

# Scrutiny Children & Young People Sub-Committee Agenda



To: Councillor Robert Ward (Chair)  
Councillor Sean Fitzsimons (Vice-Chair)  
Councillors Sue Bennett, Jerry Fitzpatrick, Bernadette Khan, Shafi Khan,  
Ola Kolade and Louisa Woodley

## Co-optee Members

Josephine Copeland (Non-voting Teacher representative), Mr Leo Morrell (Voting Diocesan Representative), Ms Elaine Jones (Voting Diocesan Representative (Catholic Diocese)) and Paul O'Donnell (Voting Parent Governor Representative)

Reserve Members: Margaret Bird, Mike Bonello, Alison Butler, Pat Clouder, Mary Croos, Patsy Cummings, Felicity Flynn, Helen Redfern and Andy Stranack

A meeting of the **Scrutiny Children & Young People Sub-Committee** which you are hereby summoned to attend, will be held on **Tuesday, 14 September 2021** at **6.30 pm** in **This meeting is being held remotely.**

Asmat Hussain  
Executive Director of Resources and  
Monitoring Officer (Interim)  
London Borough of Croydon  
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Monday, 6 September 2021

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If you require any assistance, please contact Stephanie Davis  
02087266000 x84384 as detailed above.

## **AGENDA – PART A**

**1. Apologies for absence**

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

**2. Minutes of the previous sub-committee meeting (Pages 5 - 14)**

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 22 June 2021 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. Action list update**

Discussion on actions arising from previous meetings.

**6. Early Help CSC and Education DashBoard**

To receive the Children's Social Care and Education Dashboards.  
(To Follow)

**7. Service Impact and Budget Update (Pages 15 - 50)**

To receive an overview of the staff changes, service impact and response to the budget reductions proposed under the Croydon

Renewal Plan.

**8. Cabinet Response to Recommendations (Pages 51 - 54)**

The Children and Young People Sub-Committee is asked to review the response given by the Cabinet to recommendations made by the Committee and consider whether any further action is necessary.

**9. What difference has this meeting made to Croydon's children**

To discuss the findings from this meeting and expectations for Croydon's Children.

**10. Work Programme 2021-22 (Pages 55 - 58)**

The Children and Young People Sub-Committee is asked to:-

1. Note the current position of its Work Programme for 2021-22,
2. To consider whether there are any other items that should be added to the work programme.

**11. Exclusion of the Press and Public**

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

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

## Scrutiny Children & Young People Sub-Committee

Meeting of held on Tuesday, 22 June 2021 at 6.30 pm in This meeting was held remotely via Microsoft Teams.

### MINUTES

**Present:** Councillor Robert Ward (Chair);  
Councillor Sean Fitzsimons (Vice-Chair);  
Councillors Sue Bennett, Bernadette Khan, Shafi Khan and Louisa Woodley

#### **Co-optee Members**

Josephine Copeland (Non-voting Teacher representative)

**Also Present:** Councillor Alisa Flemming, Cabinet Member for Children Young People and Learning  
Councillor Maddie Henson, Deputy Cabinet Member for Children Young People and Learning  
Councillor Helen Redfern, Shadow Cabinet Member: Children, Young People & Learning  
Councillor Mike Bonello  
Councillor Ola Kolade  
Debbie Jones, Interim Director of Early Help and Children's Social Care  
Kerry Crichlow, Interim Director of Improvement and Quality  
Kate Bingham, Interim Head of Finance - Children, Families and Education  
Pasquale Brammer, Head of Integrated Commissioning and Procurement (Children, Families and Education)  
Harold Bennison, SLAM  
Gordon Knott, Croydon Drop In  
Patrick Shields, St Mary's School  
Karen Stott, Talk off the Record  
  
Karen Stott , Talk off the Record

**Apologies:** Elaine Jones and Paul O'Donnell

### PART A

**33/21 Apologies for absence**

Apologies received from Elaine Jones and Paul O'Donnell

**34/21 Minutes of the previous sub-committee meeting**

The minutes of the meeting of 20 April 2020 was agreed as an accurate record.

**35/21 Disclosures of interest**

There were none.

**36/21 Urgent Business (if any)**

There was none.

