

Corporate Parenting Panel Agenda



To: Councillor Alisa Flemming (Chair)
Councillors Shafi Khan, Janet Campbell, Bernadette Khan, Jerry Fitzpatrick,
Maria Gatlant and Helen Redfern

Co-optee Members

Virtual School: Shelley Davies, Angela Griffiths, Sarah Bailey;
CLA Designated Health Professionals: Dr Julia Simpson, Fiona Simmons
Health Commissioners: Amanda Tuke, Pasquale Brammer, Laura Saunders
Health Providers: Lyn Glover, Sue Goode
EMPIRE: Young People and Council Staff
Care Leaver Representative; Ashleigh Searle
Foster Carer Representatives: Angela Christmas, Manny Kwamin and
Martin William (Chair of Foster Carers Association);

A meeting of the **Corporate Parenting Panel** which you are hereby summoned to attend, will be held on **Wednesday, 4 March 2020 at 5.00 pm** in **F10, Town Hall, Katharine Street, Croydon CR0 1NX**

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

Michelle Ossei-Gerning
020 8726 6000 x84246
michelle.gerning@croydon.gov.uk
www.croydon.gov.uk/meetings
Tuesday, 25 February 2020

Members of the public are welcome to attend this meeting.
If you would like to record the meeting, we ask that you read the guidance on the recording of public meetings [here](#) before attending.
The agenda papers for all Council meetings are available on the Council website www.croydon.gov.uk/meetings

If you require any assistance, please contact Michelle Ossei-Gerning
020 8726 6000 x84246 as detailed above

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 - 14)

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 15 January 2020 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. Update on actions agreed at previous meeting(s)

**6. Young people Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET)
(Pages 15 - 20)**

The report of Young People Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) as requested from the last Panel meeting, is attached.

7. Children in Care Performance Scorecard (Pages 21 - 24)

The Children in Care Performance Scorecard for January 2020 is attached.

8. The National Pledge, Croydon Commitment to Children in Care and the Local Offer for Care Leavers (Pages 25 - 36)

A report of The National Pledge, Croydon Commitment to Children in Care and the Local Offer for Care Leavers is attached.

9. Young Director (Pages 37 - 40)

The report of the Young Director is attached.

10. Annual Report of Fostering Service and Panel (Pages 41 - 54)

The Annual Report of Fostering Service and Panel is attached.

11. Fostering Service Statement of Purpose (Pages 55 - 70)

The Fostering Service Statement of Purpose is attached.

12. 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.

13. Work Programme (Pages 71 - 72)

To consider and approve the Panel's work programme for the municipal year 2019/20.

14. 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.”

This page is intentionally left blank

Agenda Item 2

Corporate Parenting Panel

Meeting of Corporate Parenting Panel held on Wednesday, 15 January 2020 at 5.00 pm
in F10, Town Hall, Katharine Street, Croydon CR0 1NX

MINUTES

Present: Councillor Alisa Flemming (Chair);

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

Co-optee Members

Virtual School: Shelley Davies, Angela Griffiths, Sarah Bailey;
CLA Designated Health Professionals: Dr Julia Simpson, Fiona Simmons

Health Commissioners: Amanda Tuke

EMPIRE: Young People and Council Staff

Care Leaver Representative; Ashleigh Searle

Foster Carer Representatives: Angela Christmas and Manny Kwamin

Also

Present: Nick Pendry (Director of Early Help and Children's social Care)
Vanessa Strang (Head of Social Work with Children Looked After and Care Leavers)
Laura Saunders (Senior Commissioning Manager)
Pasquale Brammer (Head of Commissioning and Procurement Children's, Family and Education)
Ian Forbes (Service Manager – Children Families and Education)

Apologies: Councillor Bernadette Khan

PART A

1/20 Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 November 2019 were agreed as an accurate record.

2/20 Disclosures of interest

There were none.

3/20 Urgent Business (if any)

There was none.

4/20 Update on actions agreed at previous meeting(s)

The officers updated the Panel with the status of the actions agreed at the previous Corporate Parenting Panel:

Children in Care Performance Card:

- 1. For a report of the timescales to report back to Committee (for confidence and reassurance that the pathway plans is scrutinised).*

The quality and timeliness around the completion of performance cards were significantly improving, and new care plans had been co-designed with care leavers in Croydon. Social workers were unable to complete these unless they were with the young person to ensure the plans were focused on them. There were currently twenty young people with an outstanding care plan, which had effected the statistics regarding completion, however, this was due to technical issues rather than them not being completed.

In response to questions from the Panel the Head of Social Work with Children Looked After and Care Leavers clarified the following:

- The plans were formally updated every six months with the young person, within 20 days of their review.
- The plans should be continually updated during visits from the social worker.
- The service would continue to seek feedback from the young people regarding the new form to ensure continuous improvement.
- The pathway plans were for the young person to own and co-produce alongside their social worker. The plans were not be completed without the young person being present to ensure they were involved with the full process.
- The electronic care record system monitored when plans had been completed or were outstanding.

Annual Report of Virtual School (Data Update):

- 2. Virtual School to provide an overview of the spending in pupil premium.*

There would be an update provided for the next Panel on 4 March 2020.

Following from discussion these actions received further actions, as listed below:

Annual Report of Virtual School (Data Update):

- 3. CEO to work with Director of Early Help and Children's Social Care to look at how the service and the Council (as an organisation) could create opportunities to children.*

ACTION – For an update to be distributed to Panel Members and to provide a verbal update at the next Panel on 4 March 2020.

4. *CEO to work with the Director of Human Resources to raise the role of volunteering within the Council to support the Looked After Children Service (assisting young children in reading etc).*

ACTION – For an update to be distributed to Panel Members and to provide a verbal update at the next Panel on 4 March 2020.

5. *To consider and introduce group therapy to young children as an alternative to one to one therapy.*

ACTION – For an update regarding the Steering Group and their progress to be presented at the next Corporate Parenting Panel.

ACTION – The Head of Social Work with Children Looked After and Care Leavers to distribute the various schemes available for young people to receive group and one-to-one therapy to all foster carers.

5/20 Children in Care Performance Scorecard

The Director of Early Help and Children's Social Care, Nick Pendry, introduced the report and explained that Children's Services were currently in a period of improvement. In terms of staffing and management, he confirmed that new permanent social workers were due to start soon, which would improve the performance of service, particularly in relation to ensuring pathway plans and care plans were up-to-date.

Panel Members expressed concern for the figures marked as red in the report, in regards to NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training); the Chair agreed with the concerns and requested a full report be presented on the progress with NEET at the next Corporate Parenting Panel on 4 March 2020. The Director of Early Help and Children's Social Care also agreed to present the results from the audit activity to the next Panel to show the improvements that had happened, as a lot of ongoing positive work was not captured within the report.

ACTION – To present a full report on NEET to the next CPP on 4 March 2020.

In response to comments raised by a co-optee the Head of Social Work with Children Looked After explained that the target for percentage of Annual Reviews of Foster Carers completed on time was 95%, and was therefore marked as red. She noted that a clear plan for the next year had been established and the reviews would be set at an 11-month target to ensure they were all held timely, therefore, she was expecting 100% of annual reviews to be completed.

A Foster Carer congratulated Children's Services on the improvement she had seen with social workers; an increase of social workers and they were

ensuring looked after children were visited every four weeks. The Foster Carer sought clarification regarding the indicator referenced LAC 10, as it noted that visits should be completed every six weeks. The Head of Social work with Children Looked After clarified that locally social workers were encouraged to conduct home visits every four weeks, however, the reporting was measured against statutory requirements, which was every six weeks.

In response to queries from the Panel in regards to Personal Education Plans (PEPs) the Head of Virtual School explained that the percentage of looked after children with an updated PEP had been reported at 63%, however, these figures fluctuated as they were completed within school term time so were affected by school holidays.

RESOLVED – That the Panel noted the report.

6/20

Children Looked After Health Commissioning and Performance

The Head of Children and Maternity Integrated Commissioning - Amanda Tuke, Senior Commissioning Manager - Laura Saunders, and the Head of Commissioning and Procurement Children's, Family and Education - Pasquale Brammer introduced the report and highlighted the following:

- Statutory guidance required that initial health assessments (IHAs) were delivered within twenty working days of the child becoming looked after. Notification to the Children Looked After nursing team would be received within three working days and the IHA would be delivered within sixteen working days. If the referrals were received punctually then the statutory deadline was almost always met. Health nurses would often speed up the assessment to try and hit the twenty working day deadline.
- The data, included in the report, showed that there had been a significant improvement on timeliness of IHAs compared with previous years, however, they were still looking at strengthening the quality of the assessments.
- Ensuring the management of repayments to outside boroughs were prioritised to maintain a good reputation with commissioners.
- Young people declining health assessments was a challenge, particularly with out of borough children.
- The Health and Wellbeing of Children Looked After Strategic Board chose themes and determined what was working well and where there were areas for improvement; longer term plans were then created and introduced. The Board focused on individual cases, and monitored whether there were any trends with the statistics.
- Focus was emphasised to those young people who had not attended or had declined their health assessments to encourage them to have their assessments; it was not mandatory for the young people to have their assessments after the age of 16 and they had the right to decline.

- The percentage of children in care for the last 12 months who had updated health assessments was 91.4%, as opposed to the two previous years which was 66.5% and 79.4%.
- There was an ongoing review to improve how health pathways for unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC) could be completed in a timely manner and to improve inclusivity; the challenges with UASC were often bespoke.
- Approximately 100 children in care were referred to South London & Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust (SLaM) per year, and Off The Record provided support to approximately 150 looked after children, of which almost 100 children were UASC.
- There were high waiting times for young people and a high threshold for young people to meet the requirements of the available services. This was a national challenge, which was continuously improving, and it was noted that Croydon were performing to a higher standard than a lot of other areas across the country.
- From February 2020, the existing multi-agency Single Point of Contact (SPOC) service would expand to include emotional wellbeing and mental health.
- Practitioners from SLaM would be co-located at Bernard Weatherill House, along with specialists from: social care, early help, health visiting services, education, safeguarding, police, and housing services.
- A new online referral form had been developed to ensure all information sharing and user confidentiality concerns had been addressed.
- The service would be evaluated over the next six months after implementation to determine how it was working and identify future developments. This would continually improve the service and ensure there was a more flexible offer to meet the need of the young people.
- A neighbouring borough had held specific training for foster carers regarding mental health and this could be introduced to Croydon.
- SPOC would provide clearer statistics to ensure the health service could be monitored closely.

Dr Julia Simpson, CLA Designated Health Professional, introduced herself and highlighted the following:

- She had held a focus group with young people regarding initial health assessments and it was expressed that they wished to know who would be completing their assessment; what the medical professional looked like, their name and what would be discussed.
- The data collected regarding the assessments undermined what was being achieved with the young people as they would discuss friendship groups, peers and school life with them; the data collected was quantitative and focused on areas such as vaccinations and dental checks.

- An analysis of IHAs was being carried out by Public Health to inform a health report focused on looked after children, which would be completed by the next Corporate Parenting Panel.
- Social workers had been trained to complete new health and safety questionnaires to identify children who should be referred to SLaM.
- There was a staff training day arranged in February 2020 which would focus on the support of UASC.

In response to queries raised by EMPIRE, in regards to health checks for looked after children and confidentiality with GPs, Dr Julia Simpson clarified the following:

- All information collected at the GP was confidential and this would only be shared with other health providers. If the information was to be shared further, for example with foster carers, then the young person would need to give consent.
- Young people may see a different clinical nurse at their health assessment review; however, initial health assessments were usually completed by the same nurse to ensure continuity.
- Doctors would have appointments with any looked after child without their carer once they were verbally capable. There had been recent training to improve the narrative between the health professional and young person to ensure they were able to discuss issues regarding their placement without the foster carer being present.
- Social workers should be involved in the process of health assessments to help the young person and ensure they have an understanding of their health needs; social workers were responsible for reviewing the health assessment in their capacity as a corporate parent. It was added that the young people should not leave an assessment without knowing their health needs and the next steps; health action plans should be shared with the young person and foster carer.
- The young people could make initial contact via telephone and could arrange an appointment with the doctor on their own from the age of 13.
- A record of every health assessment with the GP would be on a young person's file; however, once a young person turned 18 then hospitals and other services would not have access to this information unless the individual chose to share it with them.

