments made by the Panel would be feedback.

The Panel discussed the low level of mentoring support and wished for further information regarding the performance of children with SEND and EHCPs and how the Virtual School was supporting them. The Panel requested to have a report presented to the next Panel regarding Independent Visitors (IV) and noted that it would be useful to have an IV present at the meeting.

The Panel noted that there needed to be more information available to foster carers and children in care regarding the leaving care service and the transition. The Chair suggested that it would be useful to have a care leaver present at the meeting or a video link organised so the Panel could ask them further questions.

The Foster Carer present expressed concern for the lack of vacancies within higher education and requested that the Virtual School put pressure on the

colleges to increase their capacity as the young people in care were of a high priority and needed additional support.

Councillor B. Khan suggested that a booklet could be produced outlining the opportunities and routes available for young people and it would be useful for the young people in care, care leavers, foster carers and relevant organisations. It was noted that Croydon's Local Offer focussed primarily on social aspects rather than employment and education.

The Panel raised concerns for the high level of exclusion and requested further information on what the virtual schools were doing on it and how the needs of the young person was being met.

It was requested that there was future report regarding Personal Independent Payments (PIP) with further information regarding the delay in payments and the backlog.

The Foster Carer noted that it was important that the completed Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) were correct as they could impact on the available funding for the individual. It was noted that the foster carers could not advise when the EHCP was being completed as it was the responsibility of the social worker.

12/17 **Staying Put Update**

The Head of Looked After Children and Resources introduced the report and explained that a review of Staying Put had been brought for the Panel's consideration at the previous Corporate Parenting Panel after the Ofsted report had identified it as an area for improvement. Since the previous meeting a plan had been drafted and if the Panel was in agreement then the officers would begin the review. It was explained that some of the work had begun tentatively, including engagement with foster carers through an online survey. It was added that there would be further consultation with the foster carers and young people.

The foster carers and officers raised concern that there were foster carers who were unaware of the Staying Put policy and it was highlighted that further training was needed on this. It was also noted that children between 16-17 years old with pathway plans were very low and that this was a concern of the authority.

At 18.20 Councillor B. Khan left the meeting.

13/17 **Children in Care Performance Scorecard**

The Director of Children Family Intervention and Children's Social Care introduced the report and explained that there would be a standing item on the future Corporate Parenting Panels with updated data.

The Panel raised concern regarding the high number of missing episodes and requested that future reports included how many individuals were going missing. It was explained that the number of missing episodes was significantly higher than previous years; however, a lot of this was due to the determination for missing periods and unauthorised episodes being nationally changed, which had impacted the data. It was noted that there was a weekly Missing Panel meeting who focussed on the top ten missing children of concern. The Panel agreed to have a future report on missing children in autumn 2018.

In response to queries raised by Councillor Gatland it was explained that there were delays with young people having their initial health assessments as they should be completed within 20 working days and the health services were not being contacted promptly. It was noted that this had been recognised and additional help within the team had been sought to rectify the problem.

14/17 **Exclusion of the Press and Public**

This was not required.

The meeting ended at 7.01 pm

Signed:

Date:

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Corporate Parenting Panel

Established: First established 2007 and re-established annually since then

Regularity of meetings: 6 times per year.

Membership: 7 Members - 5:2

2018/19

- | | |
|----------------------------|------------------|
| 1. Alisa Flemming (Chair). | 1. Maria Gatland |
| 2. Shafi Khan | 2. Helen Redfern |
| 3. Jerry Fitzpatrick | |
| 4. Maddie Henson | |
| 5. Janet Campbell | |

6 Co – Opted Members

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

Proportionality: Not applicable

Discretionary training requirements: Speed reading, Data Protection and Freedom of Information. Members Code of Conduct/ Declaration of Interest, Safeguarding for Children, Children's Trust

Duties of Panel Members: (1) to read papers and identify questions and comments (2) to attend panel meetings (3) to declare interests as required (4) to carry out any follow up actions (5) attend any required training

Clerk: Michelle Gerning 0208 726 6000 ext 84246

Lead Officers:

Eleni Ioannides, Executive Director (People)
Phillip Segurola Director Children, Family, Family Intervention and Children's Social Care
Wendy Tomlinson, Head of Looked After Children and Resources

Quorum: 3

Terms of Reference (Revised 2017)

- The Corporate Parenting Panel will focus on improving outcomes for children looked after by Croydon Council
- 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 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 listen to representations from looked after children and young people who are in receipt of services from the Council or from those young people who are care leavers.
- To advise the Director of Children's Services and 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.

REPORT TO:	Corporate Parenting Panel July 2018
SUBJECT:	Review of the Council’s Staying Put Policy – Proposal
LEAD OFFICER:	Philip Segurola
CABINET MEMBER:	Cllr Alisa Flemming
WARDS:	All

CORPORATE PRIORITY/POLICY CONTEXT/AMBITIOUS FOR CROYDON:

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.

The Ofsted Inspection of services for children in need of help of protection, children looked after and care leavers, which took place in June and July of 2017 said the following in relation to Staying Put for Care Leavers:

Not enough children and young people are staying with their carers after they are 18 years of age.

Not enough care leavers benefit from staying - put arrangements. A much lower proportion of Croydon care leavers benefit from living with their former foster carers beyond the age of 18 years than in neighbouring authorities or nationally. Some care leavers and foster carers reported that they believed that staying - put arrangements are only available until the age of 18 if they remain in full - time education. In addition, care plans often say that children will remain in placement until 18 years of age. Both of these factors undermine efforts to ensure that more care leavers benefit from the security and stability of continuing to live with their foster carers as they transition to independent adulthood.

The Inspectorate made the following recommendation:

Ensure that staying - put arrangements are promoted to all care leavers and foster carers, so that care leavers who want to stay with their former foster carers can benefit from greater permanency and support as they move towards independent adulthood.

A review of the Council’s Staying Put policy has been undertaken. This report provides proposals around Staying Put approach and rates for carers.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

The Council receives a Staying Put grant from Central Government of £540k in 2018-19 – the 2nd highest in the country behind Kent County Council. Financial cost modelling based on a number of assumptions (outlined later in the report) 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.

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. Section 3 of the report provides a summary of the cost projections.

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Panel consider the recommendations of the review of the Staying Put arrangements and approve the proposed changes to the approach and rates for carers.

2. Introduction

- 2.1 The January and March 2018 reports to the Board outlined the legislative duties around the 'Staying Put' graduated approach to planning transition to adulthood. The intention is to ensure young people can remain with their former foster carers until they are prepared for adulthood, can experience a transition akin to their peers, avoid social exclusion and be more likely to avert a subsequent housing and tenancy breakdown.
- 2.2 A Staying Put Arrangement applies to a young person who was looked after immediately prior to their eighteenth birthday as an eligible child; (an eligible child is someone who is aged 16 or 17 and has been looked after for a total of at least 13 weeks since the age of 14). The young person's Social Worker will be responsible for the process from the age of 16 years until the young person's 18th birthday when the Staying Put arrangement starts. After this time the Leaving Care Personal Adviser will take over the support of the care leaver and maintenance of the arrangement.
- 2.3. Croydon has had 108 arrangements in place from 2014-18, as detailed in the table below.