**37/21 Action list update**

There were no action to be updated on.

**38/21 Covid Response- Emotional Well Being and Children's Mental Health**

The Head of Commissioning and Procurement introduced the item, with invited guests outlining details in a [Presentation](#).

Following the presentations, Members' had the opportunity to raise questions.

In response to a question on when services would resume face to face contact with children and young people, Members were informed that services were slowly increasing the amount of face to face contact. All contact was completed under strict Covid guidelines using correct PPE. It had emerged that some young people preferred online contact and this was still being offered. The Single Point of Contact service continued to receive referrals throughout the pandemic although there was a significant reduction in the early stages, referrals were now increasing to pre pandemic levels.

It was further asked what the figures of children contacted weekly by services were and Members were informed that services were back up to 60% face to face contact. Many young people preferred the alternative means of contact as some did not want to travel to offices in central Croydon at this time. Both Croydon Drop In and Off the Record have always worked on a self-referral basis and this had not changed.

In relation to contact with younger children, Members were advised that at least 50% of children worked with were between the ages of 10-13. The advantage of other means of contact such as telephone was that therapist were able to engage with parents of carers which may not have been the case previously.

A Member questioned what consideration if any was being given to extend the trailblazer funding that had 30 schools involved in the project to the rest of the schools in the Borough. Members were advised that the numbers of schools involved in Trailblazers came from commissioners, most of the work to date was in primary schools and was done in conjunction with parents. It had been difficult to get secondary schools involved although they were being encouraged to participate. There was another Trailblazer project running across South West London for colleges and post 16. It was important to note that there wasn't a school in the Borough demanding to be involved that was not yet involved.

In response to a question on what mechanisms were in place to capture hidden harm and what support there was available for children and families, officers said that there were several routes for young people to contact and seek support. Partners were working to streamline pathways in order to ensure they were clear and accessible. Investigations were taking place at national level to capture what was happening through surveys which gave insight to what was occurring. One of the lessons learnt was for agencies not to make assumptions and that whilst there had been an increase in hidden harm, this was not actually in the cohort of children that were previously known or were accessing services. Those deeply affected by events of the pandemic were children that had not previously accessed services.

It was asked if there were children who had not returned to school and what actions had been taken. An invited Guest commented that at his school, attendance was higher than it had been pre-pandemic. The school had been able to foster good connections with families who had not engaged in the past. Throughout the pandemic, engagement by students online was closely monitored with home visits conducted where appropriate. Staff were vigilant in spotting changes in behaviours.

Further information would be sought on missing numbers of children from schools as well as data on SEN children who may have been disproportionately impacted by events of Covid-19 and the details on specific outcomes for that group.

A Member asked what were the wait times for detailed intervention and assessment for young people from mental health services. Officers said that following initial assessment there was a wait time of between seven to ten weeks for ongoing regular counselling. During the wait period contact was maintained and there was an offer of short-term intervention where necessary.

In Child Adolescence Mental Health Services, different pathways had differing wait times. Eating disorders had wait times of between one to four weeks, Crisis and follow-up was up to one week. The average wait time for other services was 13 weeks. In the Autism Pathway, there were approximate wait times of over 52 weeks for assessment. One of the drivers for the long wait times was the pathway which was different to others in the rest of the country and as a result the services were being redesigned.

It was challenged that the level of wait times was unacceptable in a number of areas of service and in light of the Council's restructure to reduce spend, it was asked how the budget would impact on post-pandemic recovery. Officers said that the majority of funding for CAMHS and mental health was from the Clinical Commissioning Group. There were some joint contracts which resulted in some funding from the Council and there were no mass cuts planned as part of the Council's reconfiguration. There were several streams that contributed to the situation of the service such as badly planned pathways, workforce issues, which was a national and well as local issue and the level of complex needs.

It was commented that if substantial reconfiguration of the service was being undertaken, this would require further Scrutiny by the Health and Social Care Sub-Committee and a conversation would need to take place with officers to facilitate a meeting.

The Chair thanked officers and invited guests for their contribution to the meeting.