A foster carer co-optee member present noted that he had seen a vast improvement in 2019-20 with health assessments, and requested that information regarding the new referral process be sent to foster carers, including those who live outside of the borough. The Head of Commissioning for Children's, Families and Education confirmed that a narrative would be provided to explain how to make a referral to CAMHS for carers, GPs, young people and schools.

RESOLVED – That the Panel agreed:

- 1) to the targets, actions and deadlines as appropriate to improve the timeliness of initial health assessments, coverage of review health assessments and access to emotional wellbeing and mental health services,
- 2) that the outcomes of the CLA health needs assessment, commissioned by the Health and Wellbeing of Children Looked After Strategic Board, would be reported to Corporate Parenting Panel as part of an annual CLA health report and added to the forward plan.

At 1839 hours the Panel adjourned for a short break

At 1846 hours the Panel resumed the meeting

7/20

Annual Report of Adoption Service and Panel (Inc. plans/update of regional adoption agency)

Head of Social Work with Children Looked After introduced the report and explained that Adopt London South (ALS) was a significant change to Croydon, and affected all county and city councils across the UK. The Regional Adoption Agency (RAA) model was in its early stages, however, it had been showing positive signs; it was noted that working as smaller agencies was not the most productive method.

The Service Manager, Children Families and Education, Ian Forbes, explained that he was the lead on permanence and had been working closely to ensure a smooth transition to the RAA model. He highlighted the following to the Panel:

- It had been a challenge in Croydon, and other South London regions, to recruit adopters.
- Adoption Support was in need of improvement and one team had been formed to tackle the increasing demand.
- Two members of staff from Croydon Council had transitioned to working for ALS to work closely with children from Croydon; they met every Monday to track their development plans for adoption. All staff had now been transitioned to permanent posts within the agency.
- The RAA adoption scorecards tracked the young people on a three year average, which would have an impact on timescales and delivery to previously set deadlines; this would need to be highlighted to Ofsted.
- Croydon Council met with the RAA monthly and had good oversight of the service. The young people had been tracked tightly through the transition period and it had been ensured they all had updated adoption plans.

In response to questions asked by a Care Leaver present, regarding the adoption process, the Service Manager clarified the following:

- A means test was completed to establish if the adopter was applicable for Adoption Allowance; it was not similar to the arrangement with Foster Carers' Allowance as not many adopters were eligible and an allowance was not encouraged as they wanted the adopter to claim the child as theirs and not for financial gain.
- The adoption process was voluntary, so the adopters could withdraw at any time throughout.
- Adopters were asked if they were currently trying to conceive and the adoption process would be paused to ensure the young person being adopted was focused on. It was noted that most agencies would ask couples to use contraception throughout the adoption process.
- Prospective parents would provide a book about themselves including their hobbies, pets and photos of their family so the young person could read this with their social worker to develop an attachment. Currently, foster carers did not provide books for the young people, however, by 2021 all foster carers would have completed a profile, which would be viewable by the young person.
- Prospective parents received a 3-4 day intensive training course and would meet children who had been through the adoption process. National and local training courses would continue to be extended to parents throughout the process, material would be recommended and there were support groups available.

EMPIRE enquired as to whether the young person could withdraw from the adoption throughout the process, similar to how the prospective parents could. In response, the Service Manager explained that the majority of children adopted were under the age of five, in some cases they were up until the age of eight. As it was unlikely they were able to verbalise this at a young age Children's Services and the social worker would closely monitor the child's behaviour; if they appeared to be distressed then this would be recorded.

In response to the Care Leaver Representative it was confirmed that a child could request to be adopted at any age before turning 18. Adoption would be explored as an option when the young person first entered care.

It was explained to the Panel that some young people, often those who were older, would have contact with their birth parents so a special guardian order would be encouraged, as opposed to adoption. Permanence planning meetings were held regularly where foster carers would be given the opportunity to ask questions about adoption and apply to be assessed for either adoption or special guardianship.

Councillor Gatland left the meeting at 1905 hours.

It was noted that the South London Commissioning Programme (SLCP) had recently completed two documents called “*All About Me*” and “*All About Us*”, which had been procreated with young people in care; it would be released very soon.

Councillor Fitzpatrick expressed concern for the Annual Report and noted that the presentation of data was difficult to understand. He requested a further report which would clearly state whether there had been any progress, how it was benchmarked and the monitoring that was taking place. There were concerns for the new model and it would be helpful to see how it could be evaluated objectively. The Chair agreed and explained that she would be having a meeting with Children’s Services regarding the forward plan; this would ensure that the Corporate Parenting Panel reports were of high quality and focused. She also agreed that the RAA was a concern for corporate parents and the Panel needed to be assured of the ongoing work and were able to provide feedback.

The Service Manager noted that a quarterly review was completed which provided more explanatory data, both regionally and locally; he agreed to distribute this information to the Panel when it was available.

ACTION – To receive regular reports regarding the RAA, including a breakdown of what was happening with the individual young people from Croydon. It was suggested that these reports would be presented every other meeting.

The Service Manager in Children, Families and Education, Natalie Craig, explained that her experience working in a council in the North East England, who had introduced the RAA model, had been very similar that the initial improvement was slow but showed great benefits over time. She noted that they would continue to keep the ALS RAA under close review, however, it had been reflecting the national picture.

The Head of Social Work with Children Looked After and Care Leavers stated that their priority was to ensure the Croydon young people were receiving the help that they needed; Ian Forbes (Service Manager, Children Families and Education) had weekly meetings with the ALS to discuss each young person from Croydon individually and she would be attending these monthly to scrutinise the work of the ALS. There was also an event in June 2020 which would be attended by all lead members to meet the RAA.

In response to questions from the Panel Members and Chair regarding if there were any incentives offered with adoption, it was explained that the means test mentioned earlier in the meeting was completed for any prospective parents by reviewing their income and outgoings on a case-by-case basis; there was clear legislation which outlined what adopters could receive. It was often those who adopted older children or sibling groups who would receive an allowance. Adoption Support, focusing on emotional support rather than financial, was in need of improvement and this would occur through the RAA.

ACTION – To update the Panel on how the RAA was promoting their national campaign and incentives.

RESOLVED – That the Panel agreed to note the report.

8/20 How has the Panel helped Children in Care today?

The Panel highlighted the accomplishments and discussed changes to help Children in Care.

A big thank you was awarded to EMPIRE and the young people present for attending the meeting and their valuable contributions to the discussions.

9/20 Work Programme

The Work Programme was received for information.

10/20 Exclusion of the Press and Public

This was not required.

The meeting ended at 7.43 pm

Signed:

Date:

Agenda Item 6

REPORT TO:	Corporate Parenting Panel 4 March 2020
SUBJECT:	Young people Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET)
LEAD OFFICER:	Nick Pendry 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 None.	

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

- For information purposes only.

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2.1 Young people who are looked after or care leavers age 17-21 in Croydon are more likely to be in education, employment or training than looked after children or care leavers in England. However looked after children and care leavers are still much more likely to be NEET than their non-looked after peers.
- 2.2 Former unaccompanied asylum seeking young people are much more likely to be in education, employment or training than their non-UASC counterparts.
- 2.3 There are some features of the Croydon Care Leaver population that impacts on the optimum number of young people who are in education, employment or training.
- 2.4 An ambitious target of 85% of care leavers in EET has been set by the council for 2019-20.

3 OVERVIEW

Statutory Duties

- 3.1 All young people are required to stay in appropriate education, employment or training (EET) until their 18th birthday. This includes:
- Staying in full-time education, at a school sixth form or college
 - Learning whilst you work, e.g. traineeships and apprenticeships
 - Getting a job with specified training, e.g. formal employer-led training such as the armed forces
 - Volunteering for more than 20 hours a week in combination with accredited learning
- 3.2 Local authorities are statutorily required to track the participation of all 16 and 17 year olds who are resident within their borough, identify those who are NEET and offer appropriate support into sustainable EET until they reach age 18.
- 3.3 In addition local authorities are required to track EET outcomes for care leavers until their 21st birthday. In Croydon, we track all care leavers open to the service, which includes those aged 21-25 years as well.

16 – 18 Year Old Participation

- 3.4 Of the 260 16-17 year olds supported by the Virtual School 45 are not in education, employment or training which is 17.3% of the cohort.

Not in Education, Employment or Training	Local	UASC	Total
16-17	27	18	45

18-21 Year Old Participation

- 3.4 For the cohort aged 18-21 years that we are required to track, performance is as follows:

Indicator Title	Apr-17	Apr-18	Apr-19	Jan-20	2018-19 Target	2019-20 Target	Croydon 2019-20	England 2018-19	SN 2018-19
Percentage not in employment, education, or training (EET) on their 17th to 21st Birthday	35%	35%	35%	35%	40%	15%	35%	39%	34.2%

- 3.5 The number of NEET young people in the 18-21 year old age group is 205 out of a total cohort of 648. Former unaccompanied asylum seeking young people make up 64% of the 18-21 year old care leavers' population but 73% are in

education, employment or training compared to 48% of non-UASC care leavers aged 18-21.

3.6 Within this cohort participation, as at 31 January 2019, was as follows:

Row Labels	Non-UASC	UASC	Grand Total
F1 - Young person engaged full time in higher education (i.e. studies beyond A level)	20	17	37
F2 - Young person engaged full time in education other than higher education	31	176	207
F3 - Young person engaged full time in training or employment	37	64	101
G4 - Young person not in education, employment or training because of illness or disability	18	9	27
G5 - Young person not in education, employment or training: other circumstances	74	96	170
G6 - Young person not in education, employment or training due to pregnancy or parenting	13	3	16
Not Recorded	11	11	22
P1 - Young person engaged part time in higher education (i.e. studies beyond A level)	1		1
P2 - Young person engaged part time in education other than higher education	6	9	15
P3 - Young person engaged part time in training or employment	16	27	43
Unknown - Due to Lack of Contact	5	4	9
Grand Total	232	416	648

3.7 When the whole leaving care cohort is considered (those aged 18-25 years) the NEET percentage rises slightly to 36.7%, but this may reflect that young people staying in touch with the service are likely to be the more vulnerable young people who continue to need leaving care support for a range of reasons, including lack of employment or education.

Target Setting

3.8 In 2019-20 the Council set a target of 85% of care leavers to be in education, employment or training, reflecting the Council's ambition for the young people for whom it has corporate parenting responsibility. In measuring performance against this target, the following matters need to be taken into account:

- Currently there are 31 care leavers in custody (3.7%), meaning these young people will have more limited opportunity to be in education, depending on opportunities and the regime in the custodial setting;
- A number of young people do not have an immigration status that allows them to engage in employment or education. At any one time approximately 65 young people are considered All Appeal Rights Exhausted (ARE), an immigration status that forbids them from being in employment or education. This is approximately 7.8% of the cohort.

Support

- 3.9 All young people have access to a range of support to continue or return to education, employment or training:
- The Virtual School ensures all young people in education up to the end of year 13 have a Personal Education Plan to outline the ambition and support they will need. They rigorously track young people in education through to the end of year 13 and can provide bespoke support as needed, although there is no Pupil Premium Grant payable for young people over 16.
 - The Virtual School have also been providing bespoke careers advice and guidance for care leavers who may not yet know what career or education path they wish to follow.
 - Beats Learning, is a local organisation specifically funded to work with Croydon Care Leavers, particularly those that are 'hard to reach'. They work closely with the Leaving Care Team to identify and support young people and because they are positioned independently of more traditional services are able to work creatively to engage young people. They provide entry levels of qualifications alongside vocational courses and activities, with a focus on enabling young people to have sustainable jobs.
 - The Department for Works and Pensions have named care leaver 'leads' in each Job Centre Plus and there are good relationships between the Leaving Care Team, the Gateway Income Maximisation Team staff and the DWP leads to ensure young people are supported into employment or training
 - Croydon Adult Learning and Training (CALAT) is supportive of care leavers, particularly those who need to achieve entry level qualifications in English and Maths, or who are interested in vocational qualifications.
 - We also have one NEET caseworker which is co-funded by Youth Engagement and Gateway to provide support to those young people and/or their families eligible for various benefits. However a large number of NEET young people choose not to engage, despite frequent contact attempts and offers of support.
 - The Princes Trust and Palace For Life are also very active locally offering mentoring, work experience and paid opportunities for training
- 3.10 Care leavers are employed in various roles across the Council, and during 2019 there have been a number of ring-fenced apprenticeship opportunities for care leavers, with further traineeship and apprenticeships in the pipeline.