Currently Staying Put rates are tiered depending on the type of arrangement and a premium is provided if the Care Leaver is in education in the second year of the arrangement.

- Tier 1 arrangements are standard
- Tier 2 arrangements relate to when a young person is preparing for A2 Level Exams, BTEC Level 3 or NVQ Level 3 in the second year of a course
- Tier 3 arrangements apply to young people with disability and vulnerability

Young persons with no recourse to public funds may have a Staying Put arrangements if need dictates this is required.

Staying Put arrangements 2014-18	Total	Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3	NRPF
No. of Staying Put arrangements	108	50	38	17	3
Open arrangements	43	22	9	10	2
Closed arrangements	65	28	29	7	1

2.3 A review of the Council's Staying Put policy and arrangements has been undertaken and this report provides proposals around Staying Put approach and rates for carers and further details of timeframes.

3. Staying Put Review

The Staying Put Review encompassed:

3.1 **Engagement exercise** was undertaken on current views and suggestions for improvement on Staying Put arrangement. This involved service Users – children and young people, foster carers, social workers and IFA framework providers.

- Care leavers voiced their preference for living independently, although some young persons felt staying put arrangements are a useful way to prepare for independence. A young person who is a regular attendee at the Corporate Parenting Panel noted that he felt from personal experience and that of some others known to him, that the Council's Staying Put policy is not well understood among young people and foster carers.
- Discussions at the Foster Carers Forum and the results of a Foster Carers survey revealed that 20% of respondents would like to enter into a Staying put arrangement and 38% would consider entering and would like more information. The main reasons that would persuade foster carers to enter into these arrangements is the young person being eager to stay with the foster carer (33%) and rates closer to the amount paid by the fostering allowance (32%). The differential in allowance rate between Tier 1 standard rate and Tier 2 education was also challenged by foster carers, particularly as the young person may wish to work rather than pursue education qualifications. Foster Carers receiving Tier 3 disability/vulnerability voiced concerns that Tier 2 education receive a higher rate when they are supporting children with complex needs.
- Very occasionally, we have foster carers who would not want to lose their status as foster carer and case evidence suggests this is more likely to happen when the carer is registered with an Independent Fostering Agency (IFA).

- Social Workers feedback is that Staying Put arrangements are likely to increase if the rates are increased. This was also a common theme when obtaining feedback from IFA's.
- We do know that some IFAs would not want to 'lose' their foster carer, albeit temporarily. This includes that the IFA would lose their premium for that placement. To address this and encourage compliance, we have inserted a clause into the contract with our preferred 'framework' providers. This also affords clarity in our expectation about preparation for young people to leave care.

3.2 Following the consultation feedback, Children's Services management decided on a number of **proposed policy changes** on which to base the modelling of revised staying put rates. These are:

- 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	

3.3 Financial cost modelling has been undertaken using the following assumptions:

1. Target that Staying Put arrangements increase to 75 arrangements per year from current arrangements of approximately 45
2. Modelling based on Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rate for 2018-19 of £768.68 per month, increased from current rate of £520 per month

3. Assumption that 90% of Universal Credit/Housing Benefit reclaimed/received in time
4. Rate for Tier 2 – Disability / vulnerability is higher than standard rate by at least 5%
5. The Staying Put arrangement rate is increased to ensure there is a financial incentive to enter into Staying Put agreement but will be lower than the Foster Carer Allowance
6. Cost must be affordable i.e. covered by Staying Put Grant of £540k

3.3.1 Incentivising work for care leavers is included in the modelling through the following provision:

- 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

3.3.2 The financial cost modelling has also taken into account the Council Tax Care Leavers Relief Scheme change from April 2018 that any Foster Carer/Care Leaver entering into a Staying Put arrangement will be exempted from Council tax.

3.3.3 The following financial cost modelling meets the assumptions outlined in 3.3 to 3.3.2. This is based on the average Council Tax Band C exemption cost. If a Carer is located in a property with a different Council Tax Band this rate will change.

Table 1 below shows that current Tier 1 and Tier 3 Staying Put arrangements will receive a significant increase in annual rate, £6,372 and £4,669 respectively. The current Tier 2, which will convert to Tier 1 standard rate in the proposals, will experience a reduction of £1,428, however this will be offset by the Council tax exemption (applicable to all tiers), resulting in a minimal increase in rate.

Table 1

	Tier 1 Standard	Tier 2 Education (changes to Tier 1 Standard)	Tier 3 Disability/ Vulnerability (changes to Tier 2)
Proposed annual tier payment	15,211.92	15,211.92	16,109.90
Current annual tier payment	8,839.92	16,639.92	11,439.96
Variance of current to proposed	6,372.00	(1,428.00)	4,669.94
Plus Council Tax exemption Band C	1,455.07	1,455.07	1,455.07
Total increase with Council Tax exemption	7,827.07	27.07	6,125.01
Total payment including Council Tax exemption	16,666.99	16,666.99	17,564.97

Table 2 below shows the total cost for 75 Staying Put arrangements per year, based on the current distribution between tiers. Assuming that the new rates commence from 1 October 2018 and the current proportion of tier 1 and tier 2 Staying Put arrangements remains consistent, the proposed rates will be affordable and within the £540k grant.

Table 2

Type	Number of arrangements	Housing Benefit (weekly)	Council Contribution (weekly)	Total weekly payment	90% (of UC/HB claimed on time)
		£	£	£	£
Tier (Standard)	54	768.78	498.88	1,267.66	373,091
Tier (Disability/Vulnerability)	18	768.78	573.71	1,342.49	140,527
Tier (Employed) under 16hrs	2	768.78	498.88	1,267.66	13,818
Tier (Employed) over 16hrs	1	384.39	498.88	883.27	6,448
Total	75				533,885

3.3.4 The proposal will mean that the Staying Put arrangements complete package, including council tax exemption, compares more favourably than present to the foster carer allowance.

Table 3 below shows that Staying Put arrangement tier rates are between £5,000 to £6,000 less than Foster Carer allowance rates and that Disability and Vulnerability Tier 2 rate is 5.39% higher than the Standard Tier 1 rate.

Table 3

Allowance analysis				
	Proposed Carer allow (2% inflation on current allowance)	2018/19 Croydon Council tax - band C	Tier 1 (Standard)	Tier 2 (Disability/ Vulnerability)
	£	£	£	£
In - House Fostering 16 - 18 @ £425.14 per week	433.64	27.91	347.23	365.94
Monthly	1,734.57	121.26	1,388.92	1,463.75
Yearly	22,610.14	£1,455.07	16,666.99	17,564.97

4. 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:

Action	Timeframe
▪ Staying Put policy and guidance updated	July 2018
▪ Briefing for Foster Carers, social workers, key workers, IFAs – meetings, info materials, internet update	July-September 2018
▪ Briefing of Care Leavers – through social workers, key workers, Care leaver App	August-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 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.