In reaching its recommendations, the Sub-Committee came to the following conclusions

1. The support being provided to families by schools and the voluntary service was commendable
2. It was important that services explore ways to capture and monitor issues that manifest over time, especially those where issues may be manifesting differently due to the unique challenges of the pandemic.
3. The monitoring on different challenges in contact with families in order to track emerging issues was crucial.
4. It was evident that there was now increased need for services and understanding and monitoring of need was essential.
5. There were serious concerns regarding the waiting times for some services in CAHMS and it was welcomed that a substantial reform of its services was being undertaken.
6. It was important to understand the effects and responses from services of lockdown on children and young people with severe learning difficulties and profound multiple learning difficulties.

The Sub-Committee recommended that

1. That the CAHMS service provide a report to the Health and Social Care sub-committee on the reconfiguration of its services and how this will impact or improve the unacceptable levels of waiting times for assessment in some areas of its service.
2. That the CAHMS service report back to the Children and Young People sub-committee on targets for waiting times and monitoring framework.
3. That services explore ways and options of being more systematic about hidden harm.

Request for info:

- Data on children who accessed the service on a regular basis pre pandemic who had not been back in contact.
- A short briefing on the specific response by services on the effects of lockdown on children with severe learning difficulties and profound and multiple learning difficulties and how outcomes were being measured.



The Interim Director of Early Help and Children's Social Care introduced the report and the following was noted:

- Staff had begun to return to the offices of Bernard Weatherill House under clear Covid safe conditions.
- Children at highest risk continued as they had been throughout the pandemic, to receive face to face visits. There were instances where a family member may have tested positive for Covid and ways of assessments was a decision that continued to be made on a case by case basis.
- Virtual visits will cease for children that require statutory visits as face to face was to recommence.
- A recent Ofsted visit had taken place which was not an inspection. They focused on the practices in the frontline section. The draft letter will be published in a few weeks and the department was confident of favourable feedback.
- There has been six exclusions rescinded

The sub-committee had the opportunity to ask questions

It was commented that there had been a noted increase in exclusions and officers responded that it had since been identified that six had been rescinded and a request would be made to the Interim Director of Education to provide further information as to the reasons behind the decision.

It was asked how Croydon Music and Arts was being funded as the £13k for the service had been removed from the General Fund. Officers said that this was correct as there was no longer additional funding from the Council for the service as it was able to operate without it. Croydon Music and Arts was self-funding, primarily through grants, which was in common with other LA's.

An update was requested on the departments Transformation Funding. Officers said transformation funding had been utilised for transformation purposes only, with extensive work undertaken to ensure this. There had been success with a number of bids and there remained stringent reviews of spending. There had been success in support for short term court work teams to address loss of expert capacity in social work for families. There was targeted work on recruitment and retention with a focus on use of diverse media. There was some short term capacity on foster care department.

It was asked what the alternative would be if the departments could not achieve the savings indicated in the report. Officers said that in being transparent at the end of period two and if the identified savings were not made, the reality was that the savings would have to be found elsewhere.

It was requested that officers start reporting identified additional savings in the event that savings could not be achieved once finalised as it was expected that officers should have commenced discussions on the proposals.

The Chair added that through offline robust discussions that had taken place, he was reassured on the transparency of activities of the service that had been reported.

A Member commented that building skills in fostering was crucial to ensure future savings could be made and improve services for the children and families served.

Clarification was sought on the discrepancy in the figures in the DSG block figures for 2019/20 and 2020/21 and officers agreed to provide a response to this following the meeting.

#### The Sub-Committee came to the following conclusions

1. The report presented was detailed and provided a clear picture of the situation in the departments.
2. The sub-committee was reassured that the department was on track with its savings proposals and were keeping line of sight by reviewing on a regular basis
3. The sub-committee looked forward to the Ofsted letter when published following the recent visit.
4. There was interest in the rise of children with ECHP Plan and the sub-committee would welcome a report of the reasons behind the increase.

#### Actions/Request for information

- Data on school attendance numbers
- Data on offer for children with SEN in terms of identifying hidden harm
- Data on children in EHCP plans
- Report states 6 exclusions had been rescinded, what does this mean? What was the process behind this decision and should it be changed to avoid stress to the families involved?
- The report details discrepancies in figures on the schools DSG Block balances of 2019/20 and 2021, an explanation of the balances to be provided

#### **40/21 Refreshed Children's Improvement Plan**

The Interim Director of Improvement and Quality introduced the report and the following was noted:

- This was a refresh of the continuous improvement plan and brings together two elements, the savings and growth planned over 2021/2024 in particular those that needed to be achieved over a number of years. Also the practice improvement priority for Early Help and Children's Social Care, as per the ILACS recommendations from 2020
- The plan was a three years plan with an annual review process through the Children's Improvement Board.