Higher Education

- 3.11 As at 31 January 2020 75 care leavers aged 18 to 25 were in Higher Education; 37 were aged 18-21 and 38 were aged 22 or over. It is not uncommon for care leavers to be more ready to enter Higher Education at a slightly older age than their non-care-experienced peers.

53% of the care leavers at University are former unaccompanied minors, which is a more balanced position than in 2018 when 70% of young people in higher education were former unaccompanied asylum seeking minors.

Next Steps

- 3.12 Within the next month a multi-agency NEET panel will be operational, in order to
- Track all young people who are NEET and their journey into education employment or training
 - Understand the barriers for young people moving into EET (such as substance misuse, health, disabilities, parenting) and ensuring they are supported to access appropriate support
 - Understand the systemic or structural barriers for the wider cohort

4. CONSULTATION

Not applicable

5. FINANCIAL AND RISK ASSESSMENT CONSIDERATIONS

Not applicable

6. COMMENTS OF THE COUNCIL SOLICITOR AND MONITORING OFFICER

Not applicable

7. HUMAN RESOURCES IMPACT

Not applicable

8. EQUALITIES IMPACT

Not applicable

9. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

Not applicable

10. CRIME AND DISORDER REDUCTION IMPACT

Not applicable

CONTACT OFFICER: Vanessa Strang, Head of Service for Children Looked After and Care Leavers and Mick McCarthy, Service Manager, Leaving Care.

APPENDICES TO THIS REPORT: None

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS: None

This page is intentionally left blank



OUR
FOCUS

Childrens Performance Dashboard

January 2020

Produced by
Performance Intelligence and Data Quality Team



CROYDON
www.croydon.gov.uk

Indicator Number	Indicator Title	Polarity	2019/20												RAG	2019-20 YTD or latest	Comparative Data									
			Apr-19	May-19	Jun-19	Jul-19	Aug-19	Sep-19	Oct-19	Nov-19	Dec-19	Jan-20	RO	Croydon 2018-19		Croydon 2017-18	England 2017-18	Stats Nbr Average 2017-18	Croydon 2016-17	England 2016-17	Stats Nbr Average 2016-17	Croydon 2015-16	England 2015-16	Stats Nbr Average 2015-16		
AD 0	Number of Adoption Orders achieved in the month	BIB	0	3	2	1	1	1	3	4	4	1	IF	NA	Grey	9	1	9		Need to establish	28.6	26				
AD 1	Number of children for whom the agreed plan is adoption (ADM)	BiB	0	0	4	2	2	3	2	0	0	0	IF	NA	Grey	11	0	431					28			
AD 2	Number of children waiting to be matched to an adopter		10	15	13	13	9	12	12	12	12	15	IF	NA	Grey	15	11	18					19			
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	0	0	570	570	600	570	566	504	504	477	IF	558	Green	477	0	309		696 (2014-17) 3 yr average	520 (2014-2017) 3 yr average	554.5 (2014-2017) 3 yr average	1073 (2016) AND 779 (3 Year	558 (2013-2016) 3 yr	604 (2013-2016) 3 yr	
CL a	Care Leavers with an Up-to-date Pathway plan	BIB	89%	83%	87%	85%	85%	83%	85%	84%	79%	82%	FM	85%	Amber	82%	88%	69%								
CL 1a	Percentage in employment, education, or training (EET) on their 17th to 21st Birthday	BIB	65%	64%	59%	64%	65%	69%	65%	64%	64%	65%	FM	85%	Red	65%	66%	75%	84%	81%	53% (19-21 yr olds)	50% (average 19 to 21 yr olds)	50.2% (average 19 to 21 yr olds)	60% (345) (2016)		
CL 3a	Percentage in suitable accommodation on their 17th to 21st Birthday	BIB	90%	90%	85%	94%	93%	94%	94%	93%	94%	95%	FM	90%	Green	95%	92%	75%	84%	81%	77% (19-21 yr olds)	84% (19-21 yr olds)	81.5% (19-21 yr olds)	77% (2016)	83%	83%

This page is intentionally left blank

Agenda Item 8

REPORT TO:	Corporate Parenting Panel 4 March 2020
SUBJECT:	The National Pledge, Croydon Commitment to Children in Care and the Local Offer for Care Leavers
LEAD OFFICER:	Vanessa Strang, Head of Service Children Looked After and Care Leaving Service
CABINET MEMBER:	Cllr Alisa Flemming, Children, Young People and Learners
WARDS:	All
CORPORATE PRIORITY/POLICY CONTEXT/ AMBITIOUS FOR CROYDON	
To offer a clear commitment to children in care and offer to our young adults leaving care is fully aligned to our Corporate Plan for Croydon (2018-2022) in the following areas <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Our children and young people thrive and reach their full potential• Everyone feels safer in their street, neighbourhood and home• Everyone has the opportunity to work and build their career.	
<u>Corporate Plan for Croydon 2018-2022</u>	

1. Recommendations for corporate parenting panel

- 1.1 To consider, discuss and agree that Croydon Council and its partners:
- adopt the National Pledge for children in care and young people leaving care including the principles and top ten messages;
 - make a Croydon Commitment to children in care;
 - provide a refreshed the local offer for Croydon's care leavers.

2. The National Pledge for children in care and young people leaving care

- 2.1 The inaugural national conference for care experienced people, held in April 2019, resulted in an invitation to all local authorities to pledge their commitment to a set of principles and messages to improve the support for children in care and young people leaving care in their local area. The national pledge is entirely consistent with the government's 7 principles for Corporate Parenting, a copy of which can be found at appendix 1. The pledge is included at appendix 2.

The principles

- 2.2 It is proposed that Croydon Council and its partners commit to the following principles:

We will listen to our children/ young people and ensure they have access to all legal entitlements. We understand they are experts in their own lives who deserve love and respect as individuals (within the context of their own experience). We recognise relationships are at the core of all we do and we must ensure the emotional wellbeing of our children/young people are prioritised.

The top ten messages

2.3 Alongside the principles local authorities are asked to pledge that in their written policies, procedures and practices they take clear steps to ensure that all services delivered demonstrably:

1. Promote more love in the care system including displays of positive physical affection;
2. Ensure care experience people are regarded and treated as individuals worthy of respect and to promote that respect wherever we can;
3. Ensure that relationships are seen as central to all our policies and procedures to support children in care and care experienced people;
4. Take clear steps to improve stability and continuity in the lived experiences of people in care;
5. Work with our partners and young people to raise awareness of need and improve support for the mental health and well-being of children in care and care experienced people in our local area;
6. Recognise in our daily work that the impact of care experience does not end at 18 or 21 or even 25, and review our practice to remove age restrictions on support wherever we can;
7. Protect, promote and where necessary rebuild family and community connections and help those young people for whom we are responsible to understand their personal history;
8. Make sure that young people in our care are routinely engaged, consulted and have a real say in their own lives
9. Ensure that young people in our care are properly and fully informed of their rights and offer advocacy to ensure they receive them;
10. Listen to the voice of children in care and care experience people of all ages and always consult them about changes to services and support.

A copy of the top ten messages in poster format is included at appendix 3.

3. The Croydon commitment to children in care

3.1 Following engagement and discussions with some members of EMPIRE, it is

further proposed that the following commitment is made to children in care in Croydon:

1. We will help you build up your social life and keep in touch with your family & friends.
2. We will help you do the things you love.
3. We will make sure you are happy with where you live and listen to your needs
4. We will help you with your education and whatever you choose to do in life.
5. We will make sure you have someone to talk to and get good advice
6. We will listen to your thoughts and feelings
7. We will understand you as a person not just a child in care
8. We will give you all the support you need to go home, if this is the right option
9. We will make sure you have a good relationship with your social worker and personal adviser
10. We will be there for you in the future and give you the skills you need to live alone.
11. You can have access your records if you wish
12. We will love you for who you are and welcome you always.

4. Croydon would like to adopt the following proposed local offer, subject to further discussions around securing funding to deliver this offer and in accordance with the leaving care financial policy, to be finalised Spring 2020:

4.1 Local Offer for Care Leavers - overview

- You will have a Personal Advisor by the time you are 16½ years who visits regularly and in line with their individual needs
- At 16 years old you will have a ‘pathway plan’, which plainly sets out all your needs, ambitions, goals, including where you will live, study and work.
- You will be provided with somewhere safe to live.
- You will receive assistance to develop a clear financial plan and financial assessment. If you have an assessed need for emergency additional income Croydon may offer you ‘one off’ financial support.
- We will ensure all your health needs are met and you leave care with a ‘health passport’.
- We will ensure you have a photo ID (such as passport, biometric card or provisional driving license), national insurance number and a copy of your birth certificate.
- We will ensure you are listened to you and know how to access external support or advocacy services and you are aware of the complaints procedure.

Housing

- Housing services in Croydon will not issue a decision of ‘intentionally homeless’ for any of our care leavers under the age of 25.
- As a looked after child your housing needs will be considered by the housing panel by aged 17½. to ensure you have a clear housing options pathway plan by the date of your last looked after review, prior to you turning 18.
- You will be placed on the housing register at 18 years old, and receive priority Band B. This includes the option to bid on properties if this is stated in your Pathway Plan.
- You will be entitled to social housing (unless you are an asylum seeker with no recourse to public funds)

Education Employment and training

- If you are a care leaver in education post 19 (or 18 if at university) you will have access to tutor hours for additional learning to support you if needed through your exams. These will be offered in conjunction with a clear Pathway Plan setting out education goals.
- If you are in education, employment or training you will be supported with the costs towards driving lessons, this means a maximum of 10 driving lessons and the cost of 1 theory and 1 practical test.
- As a Care Leaver you will be able to apply for apprentice opportunities within Croydon Council. This will be at least 1 apprenticeship place in each part of the council (except children’s services where we would offer 3 per year).

Money

- The Leaving Care Service will provide young people with up to 6 weeks subsistence payments, mirrored to the current benefit rate (to assist you while waiting for initial benefits claim to be processed which needs to be backdated to your 18th birthday). This will be repaid via the setting up home grant.

Birthday gifts

- A gift and a contribution towards the cost of celebrations will be paid to you until your 21st birthday.
You will only receive this allowance if you are in contact with us.

Setting up home allowance

- You will receive a setting up home allowance in accordance with Croydon’s leaving care financial policy to help with getting essentials for your first home. The allowance is accessed as part of planned process alongside the pathway plan

Council Tax exemption

- As a care leaver you will be exempt from paying council tax in Croydon until the age of 25. If you live outside of Croydon, your council tax will be covered up to the equivalent band of a similar property type in Croydon.

Local offer for care leavers living outside of Croydon

- Your personal adviser will liaise with the local care leaver's service as a matter of routine to see what services or opportunities could be on offer for you. This will be clearly stated in your Pathway Plan.

Moving in to a new home

- You will have help with costs of hiring a van or moving service
- You will receive assistance on moving day from your personal advisor

Rent until benefit in place

- Housing (both within Croydon and other areas) and the Care leavers service have an agreement in place that allows the care leavers service and housing to liaise with each other to avoid rent arrears in most cases.

Health

- We will pay travel for all care leavers to attend hospital appointments for non-routine health concerns, such as surgery.
- You will receive a Health Passport upon turning 18.
- You will be fully supported by your personal adviser to register with a GP, Dentist and Optician.

Participation in Society

- We will support you to engage with community activities such as, religious groups, art groups, support groups, gyms, social groups, etc.

This page is intentionally left blank

Report on the National Pledge, Croydon Commitment to Children in Care and the Local Offer for Care Leavers

Appendix 1

The seven principles for Corporate Parenting (Children and Social Work Act, 2017)

1. To act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and well-being, of children and young people;
2. To encourage children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings;
3. To take into account the views, wishes and feelings of children and young people;
4. To help children and young people gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners;
5. To promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for children and young people;
6. For children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work;
7. To prepare children and young people for adulthood and independent living.