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

CONTACT OFFICER: *Wendy Tomlinson, Head of Looked After Children and Resources. X 65413*

REPORT TO:	Corporate Parenting Panel 19th July 2018
SUBJECT:	Children and Social Work Act 2017
LEAD OFFICER:	Philip Segurola Interim Director of Early Help and Children’s Social Care
CABINET MEMBER:	Cllr Flemming Cabinet Member for Children, Young People & Learning
WARDS:	All
CORPORATE PRIORITY/POLICY CONTEXT/AMBITIOUS FOR CROYDON:	
FINANCIAL IMPACT 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 Seven corporate parenting principles to have due regard for when working with looked after children and care leavers.

- Publish a Local Offer of services to care leavers.
- Support care leavers until they are 25, as opposed to 21.
- Promote the educational achievement of looked after and formerly looked after children.
- More attention to the impact on the child when the court is considering making a Care Order under Section 31 of the Children Act 1989, thus placing a child under the care of a local authority.

3. Extended Summary of the Act and Implications for Corporate Parenting

3.1 Looked After Children and Care Leavers

3.1.1 *Corporate Parenting Principles*

Local authorities must have due regard for seven corporate parenting principles, as follows:

- to act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and well-being, of those children and young people
- to encourage those children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings

- to take into account the views, wishes and feelings of those children and young people
- to help those children and young people 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 those children and young people
- for those children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work
- to prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living

For information on implementing these principles, read [Applying corporate parenting principles to looked-after children and care leavers: Statutory guidance for local authorities \(February 2018\)](#).

3.1.2 Care Leavers

Local authorities must publish a ‘Local Offer for Care Leavers’, detailing all services it provides to care leavers, including services related to:

- health and well-being
- relationships
- education and training
- employment
- accommodation
- participation in society

Care leavers are to be supported until the age of 25 with the provision of a Personal Adviser, a needs assessment, a Pathway Plan and general advice and support (previously, support ended at 21, unless the care leaver was in education).

3.1.3 Educational Achievement

- Advice and information must be made available to promote the educational achievement of [relevant children](#). (A relevant child is a 16 or 17-year-old who has been looked after by the local authority for a total period of 13 weeks or more after turning 14, but is **no longer** looked after and **has not** returned home and settled.)
- At least one individual should be hired by the local authority with responsibility for the above.
- Maintained schools must designate a member of staff as being responsible for promoting the education of formerly looked after children.
- Academies must designate a member of staff as being responsible for promoting the education of relevant **and** formerly looked after children.

3.1.4 Care and Adoption Proceedings

- When a court is deciding whether to make a Care Order, it should consider: the impact on the child of any harm suffered or was likely to suffer; current and future needs of the child; and how the long-term plan for the child’s permanence would meet current and future needs.

- During adoption, the court must have due regard for the relationship a child has with any prospective adopter with whom they are placed.

5. CONSULTATION

Not applicable.

6. FINANCIAL AND RISK ASSESSMENT CONSIDERATIONS

Not applicable.

7. COMMENTS OF THE COUNCIL SOLICITOR AND MONITORING OFFICER

Not applicable.

8. HUMAN RESOURCES IMPACT

Not applicable.

9. EQUALITIES IMPACT

Not applicable.

10. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

Not applicable.

11. CRIME AND DISORDER REDUCTION IMPACT

Not applicable.

CONTACT OFFICER: *Philip Segurola, Interim Director of Early Help and Children's Social Care, 0208 726 6000 ext 47688.*

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Agenda Item 8

REPORT TO:	Corporate Parenting Panel 19th July 2018
SUBJECT:	Review of Fostering Services
LEAD OFFICER:	Philip Segurola Interim Director of Early Help and Children's Social Care
CABINET MEMBER:	Cllr Flemming Cabinet Member for Children, Young People & Learning
WARDS:	All

CORPORATE PRIORITY/POLICY CONTEXT/AMBITIOUS FOR CROYDON:

The Single Inspection Framework Inspection undertaken by Ofsted in June 2017 stated: 'many carers feel poorly supported, and the fostering service is not compliant with all regulations.' And recommended that we: "Ensure that the fostering service appropriately supports foster carers and that the work of the service meets all relevant regulations"

The council's Children's improvement Plan, published in November 2017, states that we will

- 1) Ensure that the fostering service meets all nation minimum standards (3.10)
- 2) Develop a fostering service action plan to deliver a good quality service that values foster carers (3.10)
- 3) Engage in house foster carers to monitor progress on the fostering service improvement action plan (3.10)
- 4) Conduct an annual foster carer survey as part of the quality assurance framework (3.10)

FINANCIAL IMPACT

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** The following report serves to update Panel on the progress being made to improve the Local Authority Fostering Service. The panel are requested to note the report.

3. REVIEW OF THE FOSTERING SERVICE

3.1 Overview

- In February 2017, the Local Authority had a whistle blowing complaint on the quality of supervision of foster carers, conduct of foster carers and social workers. An Independent Consultant was appointed to undertake a Review of the Fostering Service in March 2017. The Terms of Reference included face to face consultation, telephone and email exchanges with Foster Carers. Also included was an audit of 40 cases selected by the Safeguarding Service including all cases where there have been referrals to the LADO Service. The audit was undertaken by wide range of managers from Children Services. An Action Plan was developed from the recommendations.
- In June 2017 we had the Ofsted Inspection (SIF). In March 2018, Achieving For Children was commissioned to Review progress of the service and its report is attached to this overview. The findings acknowledged progress since the initial review in 2017. The Service updated its initial Action Plan which is also attached to this report.
- The main recommendation from the Fostering Review and Ofsted was the need to improve our offer of support to foster carers and prioritising our statutory duties. At the end of 2017, we reviewed our annual training module for foster carers with an improved offer for 2018. In September 2017, we held a Consultation Session with our Connected Carers which led to the introduction of a quarterly Support Group run by Fostering Managers. From January 2018, our policy is to allocate Supervising Social Workers to all Connected Carers who are undergoing assessments. This approach has promoted early stability of placements, provided early support to Connected Carers and safeguarded children.
- As at 29th June 2018, Croydon has 229 fostering households with 326 children placed in-house. There is an increased need for foster placement in Croydon as a high proportion of our Looked After Children are placed in foster care. Croydon has one of the largest fostering households in the country with a high retention rate (95%) and continues to be attractive to foster carers. In the future we would like to attract families for local children and young people with complex needs, Including behavioral needs and those at risk of Child Sexual Exploitation and gang involvement. We would also like to be able to keep more siblings together and provide for assessment of adult parents and babies.
- The Service undertook a confidential online survey of foster carers and 69% of them said the service they receive is either 'Good' or 'Very Good'. In addition, foster carers requested a review of the Council's Staying Put offer to foster carers. The review have been completed and is awaiting approval of Corporate Parenting Panel.
- In response to demand from foster carers and social workers across the service, we have reviewed the Local Authority Policy on Savings for all Looked After Children. The plan is for the new policy to become live by 1st August 2018.
- In 2017, we introduced a monthly rota of managers attending Croydon Foster Carers Association (CFCA) monthly Support Group. These sessions provide

foster carers an opportunity to raise issues of concern, improve communication and consultation on how we can improve the service. The rota includes Wendy Tomlinson and Philip Segurola. In response to the request from foster carers, we are inviting HOS and Service Managers across Children Services to these sessions.