- There was a proposal for quarterly reports to the Children’s Scrutiny Sub-Committee to look at the progress against the savings as well as the practice improvement priorities
- Work was still needed on Scrutiny challenge and assurance role and strengthening links with the improvement board whilst avoiding duplication.

There was challenge on equalities outcomes and how this was ensured for children and families. It was asked how this outcome would be captured. Officers said that this was also a point made by the staff representative improvement board. It was acknowledged that this has not been addressed in the report and a meeting was being convened by officers to discuss this point and how to positively promote equality as part of the work being done

It was commented that the report had indicated projects that had dropped off and items that were at risk, the detail behind this had to be made clearer in future reporting.

It was commented that dialogue was needed on presentation of the quarterly report prior to the next meeting.

Members were encouraged to send further comments as indicated in the report by 29 June 2021

The Chair thanked officers for their attendance and responses to questions.

In reaching its recommendations, the Sub-Committee came to the following conclusions:

1. The sub-committee welcomed the proposals on a quarterly progress report being included in its work programme.
2. It was clear that further work needed to be done on governance assurance, strengthening of interface with the sub-committee without duplication.
3. The Plan was lacking in detailing achievement of equalities outcomes for children.
4. It would appear on the report that some projects had ‘dropped off’ and with limited detail as to the reason. Reassurance was needed on the reason why those projects had ‘dropped off’.

The Sub-Committee recommended that

1. The Chair work closely with officers on what the quarterly progress report that would be presented to the committee would look like.
2. That quarterly reports detail all completed projects or projects that had ‘dropped off’ and the reasons for this
3. The Improvement Plan detail achievement of equalities outcomes for children and families.

The Executive Director for Children Families and Education introduced the item and outlined details in a [Presentation](#).

Following the presentation, Members had the opportunity to ask questions.

The Chair summarised that:

- It was clear that Croydon wanted to take care of all children in need despite the current climate
- Some progress had been made in trying to get other Local Authorities to share responsibility for UASC through the Pan London Agreement.
- Members were unanimous in their belief that funding from central government was not adequate, in particular for the 18-25 year old group.
- The paper was referred to Scrutiny by Cabinet but it was unclear what was being asked of the sub-committee.

It was commented that there was uncertainty as to whether this meeting was a pre decision Scrutiny exercise or just an information giving exercise. Officers said that there were two issues for consideration, the need to reduce the number of UASC children in Croydon and also the funding gap. Solutions were being sought for both issues and a decision would have to be taken to reduce the pressure on Croydon. The Cabinet Member for Children Families and Education added that the issues presented a number of complexities, the details of which were being presented for noting by Scrutiny at this stage to bring awareness that decisions on safeguarding and risk may have to be taken where relevant with little notice. There would be an opportunity for further discussions but it was vital that Scrutiny had early oversight of the situation.

In response to a question on what measure were in place to maintain the budget , officers said that they were working towards ensuring that they could get the best value for placements but more needed to be done in this area.

It was clear that a meeting would need to take place to discuss the matter in detail and it was agreed for an informal meeting to take place in the coming weeks to discuss the options in greater depth.

In reaching its recommendation the Sub-Committee came to the following conclusions:

1. It was encouraging that the need to take care of all children despite the current climate was behind all decision making
2. There had been some progress made through the Pan London agreement
3. The additional funding from government was welcome. The revisions to the National Transfer Scheme will need to be judged on whether it is effective in addressing the issues facing Croydon.
4. There were still serious concerns regarding the level of funding received from government which was not enough to support and

provide services for UASC and, mainly, the resulting disproportionate number of Looked After Children in Croydon due to the large number of former UASC

5. It was unclear what was being asked of the Children and Young People sub-committee by Cabinet who recommended that this report be presented to the sub-committee. The Cabinet Member clarified that the significant costs were not sustainable, especially given the Council's serious financial position. Consequently decisions will need to be made soon on what action to take. The Cabinet requests that the assumptions in the report are challenged at Scrutiny so that any decision is based on a robust and well-founded information.