This page is intentionally left blank



Pledge Your Commitment Care Experienced Conference 2019

We welcome the clear statement from the Care Experience Conference 2019 of the things which are most important to improve the experience for children in care and care experience overall.

In response, we intend to:

- support the principles which underpin the Top Ten Messages and apply these to the way our services are planned and delivered in future;
- use our position as local system leaders for children to change things for the better;
- use the Top Ten Messages to drive improvement in our local arrangements; and
- invite care experienced people to feedback the extent to which the pledge is upheld

Specifically, we pledge, in our written policies, procedures and practices, to take clear steps to ensure that all the services we deliver will demonstrably:

1. promote more **love** in the care system including displays of positive physical affection;
2. ensure care experience people are regarded and treated as individuals worthy of **respect** and to promote that respect wherever we can;
3. ensure that **relationships** are seen as central to all our policies and procedures to support children in care and care experienced people;
4. take clear steps to improve **stability** and continuity in the lived experiences of people in care;
5. work with our partners and young people to raise awareness of need and improve support for the **mental health** and well-being of children in care and care experienced people in our local area;



6. recognise in our daily work that the impact of care experience does not end at 18 or 21 or even 25, and review our practice to **remove age restrictions** on support wherever we can;
7. protect, promote and where necessary rebuild **family and community connections** and help those young people for whom we are responsible to understand their personal history;
8. make sure that young people in our care are routinely engaged, consulted and have a real **have a say** in their own lives
9. ensure that young people in our care are properly and fully informed of their **rights** and offer advocacy to ensure they receive them; and
10. listen to the **voice** of children in care and care experience people of all ages and always consult them about changes to services and support.

CareExpConf
October 2019

<https://www.careexperiencedconference.com/>



The Care Experienced Conference

TOP 10 MESSAGES

- 1** • We need more love in the care system, including displays of positive physical affection.
- 2** • We want to be seen as individuals worthy of respect much more than we are.
- 3** • Relationships are critically important to us.
- 4** • Instability and loss of continuity in our lives is made worse through no fault of ours by pressure in the care system.
- 5** • Mental health and well-being are our biggest worries and the most important and urgent things that have to improve.



TOP 10 MESSAGES

- 6** • The impacts of the care experience do not end at 18, or 21, or even 25.
- 7** • Our sense of who we are is important. Our family, heritage and history are uniquely ours and must be protected.
- 8** • Having our say is essential.
- 9** • We have legal rights and entitlements and we are not always being told what they are.
- 10** • Nobody knows more about what it means to be in care than we do.

This page is intentionally left blank

Agenda Item 9

Young Director for Children's Social Care

Executive Summary

The role of Young Director will support and develop corporate understanding and commitment to the Leaving Care and Children in Care Council (EMPIRE) pledge.

The Young Director will also work with the Director for Children's Services to support and engage Frontline Workers, Managers, Leaders and Councillors in understanding the experience and perspective of young people who have experienced care. Ensuring that any differences in expectations between the local authority and the care it provides to children and young people are appropriately managed.

The Role

When advertising the role we will be targeting Care Leavers aged 18 – 25, ideally Croydon Care Leavers. To achieve this we will rely on the Leaving Care Service to promote this opportunity and support the young people they work with to apply. All candidates must have the right to work in the UK and have been a resident for a minimum of three years.

Due to the ESFA phasing out frameworks from 31st July 2020 the apprenticeship frameworks suitable for this post are limited to either Youth Work or the Children and Young People's Workforce framework.

Croydon Works will be responsible for screening all candidates to ensure they are suitable for the post. Should the successful candidate declare any health issues they will require a Health Assessment, from start to finish this process takes approximately 2 – 3 weeks

Young Directors Responsibilities:

- The Young Director will be responsible for delivering a range of EMPIRE and Leaving Care activities
- Attend decision making professional forums and meetings to ensure the view and opinions of young people are heard and influence the decision-making process
- Talk, listen and report the views and feedback of children in care and care leavers
- Plan and organise meeting, events and seminars
- Collect suggestions from Bright Spots surveys and prepare reports from the information collected
- Help prepare training events for new staff and workers within Early Help and Children's Social Care
- Working with the Children and Young People in Care and Leaving Care Service and Corporate Parenting Panel
- Being part of events, which promote Children and Young People in Care and Leaving Care
- Shadowing the DCS and being the voice at set meetings
- Mentoring a child or young person in care

Research and Development

We discussed various models and did research which included liaising with Bexley Councils Virtual School Head, Young Director and Ex Young Director. They were very positive about the role of

Young Director and believe it has had a great impact on helping Frontline Workers, Managers, Leaders understand the experience and perspective of children and young people who have experienced care. They have also been able to develop their participation offer for children and young people in care and care leavers and have various activities available weekly.

In Bexley, the Young Director sits within the Virtual School and their line manager is the Participation Leader who is responsible for all activities related to children in care. Bexley have had multiple Young Directors with one young person seeing out the full term of the role who has now gone on to a different post within the Virtual School. When recruiting for the role they advertised the role as an open apprenticeship meaning the young person was able to choose an apprenticeship that was best suited to them. The options available were Social Media, Business Administration, Youth Work, Child Care, Children and Young People's Workforce. Their current Young Director is studying business administration.

It took Bexley a while to find a care leaver that was suitable and committed to the role. This was down to multiple factors such as the level of the candidate, financial support, workload and apprenticeship. Even though this has been a negative it has given Bexley an opportunity to learn and shape the role further.

To ensure their Young Director is well supported, Bexley's Leaving Care Service support their Young Director by assisting with their universal credit claim, paying for travel and direct payments towards rent to avoid the young person's universal credits being affected. The Young Director also has robust day to day line management and daily work plan. Any personal matters regarding the Young Person's care are dealt with outside of work to ensure there are clear professional boundaries.

Based on the success and impact of the role in Bexley we believe this role will be a great asset to Croydon.

Apprenticeship Pathways

We looked at two potential apprenticeships, Children and Young People's Workforce and Youth Work. Unfortunately the Children and Young People's Workforce Framework was not viable.

Youth Work Framework

Depending on the level of candidate that we recruit will depend on the length of contract. The Level 2 apprenticeship will take 12 – 15 months to complete and level 3 will take 15 – 18 months.

All candidates will complete an initial Maths, English, IT and Youth Work assessment ahead of interviewing.

Below are the mandatory units and optional units that best match the role of Young Director:

Mandatory Units Level 2 & 3	Optional Units Level 2 (1 unit required)	Optional Units Level 3 (5 units required)
Theory of Youth Work	Anti-Discriminatory Practice in Youth Work	Support Young People who are Looked After or are Leaving Care
Safeguarding in a youth work setting		Support Young People's Transition to Independence

Young People's Development		Support young people to develop, implement and review a plan of action
Engaging and Communicating with Young People		Work Effectively with Vulnerable Young People
Group Work within a Youth Work Setting		Anti-Discriminatory Practice in Youth Work
Working with Challenging Behaviour in Youth Work Settings		
Reflective Practice in a Youth Work Setting		
Work-based Practice in Youth Work		
Supporting the Young Director		
Care Leavers often don't have a close support network and can be almost entirely alone. That is why it is important that this young person is closely supported during their time in post.		
The role of Young Director will be paid however a financial assessment will need to be completed by the Leaving Care Service, to see if we need to support the Young Director financially in a way that won't affect their universal credit. This could be through paid travel and/or direct payments towards housing.		
The apprenticeship training assessor will have weekly or bi-weekly workshops with the Young Director and a review will take place every 10 weeks.		
Costings		
The grade category of apprentice does not fall within the regular local authority grading system.		
Young Director Salary £19,802 + 30% on cost Total cost to the service: £25,742.60		
Please note that the above costings may increase by the time we recruit as the London living wage is currently under review.		
When will the project start?		
Preparation for the role of Young Director will begin January 2020 with the Young Director in post by June 2020		
Who will need to be involved?		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leaving Care Service • Head Early Help and Youth Service • Director of Early Help and Children's Social Care • Head of Service for Children Looked After and Care Leavers 		

- Head of the Virtual School
- Croydon Works
- Economic Growth (Employment Pathways)

Recommendations

Young Director Line Management

1.1 - The Young Director to be line managed by the Service Manager for the Youth Service and have dedicated mentors in the Engagement and Participation Team, Virtual School, Children and Young People in Care and Leaving Care Service and Workforce Development team. By siting within the Youth Service the Young Director will have direct links to EMPIRE.

The Young Director could equally be line managed by a key professional in the Virtual School, Children and Young People in Care and Leaving Care Service, or Workforce Development team.

In Bexley the Young Director is line managed by their Engagement and Participation Lead who sits within their Virtual School.

1.2 - A clear work plan to be created with the training provider ahead of the Young Director starting

1.3 - Line Manager to have monthly meetings with the Mentors to ensure the young person is receiving adequate support

1.4 - Young Director to have weekly 1-2-1's with their line manager for the first 4 months, then bi-weekly thereafter

1.5 - A financial assessment to be completed by the Leaving Care Service

1.6 - Champions to be identified from the Leaving Care Service to support with the recruitment process start to finish

1.7 - Selected EMPIRE and Leaving Care Forum members to be part of the interview panel

1.8 - Ensure that all staff that have had involvement with this young person understand professional boundaries

Author: Priya Wilson – CYPE Project Support

Date: January 2020

Agenda Item 10

REPORT TO:	Corporate Parenting Panel 4 March 2020
SUBJECT:	Annual Report of Fostering Service and Panel
LEAD OFFICER:	Vanessa Strang Head of Service Report author – Rodica Cobarzan
CABINET MEMBER:	Cllr Alisa Flemming, Children, Young People and Learners

1. Executive summary

The Fostering Service is staffed in main by a stable staffing group but there have been some challenges in achieving the level of practice Croydon Council would want to see from an experienced and committed fostering service. The service is working to develop with the aim of supporting the achievement of the best outcomes possible for our children.

The service has been successful this year in placing a significant number of children with Croydon Foster carers and an increased number of children have been placed with connected families, however the overall number of foster carers has not increased this year.

Due to the continued high number of looked after children and an increase in children in care leaving the service who remain put with their foster carers there remains a shortage of in house foster placements.

Recruitment and retention of foster carers is a priority particularly for older children, sibling groups, children with disabilities and long-term placements. Coram I has been since November 2018 Croydon's Council partner in recruitment of foster carers and targets for 2019/20 were set out in the Sufficiency Strategy and within the Recruitment and Retention strategy, but those have not led to increase in our foster carers numbers.

2. Introduction

This report complies with Standard 25.7 of the Fostering National Minimum Standards which sets out the condition that the Fostering Service Manager will monitor and report to the corporate parenting members about the management and outcomes of the fostering service.

3. Role of the Fostering Service

The Fostering Service continues to develop and improve practice to meet the needs of Children in care of Croydon Council in line with the requirements of national guidance and fostering standards.

The service is responsible for:

- Support, supervision and training of foster carers including family and friend carers (connected carers)
- Ensuring provision of local safe and supportive foster placements in accordance with fostering national minimum standards
- Promoting placement stability and permanence planning for our children
- Working with Coram I, who is commissioned by Croydon to undertake the recruitment and assessment of new foster carers
- Private Fostering, since January 2020

The Fostering Service provides a range of placements with foster carers with a varied skill and experience base. There are a range of placements offered including respite; placements with foster carers who have particular experience and skills in transition to permanence through adoption, return home or placement with family; placements providing permanence through long term fostering by providing a family based model of care to support children and young people through to independence and beyond.

There are also family and friends who are presenting for assessment as connected carers to look after children in their extended family or social network. Fostering Service works alongside the Family & Friends Team to support carers Registered under Regulation 24 (temporary approval) and support them in full post approval by Fostering Panel and Agency Decision Maker.

All foster carers are supervised and supported by social workers within the fostering team and this includes all connected carers who are afforded opportunities to engage in training and support alongside other foster carers.

The overall aim of the Fostering Service is to provide a range of high quality, safe and aspirational foster placements that meet the needs of our children looked after.