3.2 Fostering Panel

- The ADM and Independent Chair of Fostering Panel has continued to have quarterly meetings to review the work of the panel, share information about QA and any developments in the service. The Independent Chair of the panel also contributed to the case audit during the Review of the service in 2017.
- The service have introduced a Matching Panel as a response to the high number of children in foster care who have not achieved permanency. During 2017, we were able to achieve a successful long term match for 25 children with care plans for long term fostering. The panel has proved to be very popular among children and foster carers. We have reviewed our procedures on achieving permanency for children in long term fostering.
- Staff Sickness has reduced dramatically with staff feeling more confident and proud to be part of the service. Staff were open and engaging during the two Fostering Reviews and poor practice is regularly challenged. Managers are able to challenge unacceptable standards of practice and support is available to resolve complaints in a timely manner.
- We have introduced a quarterly Newsletter to improve communication with foster carers and the recent award of an MBE to one of our foster carer was the highlight of the year.
- We are reviewing our practice in line with the Strengthening Families model across Children's Services and it will impact on how we fulfil our aspirations for our children and young people. The approach is to provide systemic, strengths and relationship-based support to all our children, young people and families.

3.3 Recruitment & Assessment

- Going forward, the Council is currently reviewing its plans for achieving its sufficiency of placements. The need to recruit adequate foster carers to meet the rising needs of our children is a high priority and the service will be working with third parties to bring the service in house by 2020. We have a stable staff with high percentage of permanency and we continue to review training needs of staff members to ensure we are in a position to meet the challenges of children with complex needs.

4. CONSULTATION

N/A

5. FINANCIAL AND RISK ASSESSMENT CONSIDERATIONS

N/A

6. COMMENTS OF THE COUNCIL SOLICITOR AND MONITORING OFFICER

N/A

7. HUMAN RESOURCES IMPACT

N/A

8. EQUALITIES IMPACT

N/A

9. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

N/A

10. CRIME AND DISORDER REDUCTION IMPACT

N/A

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APPENDICES TO THIS REPORT

1. Fostering Action Plan 2018
2. Review of the Fostering Services by achieving for children

AFC Recommendations (These targets were set by staff at Service Away Day in May 2018)

Fostering Plan

	Recommendations	Activity	Lead	Complete By	RAG	
A	Review all Safer Caring Agreements to ensure they are specific to each child in the foster care placement and that they contain all necessary information relevant to the safe care of the individual child.	Evidence of a reviewed and updated child specific Safer Caring agreement on file.	SSW/UM	31/7/2018		
B	Develop and implement management guidance about the expectations of supervising social workers when they are on duty in the fostering service; in particular, provide clarity on the level of support they should be providing to foster carers when their allocated supervising social worker is absent from work.	Email guidance to every SSW and copy on the duty desk.	SM	14/05/2018		
C	Provide support to supervising social workers and managers in the fostering service to understand their role in ensuring appropriate and timely permanency planning for all children and young people in care, including those in connected person placements; strengthen management oversight of permanency planning for individual children in the fostering service through regular tracking during casework supervision.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing task group to strengthen LA practice & procedures. Appointment of BS to collate, track and allocate cases for Matching Panel and monitoring of Permanency Planning. Targets for Matching Reports for children in placement over 8 months. 	SM/HOS Business Case to HOS/Director SSW/UM	31/07/2018 30/06/2018 31/07/2018		

D	Develop and maintain profiles for all foster carers to support and improve the matching process; ensure that matching decisions are clearly recorded and evidence the rationale for the placement, as well the risk assessment and support plan for the foster carer(s).	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review of all foster carers profiles. 2. Discussions and approval of all matching criteria. 	<p>UM to identify names of outstanding Foster carers</p> <p>SSW/Duty UM</p>	<p>31/07/2018</p> <p>Ongoing</p>		
E	Consider revising the supervision template used by the fostering service to reflect the approach of the Strengthening Families practice framework, and to cover the 12 child-focused domains in the National Minimum Standards, so that there is a clear focus on the impact that the fostering service is making on improved outcomes for the child; ensure that supervision and annual appraisal has an appropriate focus on the learning and development needs of supervising social workers and managers.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Supervision Template has been updated and reflects Strengthening Families module. 2. Supervision to reflect NMS standards. 3. Training on NMS and Fostering Regulations 	<p>CRS</p> <p>UM</p> <p>SM/CORAMBAAF</p>	<p>Completed</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>03/07/2018</p>		
F	Ensure that all foster carers have a training, support and development Plan that is developed at the point of their approval, reviewed during supervision, and updated annually as part of their annual foster home review; ensure that the training offered to foster carers is tailored to their identified needs, including the provision of specialist training for those carers supporting children and young people with more complex needs.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review of TSD and Training Plan in supervision. 2. Foster carers and SSWs to have joint training on NMS 	<p>UM to review training during annual review.</p> <p>SM/CORAMBAAF</p>	<p>15/08/2018</p> <p>30/08/2018</p>		
G	Review all foster care placements to ensure that foster carers have been provided with information about delegated authority and that formal agreements are in place for them to have authority to make everyday decisions about the children and	Ongoing review of all Delegated Authority to ensure they are specific to the child.	SSW/UM	15/08/2018		