The Sub-Committee recommended that:

7. The Chair engage in further discussion with officers to obtain reassurance on the robustness of the case which will be the foundation of a future Cabinet decision.

Action/Request for info

- Data on UASC in employment or further education

**42/21 What difference has this meeting made to Croydon's children**

Following discussions, the sub-committee agreed that:

- There was notable improvement in the quality of reports and presentations being provided
- There was improvements to be made to the children's complaints process.
- There were still issues with ensuring representation of the voice of the child and service users in meetings.
- Improvements to be made on line of sight from the workforce and service users perspective
- It would be beneficial when the climate permits, to resume the visits programme
- Members to explore what how other Local Authorities involved children and young people in their committee meetings
- The Chair to explore opportunities for young people 'take over' of a committee meeting.

The work programme was discussed and it was agreed the work programme for 2021/22 was flexible and there was a need for an understanding of how Scrutiny fits in with the work being completed by Cabinet, General Purpose and Audit Committee as well as the Children's Improvement Board in order to alleviate instances of duplication.

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In reference to the Scrutiny Annual report 2020/2021 which had been published and could be found [here](#), it was agreed that Members were confident in their ability to continue to hold the executive and cabinet member to account, It was vital that the sub-committee continue to maintain sight of the budget, ensure that officers were maintaining a sustainable and safe delivery of service.

The meeting ended at 9.35 pm

**Signed:**

**Date:** .....

# Agenda Item 7

**For general release**

<b>REPORT TO:</b>	<b>Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee</b> <b>14 September 2021</b>
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>Update on Children's Social Care, Families and Education Services</b>
<b>LEAD OFFICER:</b>	<b>Debbie Jones, Executive Director, Children, Families &amp; Education</b>
<b>CABINET MEMBER:</b>	<b>Cllr Alisa Flemming, Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Learning</b>
<b>PERSON LEADING AT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING:</b>	<b>Cllr Alisa Flemming, Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Learning</b>

## **CORPORATE PRIORITY/POLICY CONTEXT/AMBITIOUS FOR CROYDON:**

[Corporate Plan for Croydon 2018-2022](#)

The plans and recommendations in this report focus on ensuring that all Croydon's children live a happy, healthy life, free from harm and that they have every opportunity to thrive and become fulfilled adults.

<b>ORIGIN OF ITEM:</b>	This item forms part of the sub-committee's work programme.
<b>BRIEF FOR THE COMMITTEE:</b>	An overview of <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Service updates from Education and Early Help &amp; children's social care</li><li>• Budget updates</li><li>• Feedback from Ofsted focused visit in June 2021</li><li>• Children's Continuous Improvement Plan 2021-2024</li></ul>

## 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report, along with the accompanying attachments provides feedback from Ofsted focused visit, service updates from Children, Families and Education and budget updates.

## 2. Updates from Early Help and Children's Social Care

- 2.1 Children benefitted from the increased access to school prior to the summer holidays enabling them to return to a level of routine that supports positive social and educational relationships. Schools continued to be impressive in their support for all Croydon children and especially those with whom Early Help and Children's Social Care are actively involved.
- 2.2 Referral rates have increased since the latter end of April, a pattern replicated across London related to lockdown easing and increased school attendance. The highest number of requests was in the week of 11<sup>th</sup> June with 1399; the highest number of individual child requests was in the week of 2<sup>nd</sup> July when 589 contacts were recorded.
- 2.3 It follows that the volume of assessments by CSC and investigations into safeguarding concerns has increased leading to pressure on capacity within Croydon Supporting Families Service. Assertive recruitment activity has maintained sufficient capacity to respond effectively to presenting concerns for Croydon children and families.
- 2.4 Ofsted HMI were on site for a two day Focused Visit on 15<sup>th</sup> & 16<sup>th</sup> June and the letter published on 26<sup>th</sup> July. The letter notes that despite the unprecedented challenges of the past 18 months, inspectors have found that when children and families are referred to us for help, in most cases we are taking swift and appropriate action to keep them safe. You can read the report in [full here](#).
- 2.5 Our social care teams have been on the frontline throughout the pandemic, ensuring that our most vulnerable families continue to receive face-to-face visits and support even in the most difficult of circumstances. Inspectors were impressed with the staff that they met noting their 'commitment, professionalism and determination' to do the right thing for children, staff feel supported, leaders are visible and effective, morale is good. Ofsted has identified some areas for improvement and we will be working with our partners to address these as a priority.
- 2.6 Whole service learning took place in the week of 26<sup>th</sup> July through a 'Practice Week' focusing on the impact of our practice for children who live with or who have experienced domestic abuse in their families.
- 2.7 A comprehensive programme of summer activities was provided to our children in care through Empire.