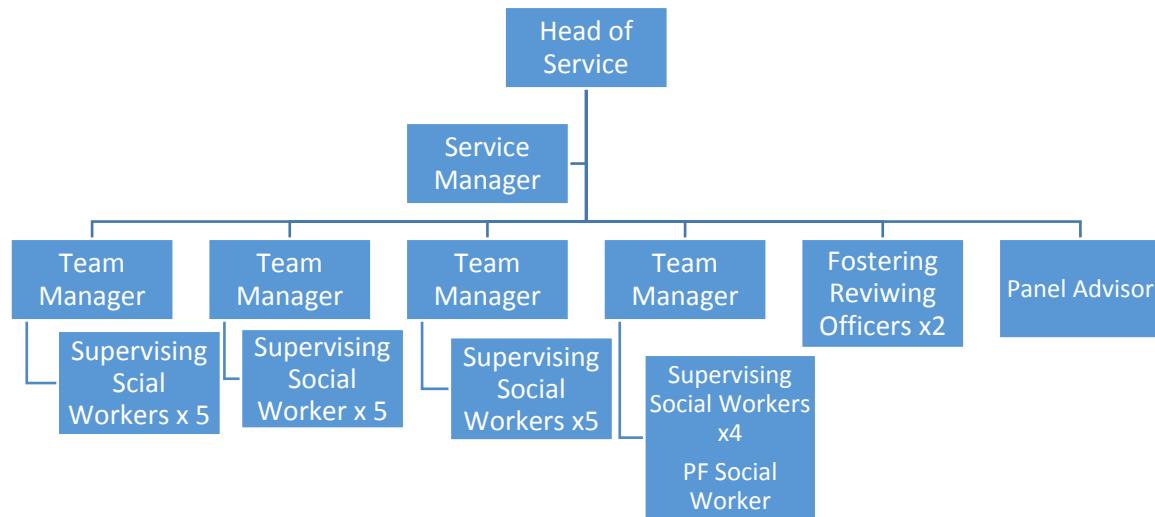
The priorities of the Fostering Service are to ensure that:

- All children who come into care have an experience of safe, secure and consistent care
- All children experience a safe place within which they can play, grow and thrive, being supported to reach their full potential.
- Ensure the holistic needs of any child are addressed and supported through health, education and social development enhancing opportunity to develop resilience and achieve.
- Support early Permanence for children in care and ensure that children who cannot safely remain at home are offered a permanent family base without delay

Since January the Fostering Service has taken the responsibility for Privately Fostered Children and young people in Croydon in line with The Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2015 and National Minimum Standards. The assessment and monitoring of placements will be overseen alongside the other Croydon Services.

4. Service Structure

Croydon's Fostering Service is managed under the Head of Service for Children Looked After and Care Leavers. There is an operational Service Manager with responsibility for this service.



The social workers main roles and responsibilities are supervising and supporting Foster Carers but also ensuring that Foster Carers meet the fostering standards, are independently reviewed annually as well as monitoring quality of care and training and development of foster carers. The most significant aspect of this work is to ensure that children remain safe in foster care and Foster Carers feel supported and enabled to fulfil their responsibilities.

The Supervising Social Workers have also been involved in co-delivering with Coram I a variety of recruitment activities, including the Skills to Foster Training.

There are three permanent Team Managers who offer supervision and line management to staff within the team. An extra team manager has been temporarily engaged in December 2019 to add capacity and support with practice improvement, she is also managing the private fostering Social Worker and leads on Duty and Placement activity.

The two Fostering Reviewing Officers report to the Service manager and are responsible for overseeing the annual reviews of all our Foster carers and make recommendations about carers' terms of approval. The two Fostering Reviewing Officers have started in their roles in March 2019.

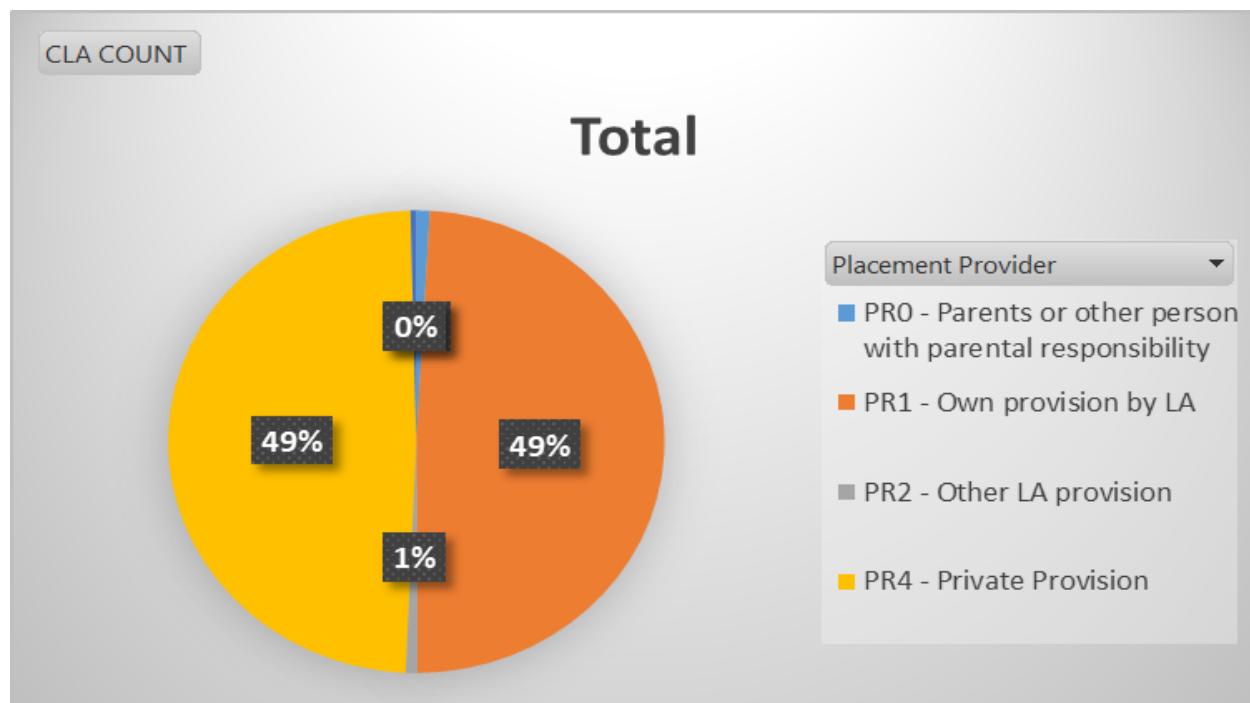
Since September 2019, Croydon has a full time Panel Advisor dedicated to this role including the monitoring of quality of reports to the fostering panel.

Fostering Service is mainly staffed by permanent staff, 78% of staff are permanently employed. There are currently a small number of agency staff who are covering vacancies or long term absences, two of the agency supervising Social Workers are in process of becoming permanent members of staff.

5. Supervision and Support to Foster Carers

The Fostering Service manages a total of 231 Fostering Households that offers Respite care, Short term Foster Carers and Long Term Foster Carers. We have a number of carers "Connected Persons Foster Carers" who are approved to care for specific children.

Croydon looks after just over 800 children who are placed in a variety of placements in accordance with their care plan.



In January 2020, 49% were placed with Croydon Foster carers, the remainder of our children in care were placed with Independent Fostering Agencies, residential units or in semi-independent accommodation, placed at home with their parents and a number of children are placed for adoption.

Whilst 49% of our children in care are in a Local Authority provision the service identified ongoing areas for improvement around the full utilisation of foster carers, maximising the use of our remaining in-house vacancies and enhancing the processes in place to match children with our carers. The focus continues to be on ensuring maximum use of in-house vacancies and that foster carers have the skills and knowledge required to care for the children in our care and to maintain their registration.

In 2019 there has been work towards only having carers who were actively fostering and committed to working with the department. This has meant that some foster carers have been deregistered due to being unable to take the children requiring placements; not actively fostering for prolonged periods and not meeting the requirements set out in fostering regulations.

Since April 2019 33 households (44 foster carers) were deregistered.

Deregistration reasons	Foster Home
Connected foster carers who secured permanence via a legal order or children turned 18 years	14
Carer deceased	1
Carer resignation (family issues x4, wanting to take a break x2, no longer has room x2, unhappy with support x2, resigned before panel when concerns raised about standards of carer or having had no placements x4)	14
Foster carer applied for SGO for the children	1
Deregistered due to standards for care.	2
Retired	1
Grand Total	33

During 2019 following a Service Review undertaken by Kathy Hundred in July 2019, who also reviewed the Fostering Panel, an analysis of the service data, case audits and feedback from the network (children, Foster Carers and professionals) the service explored how we could improve the quality of care for our children, the support and challenge to our foster carers as well as the training offer to staff and Foster Carers.

Training and development of Foster Carers was considered and further specialist training was commissioned and is due to start in 2020/2021 to meet the standard and the aspirations of the service. The training will provide experienced Foster Carers and newly approved Foster Carers further opportunities to learn how best to meet the needs of children with more complex issues such as violence towards adults or trauma.

In response to the Service Review we:

- Re-designed our training program to reflect the placement challenges and needs of Foster Carers.
- Coordinated in May 2019 a Foster Carers Awards Ceremony (the 2020 ceremony is currently being planned). This gave us the opportunity to celebrate our Foster Carers achievements with a dinner event and awards that recognized some of the extraordinary achievements of our Foster Carers.
- The Systemic Lead has undertaken reflective social work conversations with staff to promote better understanding of our children's emotional needs and empower them to support Foster carer to meet these needs. The Systemic Lead provides consultations to Supervising Social Workers and in some cases has supported Foster carers to increase placement stability. These support will extend to Foster carers in 2020.

- Introduced structured consultations for Foster Carers with CAMHS , those are also attended by the Supervising Social worker and Child's Social worker
- Trained eight foster carers to deliver training (UASC specific) and staff attend training events organised for Foster Carers to ensure joint learning
- Training has been provided to staff in various areas of practice, including Systemic Training which most permanent staff have now started
- Recently increased management capacity and reduced the number of foster carers Supervising social worker oversee in order to increase support and quality of practice
- Croydon Council continues to support Croydon Foster Carers Association and their work with foster carers. The Head of Children look After and Care Leavers, the Fostering Service Manager and A supervising Social worker attended the Christmas party in order to improve relationships and support for children and carers
- A foster carers Survey was launched in February 2019 in order to gather feedback from foster carers to understand the areas of the Fostering Service that are working well and what areas can be approved upon. Of the 106 respondents who commented on what was working well, themes included; Support from SSW's: 78% of foster carers said the support received from their Supervising Social Worker (SSW) was either 'very good' (53%) or 'good' (25%) an improvement from 69% overall last year. However we are mindful that just over half (53%) of respondents said support from Croydon's children's social care was 'good' or 'very good' an increase from a minority of 42% last year. Fostering panel: 67% of respondents said they had a 'good' (47%) or 'very good' (20%) experience of the panel
- Communication and Support- Support groups continued to take place each month facilitated by CFCA but the service plans to expand on this to cover a wider area and need. We plan to expand on our written and direct interaction with carers and increase the opportunities for feedback and challenge.

During 2019 the Fostering Service continued to implement actions around the strengthening and development of our service delivery including actions to improve consistency of practice and support provided to carers and strengthening the practice in the service.

Duty and Placements

There is a continued demand for foster placements for specific children and young people. These include:

- Parent and child placements. We do not have any carers who are approved to take a parent or parents and child when parent is over 18 years old.
- Sibling groups

- Teenagers and children with complex needs, particularly those who have suffered trauma and present with emotional and behavioural needs (often includes violence towards adults).

This demand has been evidenced through the number of referrals for these types of placements as well as our challenge to secure placements for teenagers in house or with the independent fostering agencies. Due to the increase in demand for older children with more complex behaviours we have had to go the independent fostering agency (IFA) market to make placements as reflected in the placement activity below.

Connected Persons / Kinship/ Family and Friends Foster Carers

The Family& friends Team works with the family or kinship network of the child, who put themselves forward to care for a child or young person who otherwise would be placed with a mainstream Foster Carer. Carers are assessed and presented to the fostering panel with a recommendation about registration as a Foster Carer for a specific child/children. A Supervising Social Worker has overseen and provided additional support to the temporary approved connected carers for the duration of the assessment.

The Fostering Service is responsible for the provisions of support to the Foster Carers following approval.

It is fair to say that there are some connected persons Foster Carers who don't always meet the fostering standards as applied to scheme Foster Carers but on balance they are assessed to be good enough and offer other benefits to children. Therefore, both the Courts and our Fostering panels are supportive and promote connected person's placements but they require extensive support and are not without challenge.