	young people in their care, including overnight stays and going in school trips.					
H	Develop recording guidance for supervising social workers and managers that sets out the standards for case recording so that information and key documents are recorded in the correct section of the case record; ensure that recording is reflective, analytical and demonstrates impact; and ensure that the guidance makes clear the expectation that managers record their oversight, direction and decision-making as a separate case note.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Development of guidance on case recording. 2. Review of Matching Criteria and Management Oversight 	<p>UMs/SM</p> <p>SSW and Duty UM. Hale Longpet</p>	<p>31/07/2018</p> <p>31/07/2018</p>		Completed
I	Review the current policy on allowances for connected person carers to provide the assurance that these allowances are equal with those for mainstream foster carers and comply with regulations and the National Minimum Standards.	Connected Carers not receiving full allowances to be supported to complete TSDs.	SSW/UM	30/06/2018		TSD completed by those affected; 30/12/18
J	Ensure that annual foster care reviews are completed within timescale; consider whether reviews should be completed independently of the allocated supervising social worker, and whether they should be considered by the Fostering Panel beyond the first and third reviews to provide additional scrutiny.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Complete all outstanding ARs. 2. Business Case for recruitment of Independent Reviewer of ARs. 	<p>SSW/UM</p> <p>SM/Director</p>	<p>31/07/2018</p> <p>30/09/2018</p>		
K	Support supervising social workers to develop a clear understanding of the regulations governing fostering services, as well as local policies and practice guidance; ensure that there is appropriate induction for new supervising social workers in the fostering service (including agency social workers); and ensure that managers have opportunities to meet and work collaboratively so that there is	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Training on Fostering Regulations/NMS. 2. Staff Induction Pack. 3. Collaborative and consistent 	<p>SM/CORAMBAAF</p> <p>Joan JM</p> <p>Fostering Management/360 Feedback</p>	<p>31/08/2018</p> <p>31/05/2018</p> <p>31/07/2018</p>		<p>3rd July Training</p> <p>Completed</p>

	consistent application of practice across the fostering service.	management approach.				
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Review of the Fostering Service in the London Borough of Croydon

Introduction

RIKS Consultancy Ltd completed an independent audit of the fostering service in March 2017. The audit followed the publication of a Serious Case Review of a child, known as Claire, who was sexually abused by her foster carer, and the receipt of an anonymous complaint making allegations of poor practice in the fostering service and by some foster carers. The audit involved: a review of 40 cases; interviews with supervising social workers, foster carers, children in care and independent reviewing officers; and consultation with the Croydon Foster Care Association. The resulting report made thirteen recommendations to improve practice in the fostering service. An action plan was developed in response to the independent audit report in April 2017.

Ofsted inspected the effectiveness of services for children in need of help and protection, Looked after children and care leavers in July 2017, and found them to be inadequate. The inspection report recognised that foster carers were providing good quality care to children and young people; however, it also identified dissatisfaction and a lack of support for foster carers, and noted that the fostering service was not compliant with regulatory standards. The action plan from the independent audit was updated to include the recommendations from the Ofsted inspection.

Achieving for Children was commissioned to complete a review of the fostering service in January 2018. The purpose of the review was twofold: (a) to understand the progress that has been made by the service in implementing the improvements identified in the action plan; and (b) to review compliance with the Care Planning, Placements and Review (England) Regulations 2010, the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 and the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services issued under the Care Standards Act 2000. This report sets out the findings from this independent review which was completed in March 2018. Achieving for Children is a community interest company that delivers children's services for the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames, the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames and the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead. The company also provides improvement consultancy to a number of local authorities to support the Department for Education's interventions unit and as part of the national Partners in Practice programme.

Context

There were 778 looked after children in Croydon in January 2018; this includes a high number of unaccompanied asylum seeking children. There were 246 fostering households comprising 367 individual foster carers. 392 looked after children (58%) were placed with an in-house foster family, of which 66 were connected person placements and three were foster to adopt placements. Support to foster carers is provided by 18 supervising social workers, who are organised in three teams (or units) each led by a Unit Manager. The Unit Managers report to the Service Leader for the Fostering Service. A fourth unit within the service is responsible for searching for and identifying suitable placements for children; this includes in-house foster

care placements, independent fostering agency placements and residential care placements. Foster carer recruitment is outsourced to NRS Foster Care Recruitment.

Methodology

The review involved auditing the cases of 12 children supported by the fostering service. The cases were selected from a list of all children placed with in-house foster carers or connected persons. The cases were selected using the following criteria:

Cat.	Description	Number
A	Children placed in a connected persons placement	3
B	Children placed in an in-house foster care placement for 6 or more years	2
C	Children placed in an in-house foster care placement for 2 to 6 years	2
D	Children placed in an in-house foster care placement for 0 to 2 years	2
E	Unaccompanied asylum seeking children placed in in-house foster care	2
F	Placement with a complaint or LADO investigation against a foster carer	1
Total cases to be reviewed		12

Based on these criteria, the following cases were reviewed. The cases were also selected to provide cases held by different supervising social workers from all three units to ensure a fair reflection of social work practice across the fostering service.

Case	Cat.	Child CRS ID	Foster Carer	Social Worker	Unit
1	A	179998	EM	SM	3
2	A	2117665	KH	HT	2
3	A	2121488	SA	MS	1
4	B	2086682	JA	AC	1
5	B	165432	RG	ES	1
6	C	2506955	AM	GP	1
7	C	185579	CB	WG	1
8	D	2151428	AG	JP	1
9	D	2174366	DC	EW	2
10	E	2155323	SM	SE	2
11	E	2540824	JS	CR	2
12	F	2535477	SS	BM	3

The case reviews were completed alongside the supervising social workers using a standard audit template based on the child-focused and service standards in the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services. The reviewers also examined the case records for the child and foster carer to support their case discussions with the supervising social workers. Interviews were also completed with the three Unit Managers to test out current practice and emerging themes from the case reviews. A desktop review was completed of the strategies, policies, operating protocols and practice guidance in place in the fostering service.

The reviewers also focused on assessing the impact of the action plan that has been in place since April 2017 following the independent audit. The action plan has these improvement areas:

No.	Improvement area	Current status
11.2	Training and guidance for supervising social workers on the use of the CRS to improve recording practice.	In progress
11.3	Regular supervision of supervising social workers in line with the supervision policy.	In progress
11.4	Case records need to evidence matching considerations when making placements, and include risk assessments.	Completed
11.5	An improved relationship and communication between the fostering service and the Looked After Children (LAC) teams, including supervising social workers attending LAC reviews.	Completed
11.6	Foster carers should have an agreed training, support and development plan which is regularly reviewed.	Completed
11.7	Supervising social workers should ensure that all members of the fostering household are visited regularly and their views obtained and recorded.	In progress
11.8	The fostering service needs to have an increased role in permanency planning for Looked after children.	In progress
11.9	Foster carer reviews must take place within timescale and be inclusive of all members of the fostering household.	In progress
11.10	Complaints about foster carers must be dealt with fairly and robustly, with the outcome communicated and recorded.	In progress
11.11	Consultation with foster carers of unaccompanied asylum seeking children to determine whether additional support is required.	In progress
11.12	Information on delegated authority should be more widely shared with foster carers, especially in relation to overnight stays.	Completed

Findings

What's working well?

Finding 1: There was a strong focus on the hearing and responding to the views, wishes and feelings of children and young people in foster care. Supervising social workers know children and young people well and are able to talk knowledgeably about their histories, needs, plans and aspirations. Most case recording evidences that children and young people are consulted about the care and support that they receive, and direct work is meaningfully used to explore their views, wishes and feelings. Observations are appropriately recorded in the large majority of cases. There is evidence to show how foster carers and supervising social workers have responded positively to children's and young people's wishes, or have explained the reasons why this is not possible.