### **3. Updates from Education**

- 3.1 The services delivered by the Education Directorate have remained stable at present and have generally not been impacted by the budget savings. The savings within the Directorate are in relation to Children's Centres, Croydon Music and Arts and some additional staffing savings.
- 3.2 Cabinet have approved the model of delivery for the Children's Centres and this will be out to Tender end of August 2021. The impact in relation to the savings in this area will be measurable when the new delivery model has been implemented
- 3.3 Children's Centre Consultation  
We received a high volume of responses to the consultation. The consultation response highlighted the value of our Best Start Children's Centres so the new model will include continuing to run services at all our existing Children's Centre sites, including Shirley and Purley Oaks, as part of a new hub and spoke model. The new proposals will reduce management costs so we can continue to deliver children's centre services from 11 sites across the borough with a further five sites offering services specifically for two year olds. While there will be changes to how often sessions run, our Children's Centres will continue to sit at the heart of our communities bringing together a range of services to help our children to thrive.
- 3.4 SEND  
At the end of the academic year we have seen a positive impact of the SEND Inclusion Funding approach. School Forum have approved the funding for this to be extended to a further two locality areas. The Special Schools funding review has been completed and further work and discussions are taking place to agree the final model.

### **4. Children's Continuous Improvement Plan**

- 4.1 The final version of the Children's Continuous Improvement Plan 2021-2024 was updated following review at the last Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee in June 2021 and is included as at Appendix 1 of this report.
- 4.2 Quarterly reports on progress and risk against the actions in both sections of the plan will be reported to and challenged by the Scrutiny Children and Young People sub-Committee to provide robust oversight.
- 4.3 Work will continue to ensure the forward plans and work programmes of the two formal meetings are co-ordinated and aligned to provide whole-system assurance on the progress and impact. It is proposed that the Children's Continuous Improvement Plan is reviewed annually by the CCIB.

## 5. Budget update

### 5.1 Dedicated School Grant (DSG) Deficit Management

5.1.1 The table below summarises the position of the DSG deficit as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021. The deficit balance increased by £5.281m in 2020/21 to an end of year position of £19.839m. The main reason for the adverse movement is the High Needs block which was overspend by £5.744m due to increase in pupil numbers with severe and complex needs hence extra funding to meet their educational needs.

5.1.2 The local Authority (LA) has therefore implemented various SEND work streams as part of the DSG deficit recovery strategy to mitigate this trend. This is in line with the latest Department for Education (DfE) guidance for all local authorities with DSG deficit above a particular threshold to prepare a 5-year Deficit Recovery Plan with the aim to bring the spending level down as well as recover previous accumulated deficits.

### Croydon DSG Balances

DSG Block	2019/20	2020/21	2020/21
	Balance	Movement	Final Balance
	£,000	£,000	£,000
Schools Block	-2,932	1,509	-1,423
Early Years Block	-988	-1,972	-2,960
High Needs Block	18,478	5,744	24,222
<b>Total</b>	<b>14,558</b>	<b>5,281</b>	<b>19,839</b>

5.1.3 The LA has been working closely with the DfE in reviewing the management plan and will continue to seek relevant advice to bring the High Needs Block expenditure within the High Needs funding allocation by Year 5 as reported in the Recovery Plan.

5.1.4 The current DSG Management Plan was agreed by School Forum in April 2021, signed off by the Executive Director (CFE) and the Chief Finance Officer and submitted to the DfE in May. The LA continues to engage and receive support from the DfE in the management of the deficit and regular monitoring reports will be presented to both GPAC and School Forum throughout the financial year.