The high numbers of assessments and the tight timescales involved have meant that we operate a hybrid model of both commissioned assessments alongside assessments completed in house.

The service has creatively used resources to complete assessments often within very short timescales and to ensure that the assessments do not compromise the 26 weeks' timeline to conclude proceedings.

6. Recruitment Activity

This report gives a summary of the fostering recruitment activity carried out by Coram-i and Croydon Council from November 2018 to October 2019.

Coram-i took on the responsibility for the recruitment and assessment of foster carers for Croydon Council in November 2018. The long term aim was to transfer the service from an outsourced model and work in partnership with Croydon Council to business engineer for efficiency with the intention of transferring the service back to the council in the space of two years. Targets for the recruitment of foster carers were ambitious given: the recognised national shortage of foster carers (especially for those children categorised as 'hard to place'); the competitive local context and the fact that no

prospective foster carers or Social Workers were transferred to Coram-i from the previous provider. In effect the service had to be built from scratch.

The service was designed to have a small core team with use of Independent Social Workers (ISW) to cover assessments because of the need for speedy delivery at inception but also in order to give the council less obligation in relation to TUPE at the end of the contract. The dependence on ISWs has led to the need for extra quality control measures (additional supervisions, second opinion visits, midway reviews, training and practice audits) and this in a context where ISWs are in short supply in London. The contract is now in its second year and much information has been collected on the success of the recruitment strategies which in turn will aid the partnership to refresh its plans moving forwards.

Recruitment strategy

The recruitment strategy focused on the ethical value of fostering alongside the reward, incentives and high level support provided to carers. In addition to promoting fostering, our strategy was to promote Croydon Family Placement Service as the place to go to if you are thinking about fostering. Staff working within the recruitment and support teams needed to continue to adopt an approach recognising that potential and existing carers can choose any local authority or IFA to foster. This is particularly relevant in helping people move through the journey with Croydon and make those already approved very loyal to the authority.

We therefore looked to position Croydon Fostering as offering:

- A customer-focused service and a competitive foster carer package.
- A transparent, supportive and timely assessment process.
- Understanding and supportive SSW who are always ‘on the other end of the phone’.

The strategy has been measured quarterly to build up a picture of effective methods of recruitment. This has been undertaken by a variety of methods including:

- Analysis of initial enquiry data – an ongoing monitoring system is in place via Framework and other database systems.
- Analysis of prospective carers’ data – ongoing monitoring systems are in place.
- Analysis of referrals.
- Analysis of exit interviews/feedback to evidence how services can be improved and promoted.
- Analysis of ‘drop out’ stage – when do people drop out of the fostering process i.e. information pack, initial visit, preparation training, or assessment stage.
- Evaluation of individual recruitment channels used – including hits to the website and press coverage.
- Surveying of newly approved foster carers post-November 2018.

Marketing and other activities

Over the past year, we have carried out a variety of activities to advertise and market the fostering service. These have included:

- Redesigning and publishing posters and advertising materials including press advertising (JC Decaux, Coulsdon resident's magazine) and displays at museums and Town Hall.
- Foster carer case studies and video testimonies of existing carers produced
- A6 flyer included in Council Tax mail out to 180,000 households
- Sponsoring an award at the Premier Gospel Music Awards
- Radio ads on Premier Radios various stations
- Activity through Foster Care Fortnight (ad campaign, social media, interviews on Premier Radio, BBC London)
- Pop-up shop in Whitgift Centre, stand at Pride Fest and stands in BWH canteen as well as plasma screen displays at Croydon Council offices.
- Focusing advertising on fostering as a career
- Targeted advertising to specific groups (Croydon Churches Together, My Foster Family, Empty Nest Campaign, Ethnic Forum Hub, Black history month, Muslim Foster Friday). Muslim Foster Friday was the top social media post for Croydon in the w/c 14th October. Premier Christian Radio and publications.
- Involving foster carer association support group to update current carers and remind them of the recommend a friend scheme and how to be involved in recruitment events (on three occasions).
- 16 libraries received fostering display packs and pop ups at employment and careers fairs.
- Croydon care experienced young person undertook research of community groups in the Coulsdon area, made contacts and cascaded marketing materials as well as securing useful links made for follow up recruitment activity. Young person also attended skills to foster to provide input.
- Virtual schools Arena meeting
- Vinyl banners outside of schools and places of worship
- Sponsored youth football kit

Recruitment activity

(i) Summary

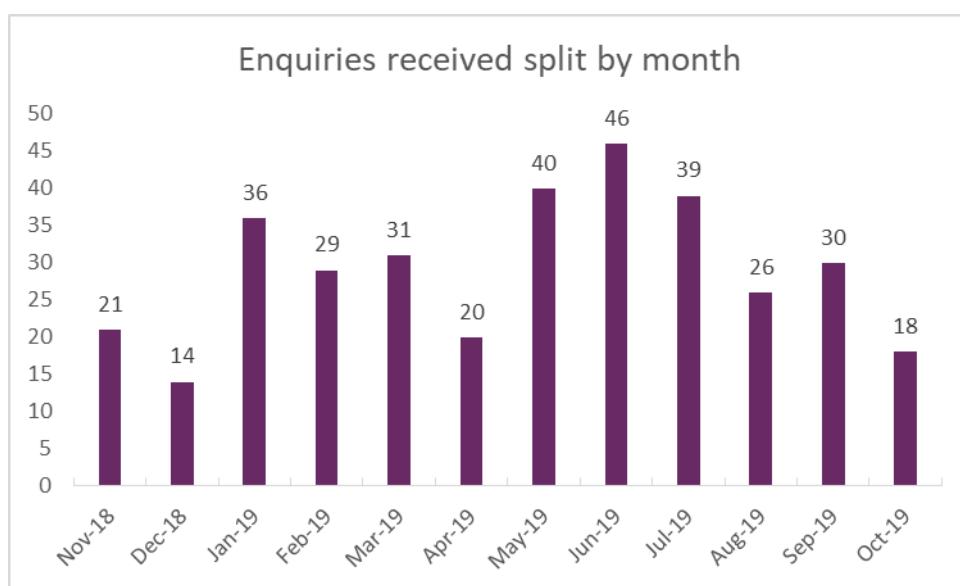
From November 2018 to October 2019, **350 enquiries were received and seven foster carers who were approved by Panel**. The fostering recruitment activity in Croydon and progression of cases are summarised below. The table outlines the number of cases that progressed to each stage of the foster carer recruitment journey in this time period.

Table 1: Summary of foster carer recruitment journey between Nov 2018 and Oct 2019

	Enquiries received	Carried out IHV	Progressed to StF	Progressed to Form F	Withdrawal during Form F assessment ¹	Still in assessment as at 31/10/19 ¹	Approved at Panel ¹
Number	350	96	72	32	9	16	7
Conversion rate		27%	75%	44%	28%	50%	22%

(ii) Enquiries

The 350 enquiries received over this time period (November 2018 to October 2019) is shown below, with clear peaks between May and July 2019, which correspond with increased activity around Fostering Fortnight.



Of the 350 enquiries received, 203 (58%) were not progressed any further. The most frequently cited reasons for closed enquiries were:

- Case specific reasons (no spare bedroom, motivation to foster, not at a stage where they were ready to proceed due to personal circumstances).
- Non-contact (we make several attempts to contact and if we are unable to get in touch with them after two weeks we close the enquiry and ask them to get in touch with us).
- Living too far away from Croydon.

Fourteen enquiries are currently on hold and a further 37 are still being progressed, leaving 96 enquiries that have progressed.

¹ Conversion rates for these metrics are taken as a percentage of the number of cases who progressed to Form F.

(iii) Initial Home Visits (IHVs)

96 enquiries resulted in an Initial Home Visit (27%). Of these a quarter (24) were rejected following the IHV. The most cited reasons for cases being rejected at IHV stage were:

- Lack of a dedicated spare bedroom.
- Current circumstances not suitable e.g. work commitments, no capacity to foster.

The average time taken between initial enquiry and the IHV was 40 days, with 19 IHVs (20%) conducted within two weeks of the initial enquiry and a further 40 (42%) within a month.

(iv) Skills to Foster (STF) training

Of the 72 households invited to STF following their IHV, 42 have now been to STF training and 19 households decided not to attend STF. The remaining 11 have yet to attend STF training. Ten of the 42 households that attended STF were not progressed to an assessment.

(v) Approvals

Seven foster carers were presented to Panel for approval between 1 November 2018 and 31 October 2019. All seven carers who went to Panel were approved. The approval terms for these seven carers are outlined below:

- 1 carer 0-18 year old mainstream/respite (preference 4-15 year old long term)
- 1 carer 0-7 year old mainstream
- 1 carer 0-18 year old mainstream
- 1 carer for 1 child (2 if siblings) aged 6-12
- 1 carer for 5-11 year old respite
- 1 carer 5-11 year old for 1 child
- 1 carer 0-11 year old for 1 child

The National Minimum Standards for Fostering state that an assessment should be presented to panel within 8 months of the application to be assessed. This timescale was met for all 7 cases.

In addition Coram-i also conducted a short assessment of a prospective carer who had originally been assessed by the previous provider and rejected by panel – this resulted in the carer being approved as a respite carer.

7. Key achievements during 2019

- Full review of the fostering service created an opportunity to identify the gaps in our practices and put in place an extensive programme of improvement
- Reviewed the way panel works and a new Panel Chair was appointed. The Panel had a focused workshop to consider its remit and reflect on practice. There is a plan to extend the “Central List” of panel members to increase diversity

- Reviewing and developing the foster carer's annual review process. This has seen an improvement in the number of Annual Reviewing undertaken timely and over 50% of these have had oversight from the newly appointed Fostering Reviewing Officers
- Introduction of foster carer reviews at fostering panel on a 3 yearly cycle with a full time fostering panel advisor in post
- Extended the Fostering Panels, the panel is now set to support permanency through long term foster care matches.
- Introduced new Supervising Social Worker visit template to improve recording and compliance with National Minimum Standards and also a record that puts the children at the centre.
- Recognised the need to improve the Foster carer's financial reward. There has been extensive consultation with Foster carers on the financial package, as well as benchmarking undertaken against other London boroughs and the new Financial Policy is to be implemented from 31 January 2020.
- Increase in fostering enquiries in the last part of 2019 and some progress in terms of new approvals
- Croydon foster carers respond positively and in general offer our young people the option of "Staying Put" when they reach 18 years old.
- Extensive work has undertaken in terms of improving the working relationships with other social work teams and services (VSK, Health etc)
- Foster carer project established to address issues raised by foster carers and the service
- Broadening of training programme with arrangements to deliver foster carer training and develop based on needs for 2020-2021

8. Key priorities for development during 2020-21

- Build on the Service relationships with Foster Carers by using systemic practice and develop confidence, competence and resilience to support children achieve a full sense of stability and security.
- Increase in children achieving permanency either by a court order or by making the arrangements in foster carer permanent. This increases the children sense of belonging and provides them with the stability that will contribute towards their overall well-being

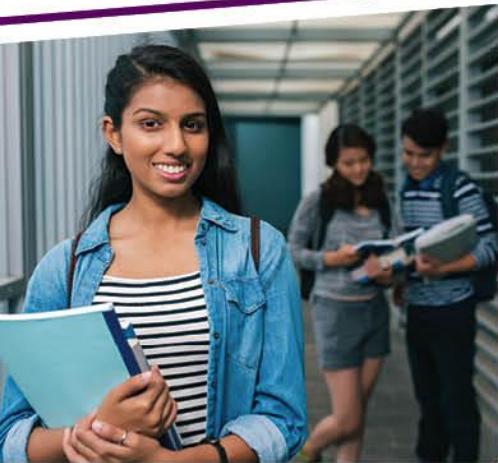
- Use our placement stability guidance and support children to develop ways of managing their difficulties and carers to provide non-judgmental and nurturing care that is supported by systemic practice.
- Reviewing and developing foster carer support groups (to include specific groups for connected carers)
- Where appropriate increase the utilisation of our Foster carers , as mentors, ambassadors , support group facilitators, etc
- Improve retention through improving benefits package available to foster carers as well and as a more responsive service
- Development of training programme tailored to their own needs and development , this includes an introduction to the systemic practice and other therapeutic parenting and online resources, including Foster carers attendance to Total Respect training
- Creating a training/learning event for Foster Carers around leaving care and preparing children for independence.
- Increase involvement of young people in training for our Foster carers and Young People being involved in Skills to Foster Training
- Foster Carer Handbook – to review the handbook and start work on offering the option of having a digital link to the handbook in the future.
- Build and enhance our links with the professional network around the child.
- Enabling the service to learn from Ofsted inspection and any recommendations made
- Work with Coram I to return the Recruitment and Assessment of Foster Carers in-house by November 2020.
- Increase in number of carers approved in line with the sufficiency strategy and build on work undertaken so far by Coram I.