Finding 2: Children are safe in their placements and foster carers have an appropriate focus on safeguarding children and young people. The safe and caring relationships and homes that foster carers provide to children is evident in the case recording. There are Safer Caring Agreements in place for all children and young people; however, these tend to be generic and are not focused on the individual needs of each child. **(Recommendation A).** Agreements include actions to safeguard children inside and outside the home and when using the Internet and social media. Foster carers seek information and advice from their supervising social workers on safeguarding issues, and risk assessments and referrals are made when there are concerns, including when children go missing from their placement, or are at risk of sexual exploitation. Only one young person in the sample had been missing and appropriate local procedures were followed and a safety plan developed. Foster carers have received training in safer caring and safeguarding, and the very large majority have received training in managing challenging behaviour. There was no evidence that foster carers caring for children with disabilities had received specialist safeguarding training. In two cases, an allegation had been made against a carer for physical abuse. In both cases, a referral was made to the Designated Officer and appropriate action was taken; neither allegation was substantiated. The management of complaints and allegations against foster carers has improved since the independent audit made a recommendation (11.10) to improve practice in this area.

Finding 3: Foster carers are committed to supporting and achieving positive outcomes for the children and young people in their care. Foster carers are engaged with the fostering service and the very large majority work constructively with supervising social workers to provide excellent standards of care. The retention rate for foster carers is high at 97%. There is good evidence that foster carers are proactive in seeking support for young people's education, health and leisure interests. Foster carers routinely attend LAC reviews and Personal Education Plan (PEP) meetings. There were issues with 3 foster carers (25%) completing foster carer logs with little challenge or follow-up from the supervising social worker; however, notifications of significant events were routinely made to supervising social workers.

Finding 4: Placement plans are completed and regularly reviewed. The majority of children's placement plans are completed promptly following a placement planning meeting. In the sample four placement plans (33%) had been delayed. Plans are updated every six months following the review of the child's care plan at the LAC review. Placement plans are of variable quality and detail; however, foster carers actively contribute to placement plans which also reflect the wishes and feelings of children and young people. Stability meetings are held when appropriate; this has proved effective in two cases within the sample which had prevented placement breakdown.

Finding 5: Children and young people are provided with care that promotes their cultural heritage and identity. Although not all children are in culturally-matched placements, there is good evidence that foster carers are promoting and meeting their identity needs. Examples include: meeting the dietary and religious needs of an unaccompanied asylum seeking child; teaching two Black African children to treat and care for their own hair; and supporting individual children's choices about their clothes and personal interests.

Finding 6: Foster carers have access to good multi-agency support for the children and young people in their care. There is good evidence that children and young people are supported in their education, health and leisure interests. The support provided by the LAC nurse and the Virtual School is effective; the work by the Virtual School to support the education and vocational training of unaccompanied asylum seeking children is particularly noteworthy. Personal Education Plans were in place for the very large majority of children (84%). Foster carers and supervising social workers are identifying specific support needs and are making appropriate referrals for services; for example, a supervising social worker researching and making a referral for support with faecal smearing. Individual support is available to foster carers from CAMHS for issues with children's and young people's emotional development and challenging behaviour.

Finding 7: Visits by supervising social workers are regular and most are meaningful. Visits happen every four to six weeks. The majority of visits are announced. Unannounced visits are not yet consistent: 75% of cases in the sample (9) had at least one unannounced visit each year in line with the agreed practice standard. Supervising social workers routinely speak to children and young people during these visits and there is evidence that they speak to them alone. They also generally see and speak with all members of the foster care household. This is an improvement since the independent audit which made a recommendation (11.7) on this area of practice. There is evidence of regular joint visits between the child's social worker and the supervising social worker which are positive for improving communication, consistent messaging and coordinated working. Visits are largely meaningful in identifying the support needed by foster carers (including their training and development needs) and in provide strategies on managing difficult issues, such as school refusal and challenging behaviour. There has been historic delay in actioning some of the support required by foster carers, including making referrals to other agencies, which has left carers feeling frustrated and unsupported. This has not been helped by changes in supervising social workers. More recent casework indicates that this situation is improving. Supervising social workers are beginning to have more challenging conversations with foster carers about non-compliance and delays to implementing changes. There is a lack of clarity about the support available to foster carers when their supervising social worker is absent on leave or through ill health. A duty system is

in place; however, the expectations of supervising social workers on duty are unclear and have resulted in a lack of support to some foster carers. **(Recommendation B)**.

Finding 8: Supervising social workers support foster carers to promote and maintain family contacts and relationships. This includes contact with parents, grandparents, siblings, wider family and friends. Contact arrangements are clearly set out in the placement plan for all children and are evidenced in the case recording. All contact arrangements comply with court orders and the child's or young person's care plan. Further work could be done by supervising social workers to support those foster carers, particularly connected person carers, who are finding it difficult to manage emotional issues resulting from contact.

Finding 9: The support provided to help young people plan for independence and adulthood is good. An independence checklist has been completed for all relevant young people in the sample and in the remaining cases foster carers are supporting younger children with early independence skills such as their personal care. There was good evidence that young people were being supported to develop practical independent living skills, financial capability and appropriate social and sexual relationships. The Virtual School is working effectively to support young people in education and training. Staying Put arrangements are in place in two cases and are supporting young people in their transition to independence and in meeting their aspirations for adulthood.

Finding 10: There is an improved working relationship between the fostering team and the Looked after children (LAC) team. Supervising social workers reported that they had positive working relationships with social workers responsible for Looked after children. This was evident in joint visits and joint work to achieve permanency for children and young people. This is an improvement since the independent audit made a recommendation (11.5) to improve practice in this area. Communication between social workers has also improved; however, there remains too much emphasis on foster carers relaying information about children to their supervising social worker, including extending invitations to key meetings such as LAC reviews, rather than communication and information-sharing happening directly between professionals.

What are we worried about?

Finding 11: Permanency planning processes are not yet fully embedded meaning that permanent placements for some children and young people have not been secured in a timely way. Revised permanency planning guidance was issued by the Head of Service for LAC in March 2017. The guidance sets out the expectation that all children aged 5 and under will have a permanency planning meeting (PPM) within 15 days of becoming looked after to ensure their permanence is planned and achieved in a timely manner; subsequent PPMs should be held five days after every LAC review until the child's permanence is achieved. For children aged 6 and over, a PPM should be held 15 days after their second LAC review and every subsequent review. Each PPM should be attended by the child's social worker and their unit manager, the supervising social worker from the fostering service and the social worker responsible for family finding. The PPM is chaired by the Unit Manager or a duty manager from within the same service. There was evidence of effective permanence planning in five (42%) of the sampled cases. There was an improved picture for children who had more

recently come into care, indicating that the process is not yet fully embedded within the fostering service. Supervising social workers are not routinely attending PPMs and are not able to consistently explain the agreed processes for securing permanency, indicating a need for training and development in this area. Some progress has been made in this area since the independent audit which made a recommendation (11.8) to improve this area of practice. There was a lack of permanency planning for children and young people living in connected person placements, particularly in relation to agreeing special guardianship arrangements for children (see CRS 179998 and 2121488). **(Recommendation C)**.