### 5.2 2021/22 Budget

The department developed a delivery plan to meet the financial challenge as part of the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) over 2021-24, which includes growth in the first year alongside significant savings over the MTFS. The key deliverables for this plan are:

- Re-base placement budgets to address demographic and historic pressures in 2020-21, with no further growth required;
- Reduce the numbers of local children in care to a target of 430 from 463 on the 30 June 2021 and improve value for money to reduce spend to the London

average or below by 2024;

- Increase the number of children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) educated in the borough; 1608 in borough and 544 out of borough;
- 5% budget savings each year on placement and care package costs for children with disabilities over 2021-24, challenged against benchmarking to London or national average;
- Improve the efficiency of the practice system whilst sustaining the effectiveness.

5. 2 For Children, Families and Education, as at 30 June 2021, it is assumed that net expenditure for the department will be within or below the £115.669m budget approved by Council for 2021/22. This includes an assumption that the current negotiations with central government, seeking additional funding for Asylum Seekers, will either be successful or the Council will move to reduce the number of unaccompanied asylum seeking children entering into our care. There are a number of general and specific risks already emerging across the department to this assumption, all of which are outlined below and where those risks can be quantified that is also included.

### 5. 3 Savings Programme

The final reorganisation outcomes in many areas have not resulted in the full extent of the savings initially proposed and agreed by Council in February 2021. The majority of this under delivery will be as a result of timing differences, where staff have not left the service as at 1 April 2021 and whilst the full year effect of such savings will be felt in 2022/23, one-off substitute savings will need to be identified in year. In addition, as a consequence of pre-election restrictions, necessary public consultations required before some final saving proposals are implemented have been delayed resulting in further risks for non-delivery in 2021/22. Critical to the successful delivery of those savings projects that are due to mobilise in the current quarter is the urgent approval of transformation bids submitted in mid- April.

MTFS Savings Ref	MTFS Savings Description	Savings at risk
		(£,000's)
CFE Sav 07	Improve Practice System Efficiency	1,065
CFE Sav 09	Review Children's Centres Delivery Model	237
CFE Sav 10	Additional Education Savings	15
<b>CFE Total</b>		<b>1,317</b>

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**CONTACT OFFICER: Debbie Jones, Executive Director, Children, Families and Education.**

**APPENDICES:** Appendix 1 Children's Continuous Improvement Plan 2021-2024  
Appendix 2 Ofsted Focused visit letter

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# Children's Continuous Improvement Plan 2021-24

July 2021

**be the change**

for children and young people in Croydon

#bethechangecroydon



OUR DESTINATION



OUR PRINCIPLES



OUR PRACTICE  
FRAMEWORK



Delivering for Croydon

**CROYDON**  
[www.croydon.gov.uk](http://www.croydon.gov.uk)

## Introduction

In the inspection report of Croydon's children's social care services published in March 2020 Ofsted recognised that services for children in need of help and protection were now good, and services for children in care and care leavers were improving well. Overall children's social care services were judged as good.

## Croydon's Challenge

Croydon Council faces serious governance, financial and operational challenges. Resolving this crisis requires one of the most significant change programmes in local government. The service transformation that lifted children's services from an inadequate to good was underpinned by significant investment, and whilst some of the additional investment has been removed children's services are still higher cost compared to other council services judged as good overall.

We must now review how we deliver children's services in Croydon to reduce the cost and work within the council's available resources whilst retaining the quality and effectiveness that children and families in Croydon deserve.

## Planning for continued improvement

This Continuous Improvement Plan 2021-24 brings together:

- The savings and growth planned over 2021-24 across early help, children's social care and education as the departmental contribution to the Council's Medium Term Finance Strategy (MTFS) – Section 1.
- The practice improvement priorities for early help and children's social care including actions to address the recommendations in the 2020 Ofsted inspection – Section 2.