This page is intentionally left blank

Fostering Service Statement of Purpose

April 2020-March 2021 Version1

be the change
for children and young people in croydon



Introduction

The Fostering Services Regulations 2011 Part 2 state that a fostering service must compile a written statement of purpose which sets out the aims and objectives of the service as a whole, and the services, and facilities which are provided.

This Statement of Purpose sets out the aims and objectives of Croydon Council Fostering Service. This document is made available, upon request, to foster carers and prospective foster carers, any child placed by the service, the parent of any child looked after and staff. It is also available on Croydon Council website.

The Statement of Purpose sets a framework for all of the business of the fostering service. It must be consistent with relevant legislation, Regulations, National Minimum Standards (NMS) and statutory guidance. The manager of the fostering service must ensure that the service is at all times conducted in a manner consistent with the Statement of Purpose. This document will be reviewed at least once annually. Any amendments due to changes in legislation or guidance will be incorporated into a new statement of purpose.

The Statement of Purpose makes reference to the Croydon Foster Carer Charter. Croydon Foster Carer Charter has been jointly produced by Croydon Foster Carers and London Borough of Croydon Fostering Service. It is a shared agreement setting out the mutual expectations and responsibilities of both Foster Carers and Croydon Council. The charter confirms The Corporate Parenting commitment to provide the best care for the children we look after. The Charter is a statement of Croydon's commitment to ensuring that, unless the child's needs require otherwise, the children in our care will be looked after in a family environment which is safe and nurturing and which supports them to achieve their full potential as individuals. The Charter is our recognition of the crucial daily role that foster carers have in the lives of the children they have welcomed into their homes and families.

The Statement is informed by:

- **Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations, Volume 4: Fostering Services**
- **Care Planning Regulations**
- **Fostering Services [England] Regulations 2011.**
- **The Fostering National Minimum Standards 2011**

1.1 Values, Aims and Objectives

1.1. Croydon Council Fostering Service is committed to providing quality safe care for every looked after child who lives with a Croydon foster carer

Values - Children:

- In line with the values and priorities set by the Council, the fostering service aims to work in partnership with children in care, parents, foster carers and colleagues across the Council, and with other agencies to ensure that children in care have the same opportunities as all children within the borough.
- This is achieved by offering placement choice so that children are matched to a carer who can meet their needs and enable children and young people to have positive experiences to support them to be safe, healthy and develop social relationships.
- The Fostering Service is committed to reducing the number of children placed with independent fostering agencies and continues to invest resources to increase the number and quality of Croydon fostering households .The service works closely with children's services within social care, feedback from children, young people and foster carers to meet the needs of children, to continuously improve and develop the service.
- The service is committed to recruiting, maintaining, supporting and training foster carers from wide range of diverse backgrounds. The diverse needs of Croydon's children and young people, in terms of sexuality, ethnicity and disability require the service to address these issues with foster carers during the assessment process, who are then supported to meet the individual needs of any child in the care.

The Aims of the Croydon Fostering Service are:

- To ensure that the right home is found for the child at the right time and without delay, with clear action plans agreed to ensure the placement meets the child's assessed needs and Croydon foster carers are able to care for and support children to meet all their outcomes
- To have a robust, transparent and efficient process to recruit foster carers.
- To recruit, assess, and approve more foster carers, within the nationally prescribed time-scales, who can meet the needs of every child referred to the fostering service
- To ensure that a good match is achieved in for children and that any gaps are supported by a robust plan to address these
- To provide children, young people fostered, and foster carers with handbooks which are a guide to foster care.
- To provide a comprehensive fostering support and supervision service to foster carers to enable a child to remain with a foster family and to ensure that the child reaches their full potential.

- To provide opportunities for foster carers to increase their skills and knowledge in fostering through the provision of training and development.

1.2 Named Person:

Registered Person: Robert Henderson, Executive Director, Children, Families and Education Department.

The **Registered Manager** is temporarily covered by Rodica Cobarzan, Service Manager, and Fostering Service.

The **Fostering Agency Decision Maker** (ADM) Vanessa Strang, Head of Service Social Work for Children looked after and care leavers.

1.4 Organisation and Structure

The Fostering Service is part of Croydon's Children, Families & Education Department. The Head of Service for social work with children looked after is responsible for the Fostering Service.

The Fostering Service and social workers are responsible for the support, supervision and development of approved foster carers.

The current structure of the Fostering Service is designed to meet the requirements of the Fostering Services' National Minimum Standards and the Children Act 1989 and associated regulations and guidance relating to the delivery of Fostering Services.

The Fostering Service is led by the Fostering Service Manager with three social work teams who provide a support, supervision and development service to Croydon's approved foster carers.

Foster Care recruitment is currently provided through a contract partnership arrangements with Coram I until November 2020, when this will be returned to the local authority fostering service.

Relevant qualifications and experiences of staff.

All Social Work Managers and Social Workers hold social work qualifications and are registered with the HCPC and have relevant experiences working with children and families.

1.5 Services provided

The fostering teams provide a range of fostering services:

- **Task focused or short term foster carers** who provide placements for children and young people at the point of need and in accordance with their Care Plan, either to return to birth family or to move to a permanent placement.

- **Permanent or long-term foster carers** who make a commitment to care for a child or young person until they reach independence.
- **Connected persons carers, often known as family and friend's carers** are foster carers approved to look after a specific child or children. These carers are family members or friends usually with a pre-existing relationship with child or children before they became looked after by Croydon.
- **Regulation 24 foster carers, are family and friends foster carers who are temporarily approved to look after a child know to them**
- **Foster to Adopt foster carers** are approved adopters, temporarily approved as foster carers for a named child, where the intention and Local Authority care plan is that the child will be adopted by this family.
- **Parent and Child Foster Carers**

1.6 The Fostering Task

The task of securing high quality foster care includes:

- advertising for and recruiting prospective foster carers;
- Quality assuring the assessment of prospective carers under Regulation 26 (The Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011) for approval by the Fostering Panel or, in the case of family and friends carers or connected persons conducting planned assessments for temporary approvals in accordance with Regulation 24 (The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010) assessments;
- Consultation with other professionals, foster carers and families around making appropriate placements for children and 'matching' children with carers who can meet their needs;
- Family-finding for children needing permanent placements,
- Support and supervision of foster carers in their work with children, children's families, departmental social workers and other professionals;
- Attendance at various professional meetings to ensure that foster carers are actively supported in carrying out a child's individual care plan;
- Completion of annual reviews on foster carers;
- Delivering a programme of on-going learning and development opportunities and training for foster carers;

- Support & training in completing the Children Workforce Development Council standards for foster carers (TSD);
- Contributing to investigations into complaints and allegations made against carers and supporting them through the process;
- Providing daily Fostering Duty Service from 9am-5pm, Mon-Fri;
- An out of hours support service for Foster Carers requiring advice about a child in their care during evenings and at weekends;
- Working in partnership with the Croydon Foster Carers Association.

Procedures and processes for recruiting, approving and reviewing Foster Carers

From 1st November 2018, the Local Authority commissioned Coram BAAF on a two year contract to undertake the recruitment and assessment of foster carers. Coram are responsible for the complete process from marketing to approval, with a clear handover procedure in place to ensure that newly approved foster carers experience a seamless transition from the assessment service to the supervision and support service they will receive from Croydon's fostering service . Supervising social workers are allocated and meet applicants before panel. The contract aim is to achieve the approval of 30 new fostering households per annum.

The priority of the year was to develop a robust recruitment and assessment framework for Croydon foster carers. The second year is to support the service to build an in-house fostering recruitment service which will be transferred to the Council at the end of the second year.

1.7 Recruitment of foster carers

There is a clear two staged approach, known as Stage One and Stage Two. This is followed to support applicants to find out more about fostering and to assess their suitability to care for looked after children and become registered foster carers. To ensure a smooth and timely approach .Croydon fostering service, through the commissioned Coram service have agreed that Stage One and Two will run simultaneously.

Stage One

Includes undertaking a range of statutory and reference checks and offering preparation training

Stage Two

Involves the in-depth assessment, also known as the Home Study.

Interested applicants can find out about fostering by telephone, completion of an on line application form, visit Bernard Wetherill House or attend one of the frequently held information sessions held at the Town Hall.

Details of this process are described in the Croydon Information Pack for Foster Carer Applicants which is available online on the Croydon Website, www.croydon.gov.uk/fostering. The Croydon Fostering Service also has a dedicated free phone number (**0800 112 3644**) and an email address: iwanttostfoster@croydon.gov.uk.

The aim is to provide applicants ongoing support, advice and information at each stage of the preparation process, whilst also assessing in a transparent way their suitability to become registered foster carers and provide safe and quality care to Croydon's looked after children and young people.

1.7.1 Information Meeting

All enquirers are invited to attend an information meeting run by Fostering Social Workers and current foster carers who can discuss their fostering experiences. This is not required although applicants are encouraged to attend these valuable sessions.

The purpose of these sessions is to provide people with basic information about fostering, explain what Croydon Council is looking for and outline the preparation and assessment process. At the meeting, details of attendees are recorded and feedback is sought to support continued development of the service and to help evaluate the effectiveness of recruitment methods.

1.7.2 Initial Telephone Assessment

This is completed by one of the assessment social workers to gather more details from applicants, establish their current circumstances and to provide them with more information about fostering for Croydon.

When there is the potential to progress further, an assessing social worker will undertake an initial home visit to gather more information about the applicant and to provide them with further details. If this is possible or the service and the applicants, they are invited to submit their application which triggers the start of Stage One.

1.7.3 Skills to Foster Group Training

The main purpose of the training is to provide more details about the role and tasks of fostering. Direct information is provided by way of presentations, films, there are small and large group discussions and exercises, and applicants are encouraged to participate fully in the discussions through case studies.

An important secondary purpose is evaluation and applicants are informed at the beginning that the facilitators' observations will form part of the assessment process. Applicants may also be counselled out at this stage as the groups will encourage

them to explore their own motivation, strengths, and abilities to foster, helping them to decide whether fostering is right for them.

The training and groups are co-led by a Social Worker from the fostering team and experienced foster carers.

1.7.4 Statutory Checks and References

The Fostering Service provides administrative support in managing all statutory checks; Medicals and DBS. The Service will take appropriate action on DBS disclosures as soon as possible and before they are presented to the Fostering and Permanence Panel.

Written references are required from three personal referees who must be interviewed by the assessing Social Worker. A report attached to the Form F should give details of these interviews, including the workers' assessment of the references.

Other checks include:

- The applicants' employer (continuity of employment must be addressed and any gaps investigated);
- Previous partners;
- The applicants' children's school;
- A full medical history;
- Evaluation of financial stability.

Criminal Records (DBS checks).

Regulation 26(5) prohibits the approval of any person as a prospective foster carer where they or any member of their household is known to have a conviction or caution for specific offences. All offences must be brought to the attention of the Head of Service and the Fostering Service Manager who will decide whether or not to proceed with the assessment.

1.7.5 The Assessment of Foster Carer applicants using objective, robust, fair, and transparent criteria.

All applicants are assessed by an individual process to establish their suitability to be registered as a foster carer. . The Foster Carers' Report (Form F or Form C for connected persons) will be used to record the assessment and the format for assessment interviews will normally follow the guidelines. Applicants are encouraged to engage fully in the preparation of the assessment, including providing evidence and completing certain sections themselves where possible.

Under the Fostering National Minimum Standards 2011, the expectation is that prospective foster carers' completed reports will be presented to the Fostering Panel within eight months of application. However, within Croydon the aim is to achieve this within a five month timescale.