Finding 12: There is no established process for matching children with their foster care families. Searches for foster care placements are completed by family finding social workers in the Business Relationships Team (BRT). The BRT is supported by a duty supervising social worker on a rota basis. The placement plan is used as a checklist for matching a child to a foster carer when they come into care. Available foster carer placements are listed on a duty board which is updated by the BRT. Initial matching is primarily informed by the knowledge of foster carers held by the manager in the BRT and by the supervising social workers and their unit managers, rather than the team having access to updated foster carer profiles to inform the matching process. The impact is that initial placements can be based solely on availability and/or a partial knowledge of foster carer(s), meaning that some children have experienced one or more placement moves during their initial time in care due to a poor match. The recording of initial matching is limited and there are no formal matching reports. A recommendation with rationale to match a child with a particular foster carer is sent in an email to the fostering duty manager for approval. There was very limited evidence that the decision was recorded on the child's or the foster carer's electronic record as management oversight. This was a recommendation (11.4) in the independent audit about the matching process and limited progress appears to have been made over the last 12 months. **(Recommendation D)**. Long-term matching of foster care placements is discussed in supervision with the foster carer and at the annual foster home review. Unit Managers explained that there is an expectation that long-term matching would be discussed with the foster carer once the child had been in the placement for six months. There was evidence in the case recording that these discussions are taking place with foster carers. There is a template matching report. Long-term matches have not been consistently considered at the Fostering Panel and approved by the agency decision-maker (CRS 2117665; 2506955; and 2155323); however, this has improved in the last 12 months. There is a clear process for agreeing connected person placements. Initial checks and a viability assessment are completed to provide 16-week temporary approval in line with Regulation 24 of the Care Planning, Placement and Review Regulations 2010. Full assessments are then completed by an independent social worker and reported to the Fostering Panel and Agency Decision Maker for approval. This process had been followed in all three connected person cases within the sample.

Finding 13: Management oversight and direction is inconsistent across the fostering service. There is differing decision-making between Unit Managers in relation to casework. Management oversight is absent or inadequately recorded on the foster carer's record with an over-reliance on supervision notes to record management direction and decisions. **(Recommendation H)**. Personal supervision is regular. This is an improvement since the recommendation (11.3) in the independent audit; however, supervision lacks a sufficient focus on casework. In two cases in the sample (17%), case supervision has not happened since

2016. Supervision would also benefit from being more reflective and from using a consistent supervision model or approach. The implementation of the Strengthening Families practice framework should provide this opportunity. The supervision template has been adapted by Unit Managers to meet their individual preferences. A standard template should be used and would benefit from being based on the 12 child-focused standards in the National Minimum Standards. **(Recommendation E).**

Finding 14: Not all foster carers had a completed Training, Support and Development (TSD) Plan. There is limited evidence that the TSD has informed the training and support needs of each foster carer, nor that supervision has consistently used to identify and promote training to foster carers. **(Recommendation F).** This issue was identified in the independent audit (recommendation 11.6) and limited progress has been made in the last 12 months. There is an effective core training offer available to foster carers covering key areas such as safer caring, first aid, safeguarding, attachment and managing challenging behaviour. There is only one example in the sample of specific training being provided to a foster carer; this was training on medication and behaviour management techniques to support a child with a complex disability. Most supervising social workers noted the need for more specialist training for experienced foster carers and those supporting children and young people with more complex needs and challenging behaviours. There is a mentoring scheme, a support group led by the Croydon Foster Care Association (CFCA), and a support group for connected person carers, but wider support groups and networks are not in place. All foster carers had back-up carers to provide additional support when required.

Finding 15: There is limited evidence that foster carers are being given formal delegated authority to make everyday decisions about the child or young person in their care. Formal delegated authority for decision-making had been given to three foster carers (25%) and recorded on the file using a tick-list template. There was evidence in the case recording that delegated authority had been discussed with the foster carer in a further six cases (50%) but this was not formally agreed and recorded. The majority of recorded discussions related to foster carers requesting advice on overnight stays which echoes the finding (11.13) in the independent audit. **(Recommendation G).**

Finding 16: Supervising social workers do not have access to training that meet their specific learning and development needs. There was limited evidence that appraisals or personal supervision involved meaningful discussion about the learning and development needs of supervising social workers and managers. New social workers spoke about the lack of induction into their roles and the service; and managers spoke about the lack of developmental support when stepping up into management roles. Supervising social workers and managers had received important service-wide training on the Strengthening Families practice model, the neglect toolkit, and child trafficking, but there was limited fostering-specific training available to practitioners, for example through BAAF or The Fostering Network. Supervising social workers reported that they would be able to better support foster carers if they had improved access to specialist training.

Finding 17: Case recording insufficiently records the actions of supervising social workers, and does not include all relevant documents. There is differentiation in the standard and quality of case recording by supervising social workers. The large majority of case records were up-to-date and included key documents; however, it did not consistently reflect the

work that supervising social workers were completing with foster carers and the impact that this is having on children in their care. Case recording would benefit from being more reflective and analytical. Most case recording lacked management oversight. Case recording was identified as an issue in the independent audit (11.2) and there has been some progress in addressing this over the last 12 months. **(Recommendation H)**.

Finding 18: It is unclear whether foster care allowances for mainstream foster carers and connected person carers are equal and therefore compliant with regulations. The current foster care allowances are set out in the table below. The allowances exceed the minimum weekly fostering allowance rate set by the Department for Education (www.gov.uk/foster-carers/help-with-the-cost-of-fostering) and compare favourably with other local authorities in London and the south-east. The service has a policy that connected person carers receive the basis maintenance allowance (shown below) until the completion of their Training, Development and Support Plan (TSD) during their first year. The service reports that the large majority of connected person carers receive the same allowance rate as mainstream foster carers. The service should assure itself that the current policy fully complies with NMS 28.7 and is consistently applied across the service. **(Recommendation I)**.

Age differentiated weekly allowances				
Type of carer	Age 0-4	Age 5-10	Age 11-15	Age 16-18
Connected person carer	£161.27	£187.10	£233.04	£296.96
Level 1 foster carer (standard)	£346.76	£346.76	£346.76	£425.14
Level 2 foster carer (enhanced)	£390.95	£419.65	£481.86	£516.32

Finding 19: Annual foster care reviews are not held within timescales and are not considered by the Fostering Panel with appropriate regularity. Annual foster home reviews are completed by the supervising social worker and approved by the Unit Manager. Reviews were of variable quality and detail, although they did involve consultation with the foster carer(s), the child or young person in the placement and their allocated social worker; they also considered recent changes in the household and placement, any training and development completed by the foster carer(s), and their access to support. Supervising social workers reported that the current policy was for the first and third reviews to be considered by the Fostering Panel. The fostering regulations require that the first review should be considered by the Panel to determine whether the foster carer's approval should continue and whether there should be any changes to the approval. There is no legal requirement for subsequent reviews to be considered by the Panel unless there are significant changes to the household or the carer's approval, although this would be good practice. There was notable delay in the completion of annual foster home reviews in 67% (8) of the sampled cases, with evidence that only 75% (9) had been considered by the Fostering Panel. Limited progress has been made in this area since the independent audit which made a recommendation (11.9) to improve the timeliness and participation in reviews. The drift in the completion of annual foster home reviews and the lack of independent review or scrutiny of foster carers beyond their first review is a concern. **(Recommendation J)**. There was a clear process for changes to

foster carer approvals and exemptions, with the Service Manager agreeing emergency placements outside the terms of a foster carer's approval for a maximum of six days in line with Regulation 23 of the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010. Approval changes and exemptions are approved by the Head of Service as Agency Decision-Making using a standard template. One case was identified where there was no evidence of a change in age approval for a foster carer (CRS 2174366).

Finding 20: Social workers and managers are not consistently aware of the regulations and standards for fostering services, and the local policies and practice guidance available to support them. There is a clear Statement of Purpose for the Fostering Service (2017/18) and a Children's Guide to being looked after (undated). The statement of purpose is in the process of being updated for 2018/19. There are guidance and policies for supervising social workers and managers in the procedures manual (www.proceduresonline.com/croydon). This cover services for Looked after children, permanency planning and placements in foster care. Guidance is also available in the manual in relation to specific circumstances, such as support for connected persons and staying put arrangements. However, there is a lack of consistent awareness and application of regulations, local policies and practice standards by supervising social workers and, as noted in finding 13, management decision-making can be inconsistent. **(Recommendation K).**

Recommendations

What needs to change?

- A. Review all Safer Caring Agreements to ensure they are specific to each child in the foster care placement and that they contain all necessary information relevant to the safe care of the individual child.
- B. Develop and implement management guidance about the expectations of supervising social workers when they are on duty in the fostering service; in particular, provide clarity on the level of support they should be providing to foster carers when their allocated supervising social worker is absent from work.
- C. Provide support to supervising social workers and managers in the fostering service to understand their role in ensuring appropriate and timely permanency planning for all children and young people in care, including those in connected person placements; strengthen management oversight of permanency planning for individual children in the fostering service through regular tracking during casework supervision.
- D. Develop and maintain profiles for all foster carers to support and improve the matching process; ensure that matching decisions are clearly recorded and evidence the rationale for the placement, as well the risk assessment and support plan for the foster carer(s).

- E. Consider revising the supervision template used by the fostering service to reflect the approach of the Strengthening Families practice framework, and to cover the 12 child-focused domains in the National Minimum Standards, so that there is a clear focus on the impact that the fostering service is making on improved outcomes for the child; ensure that supervision and annual appraisal has an appropriate focus on the learning and development needs of supervising social workers and managers.
- F. Ensure that all foster carers have a training, support and development Plan that is developed at the point of their approval, reviewed during supervision, and updated annually as part of their annual foster home review; ensure that the training offered to foster carers is tailored to their identified needs, including the provision of specialist training for those carers supporting children and young people with more complex needs.
- G. Review all foster care placements to ensure that foster carers have been provided with information about delegated authority and that formal agreements are in place for them to have authority to make everyday decisions about the children and young people in their care, including overnight stays and going in school trips.
- H. Develop recording guidance for supervising social workers and managers that sets out the standards for case recording so that information and key documents are recorded in the correct section of the case record; ensure that recording is reflective, analytical and demonstrates impact; and ensure that the guidance makes clear the expectation that managers record their oversight, direction and decision-making as a separate case note.
- I. Review the current policy on allowances for connected person carers to provide the assurance that these allowances are equal with those for mainstream foster carers and comply with regulations and the National Minimum Standards.
- J. Ensure that annual foster care reviews are completed within timescale; consider whether reviews should be completed independently of the allocated supervising social worker, and whether they should be considered by the Fostering Panel beyond the first and third reviews to provide additional scrutiny.
- K. Support supervising social workers to develop a clear understanding of the regulations governing fostering services, as well as local policies and practice guidance; ensure that there is appropriate induction for new supervising social workers in the fostering service (including agency social workers); and ensure that managers have opportunities to meet and work collaboratively so that there is consistent application of practice across the fostering service.

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23 April 2018

Annex A – National Minimum Standards

The tables below set out the fostering service’s compliance with the fostering regulations set out in the NMS for Fostering Services using a RAG rating system. A green RAG-rating indicates the service is fully compliant with the relevant standard. A RAG-rating of amber indicates that the service must take action to ensure that full compliance with the standard is achieved. No standards were RAG-rated as red (total non-compliance). The letter reference in the RAG-rating column links to the recommendation in this report aimed at securing full compliance.

Child-Focused Standards

No.	Standard	RAG-rating
1.	The child’s wishes and feelings	Green
2.	Promoting positive identity, potential and valuing diversity	Green
3.	Promoting positive behaviour and relationships	Green
4.	Safeguarding children	Amber (A)
5.	Children missing from care	Green
6.	Promoting good health and wellbeing	Green
7.	Leisure activities	Green
8.	Promoting educational attainment	Green
9.	Promoting and supporting contact	Green
10.	Providing a suitable physical environment	Green
11.	Preparation for a placement	Amber (C) (D)
12.	Promoting independence and moves to adulthood	Green

Standards for Fostering Services

No.	Standard	RAG-rating
13.	Recruiting and assessing foster carers	Amber
14.	Fostering Panels and decision-making	Amber (J)
15.	Matching a child with a placement that meets their needs	Amber (D)
16.	Statement of purpose and children’s guide	Green
17.	Fitness to manage the administration of a fostering service	Green

18.	Financial viability and business continuity	Green
19.	Suitability to work with children	Green
20.	Learning and development of foster carers	Amber (F)
21.	Supervision and support for foster carers	Amber (B) (G) (K)
22.	Handling allegations and suspicions of harm	Green
23.	Learning development and qualification of staff	Amber (E)
24.	Staff support and supervision	Amber (B) (E)
25.	Managing effectively and efficiently	Amber (H) (K)
26.	Recording	Amber (H)
27.	Fitness of premises for use as a fostering service	Green
28.	Payment to carers	Amber (I)
29.	Notification of significant events	Green
30.	Family and friends as foster carers	Amber (C) (I)
31.	Placement plan and review	Green

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Corporate Parenting Panel Work Programme 2018/19

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

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

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