The completed Foster Carers' Report (Form F/Form C) is shared with the applicant(s), who will retain a copy. If applicants are unhappy with any of the content of the report, the assessing worker should seek first to deal with this by negotiation. If this is not possible, the applicants are invited to submit their own comments in writing for presentation to the Fostering and Permanence Panel. All applicants are expected to attend Panel in person.

1.8 The Fostering and Permanence Panel

The Fostering and Permanence Panel is chaired by an independent person, who ensures that the panel is able to fulfil its quality assurance function free of undue influence. The Panel is constituted from a central list in line with Fostering Regulations and the requirements of the National Minimum Standards. The Panel meets three times a month or, as and when required and is supported by a Panel Adviser and Administrator.

1.8.1 The statutory functions of the panel are:

- To consider applications for approval & to recommend whether a person is suitable or not to become a foster carer & to recommend the number & age to be placed.
- To consider the first annual review of the foster carer & other subsequent annual reviews that is referred to it.
- To ensure the assessments undertaken by the assessor is balanced and of sufficient quality.
- To advise & monitor the effectiveness of procedures. To offer advice & make recommendations on any other matter or cases referred to panel by the Fostering Service.
- Consider Standard of Care issues and make recommendations as necessary.
- Consider matching of children with foster carers where the plan is for children to remain in long term foster care.

Decisions are made by Croydon's Agency Decision Maker, Head of Service for Social work with children looked after, after considering the recommendations of the panel.

1.8.2 Presentation of Assessment Report to the Fostering Panel

The Assessing Social Worker must attend the Fostering and Permanence Panel in person to present the Prospective Foster Carers Report. Applicants are expected to attend the Panel. The Panel will make one of three recommendations:

- Recommend to the Agency Decision Maker approval of the applicant as a foster carer.
- Recommend to the Agency Decision Maker that the applicant is not approved as a foster carer.
- Defer - Ask for further information on any relevant matter.

Foster carer applicants are given written information explaining the panel process and are positively encouraged to attend. Their feedback is sought as Croydon and the Panel is a learning organisation and seeks to continually consider any developments and improvements they may need to make. The feedback is collated and considered by the service and panel at bi annual business meeting.

1.8.3 Applicants Not Approved By Panel

The Agency Decision Maker will write to all applicants whose applications were not recommended for approval by the Panel and will advise the applicants of their Qualified Determination.

The letter will give the reasons for this and advise the applicants of the various appeals routes available including the **Independent Review Mechanism (IRM)**.

1.8.4 Connected Persons Assessment.

Regulation 24 of the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) 2010 provides for the temporary placement of a child with a relative or friend who is not an approved Carer for a period of up to sixteen weeks. If the child is to remain beyond sixteen weeks, a further 8 weeks extension, Regulation 25 can be agreed by the Head of Service for Social Work for children looked after and care leavers.

Immediate placements under Regulation 24 may only be made provided that prior to placement;

- the accommodation has been inspected;
- Police check 87a or DBS is received and checked for suitability;
- information has been obtained about all other members of the household;
- the Carer is a relative or friend or other person connected to the child (a friend being normally defined as someone previously known to the child and a connected person someone who knows the child in a more professional capacity);

- notification in writing setting out the terms of the approval, followed by a written agreement made between the Carer and the Local Authority covering the matters set out in schedule 5 to the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011; and
- The authority is satisfied that the placement is the most suitable way of performing their duty under Section 22(3) of the Children Act 1989. The child's Social Worker will complete a referral form, initiate DBS and other checks; and refer the matter to the Fostering Service. The Manager leading on recruitment and assessment will then allocate a Social Worker to carry out a Regulation 24 assessment of the friend and family carer with a view to seeking specific approval at the Fostering Panel within sixteen weeks. In exceptional circumstances temporary approvals can be extended for up to twenty four weeks.

1.9 An equal opportunities policy that covers all aspects of fostering:

The Croydon Council Fostering Service works to the Council's Equality and Diversity Strategy, which is available to all staff via the Council's Intranet service.

The Fostering Service will treat all service users fairly, openly and with respect throughout the assessment and recruitment process. Applicants wishing to be approved as foster carers will be considered irrespective of age, ethnicity, religion, class, gender, sexual orientation or disability and on the basis of being able to parent and to meet the needs of looked after children.

1.10 Foster Carer Annual Reviews

1.10.1 The Fostering Services (England) Regulation 2011, Regulation 28 requires that carers be reviewed at least once a year. A review can be held at other times if there has been a significant change in circumstances or if concerns arise.

The review considers the foster carer's previous year of fostering and makes a recommendation about their continued fostering registration. Reviews are carried out in the carer's home, the meeting is chaired by a fostering reviewing officer who will consider the recommendation of the social worker and will make their own recommendation based of the evidence in written reports and the discussion held in the review meeting. All registered foster carers in the household must attend the review meeting.

1.10.2 The views of children, their social workers, independent reviewing officer, birth parents and the fostering family will be sought in the annual review. Health and safety checks will be completed annually and police and medical references updated every second or third year.

1.10.4 The Local Authority is working to improve the quality and timeliness of all annual reviews. Two Fostering Reviewing Officers were appointed in March 2019.

1.10.5 The first review is presented to the Fostering and Permanence Panel and then every three years thereafter.

1.11 Continuous Professional Development

1.11.1 A comprehensive training programme is provided for all carers which is reviewed annually. Foster carers have access to LSCB and online line training available to borough staff.

1.11.2 The Training Support and Development Standards for Foster Carers (TSD).

All carers are expected to complete the Standards within the first year of registration. Ongoing workshops are delivered throughout the year supporting the foster carers in completing the Training and Development Standards for Foster Carers.

Carers are expected to complete a minimum of 30 hours training in their first year of approval and a minimum of 20 in subsequent years. A Personal Development Plan (PDP) will be completed annually with all Croydon foster carers and reviewed at their annual review meeting.

1.12 Support, Supervision and Development of Croydon Foster Carers

1.12.1 All registered Carers will have an allocated Supervising Social Worker who is responsible for ensuring that Carers receive an appropriate level of support and supervision to successfully undertake their work in supporting, meeting the needs and improving the outcomes for children in their care.

1.12.2 Supervising Social Workers will ensure that Carers have access to necessary support, advice and training to carry out their roles and responsibilities. This will vary from Carer to Carer, but will include all of the following:

- Complete a Foster Care Agreement with all Carers (Regulation 27 (5) Schedule 5 of Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011).
- Ensure the Carer has an adequate supply of equipment.
- Ensure that carers have an up-to-date copy of the Croydon Foster Carers' Handbook.
- Ensure that Carers are provided with up-to-date details of procedures and policies, including the Complaints and Suggestions Procedure, payment procedures and the service's insurance policy for Carers.
- Carers automatically become members of the Foster Talk and the Croydon Foster Care Association

- Visit the Carers on a six weekly basis and whenever reasonably requested by Carers or as deemed necessary by the agency to support and supervise a carer.
- Make at least one unannounced visit per annum.
- Carry out an annual health and safety inspection of the carer's home, or when the carer moves or has major work carried out on their home, and this is considered at each annual review.
- Ensure that the carer is recording placement details as stipulated by Croydon fostering service.
- Carry out an annual review of the Carer's approval.
- Identify, in conjunction with the Carer, complete a personal development plan with details of training needs/core requirements and identify purposes ways in which these may be met.
- Attend reviews, case conferences and other planning meetings in respect of children placed when requested by the carer or the IRO.
- Investigate any complaint by or against Carers' standards of care in accordance with relevant procedures.
- Ensure that lines of communication between the Carer and the child's Social Worker are open and effective.
- Respond promptly to telephone calls and correspondence from the Carer.
- Keep a record of their visits, share these with foster carers and record these on CRS.

1.12.3 Supervising Social Workers ensure that visits are arranged in such a way that there is adequate time to address the Carer's own role and development in addition to any visits which may be necessary in respect of individual placements. Carers' children are also provided with opportunities to discuss their experiences of fostering. Visits are expected at four weekly intervals.

1.13 Foster Carer Charter

Croydon Council has drawn up an agreed Croydon Foster Carer Charter that sets out the expectations and responsibilities of the Croydon Fostering Service, Croydon Foster Carers and other people involved in the care of looked after children. This is available to on the website.

1.14 Financial Allowance Policy

Approved Croydon foster carers, including connected carers and regulation 24 temporary carers (from the date of introduction of the new 2020 fostering allowance policy) are paid a weekly amount which is made up of a fee and a maintenance element. The fee element is paid to the carers as recognition of the skills, responsibilities and experience that they bring to the fostering task. The maintenance element covers the costs of caring for the child/children in their care. The policy covers costs for equipment etc.

1.16 Services for Children

Children's Guide

A new children guide to fostering is currently in draft to be completed by June 2020 following consultation with the children in care council.

1.17 Newsletter

A foster carer Newsletter is produced on a regular basis to keep carers informed of:

- Advice on practice
- Changes to policy
- General information on fostering
- Staff updates within the fostering team
- Training opportunities

1.17.1 Croydon Foster Carers Association

There is an established Croydon Foster Carers Association that is run and managed by the foster carers through a management committee. The Head of Service and Fostering Service Manager hold quarterly meetings with the association.

1.18. Support Group

A monthly foster carer support group is held, funded and supported with fostering team managers in attendance

1.19 Complaints & Allegations against Foster Carers

Where there are complaints about the standards of care provided by a foster carer these are managed by the service. If there are allegations of inappropriate behaviour by foster carers, these are managed through the procedures for allegations agreed by Croydon Safeguarding Children Partnership. The Local

Authority Designated Officer (LADO) process is also involved in the management of allegations against foster carers.

1.20 Complaints from Foster Carers

Complaints about the service are dealt with under the Corporate Services Complaints procedure which can be accessed via Croydon Council website or by calling Tel: 020 8726 6000 ext. 62753 or at complaints@croydon.gov.uk

1.21 Registration Authority

The address for the OFSTED Registration Authority is:
Clive House, 70 Petty France, London SW1H 9EX www.ofsted.gov.uk

1.22 The system for reviewing the Statement of Purpose

The Statement of Purpose is available to anyone working for the purposes of the fostering service, with children who may be in our care including families, professionals and legal guardians, and anyone wishing to become a foster carer.

The Statement of Purpose is available on the Croydon website.

The Statement of Purpose will be reviewed annually. The information contained in this Statement of Purpose can be made available in alternative formats: Large print, Braille, audio tape or disk. We can also translate the information into other languages.

Please contact:

Croydon Council
Fostering Service
Early Help and Children's Social Care
London Borough of Croydon
4TH Floor, Bernard Weatherill House
8 Mint Walk
Croydon
CR0 1EA

By telephone: 020 8726 6000

By fax: 020 8760 5665

By email: fosteringenquiries@croydon.gov.uk

This page is intentionally left blank

Corporate Parenting Panel Work Programme 2019/20

Meeting date	Wed 3 July 19	Thurs 5 Sept	Wed 13 Nov	Wed 15 Jan 20	Wed 4 Mar	Thurs 30 Apr
Theme	SUFFICIENCY	EDUCATION	HEALTH	ADOPTION	FOSTERING	
Item	Terms of Reference	Exam Results Exclusion SEN	IHAs	Annual Report of Adoption Service and Panel (inc. plans/update of regional adoption agency)	Annual Report of Fostering Service and Panel	Annual Report of Corporate Parenting Panel
Officer						
Item	Residential Care (Part B paper—37 children)	Mentoring and Careers guidance for LAC and CL	RHAs		Statement of Purpose	CIC Performance Scorecard
Officer						
Item	Update on the South Commissioning Programme	Difference between Mentoring and IV work	CAMHS	CIC Performance Scorecard	Recruitment and Deregistration	
Officer						
Item	IRO Annual Report	Engagement Achievement (inc. complaints and leaving opportunities)	CIC Performance Scorecard		Review of Fostering Services	
Officer						
Item	Annual Report of Corporate Parenting	Annual Report of Virtual School			Escalation Policy for Foster Carers	
Officer						
Item	CIC Performance Scorecard	CIC Performance Scorecard			CIC Performance Scorecard	
Officer						
Item					Update on NEET	
Officer						
Item					Leaving Care Offer and pledge	

This page is intentionally left blank