The majority of the MTFS savings impact on the practice improvement priorities, and there is a direct read across for many of the priorities and actions. However, there are areas that are specific to each section. More details on the background and rationale for the MTFS savings are set out in the CFE Delivery Plan, March 2021.<sup>1</sup>

The plan will help the council achieve the overall reduction in spend required and put children's services in Croydon on a sustainable financial footing. We know that we cannot afford to be complacent to sustain the improvements made and build on them. We also know we will need to adjust to emerging needs and themes including the longer term effects of the Covid-19 Pandemic on our children and young people.

### **Our values, our principles**

throughout the planning and making changes across education and children's social care we aim to sustain the service offer to children, families and schools at reduced cost whilst continuing to meet statutory responsibilities. We will retain our commitment to the following:

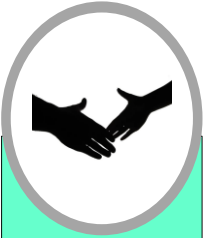
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<sup>1</sup> Croydon CFE Delivery Plan, February 2021 <https://democracy.croydon.gov.uk/documents/s28951/Appendix%201%20-Draft%20CFE%20Delivery%20Plan.pdf>

## Our Values



Putting children at the centre of all that we do



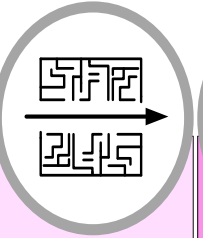
Building and sustaining trusting relationships



Doing things *with* children and their families not *to* them and enabling independence



Working with the whole family, the school and community



Making the journey of the child and family as simple as possible



Delivering services as early as possible

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## Our principles

- We will support families to keep children and young people safely at home, and make sound decisions to bring children into our care when we need to;
- We will develop local provision so more children with SEND attend Croydon schools, keeping close to their friends and community and relieving the pressure on the Dedicated Schools Grant;
- We will get the best possible value for the Croydon pound for placements and packages of care for children and young people, commissioning for cost and quality;
- We will continuously challenge ourselves to improve efficiency and reduce the cost of services, improving the business systems and processes needed to enable us to understand spend and accurately benchmark ourselves against others locally, regionally and nationally.
- We will focus on tackling ingrained inequality and poverty in the borough. We will follow the evidence to tackle the underlying causes of inequality and hardship, like structural racism, environmental injustice and economic injustice

## Oversight and Review

The Continuous Children's Improvement Board (CCIB), through its partnership lens with service experts and an independent Chair, is well placed to monitor sustained practice improvements whilst also providing constructive scrutiny on the impact of the savings, keeping at the heart of discussions the need to ensure vulnerable children and young people are kept safe.



The Scrutiny Children and Young People sub-Committee has a vital role in scrutinising the duties and functions of children’s social care, and through its public meetings is able to bring these issues to a wide audience.

The MTFS projects set out in the plan are reported through the governance arrangements set out in the Croydon Renewal Plan. The Children Families and Education (CFE) Delivery Plan sets out the projects in more detail.

The Children’s Continuous Improvement Board will take the MTFS projects set out in this plan at its meetings in order to monitor service impact and progress on making the savings. Financial updates will continue to come to the Board on a bi-monthly basis to keep the Board informed of financial progress and risk against all CFE MTFS projects.

Service performance and quality is reviewed and challenged through the cycle of meetings set out in the Windows into Practice early help & children’s social care quality assurance framework. The Children’s Continuous Improvement Board will receive the bi-monthly reports on Quality of Practice and monthly performance reports. These will underpin the Practice priorities in the Plan.

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Quarterly reports on progress and risk against the actions in both sections of the plan will be reported to and challenged by the Scrutiny Children and Young People sub-Committee to provide robust oversight. Work will continue to ensure the forward plans and work programmes of the two formal meetings are co-ordinated and aligned to provide whole-system assurance on the progress and impact.

It is proposed that the Children’s Continuous Improvement Plan is reviewed annually by the CCIB.

## Delivery targets

The Croydon Renewal Improvement Plan performance framework is being developed to include targets for each of the MTFS savings. As these are finalised and agreed they will be included in this plan to ensure there is a single version of the truth for delivery.

It may be that through the course of its business, the CCIB identifies the need for a further subsets of performance indicators in order to enable it to monitor a particular activity, and this can be developed with the Performance Team.

## Equalities and Diversity

In order to deliver safe, quality, value for money services, it is crucial that children's services tackles inequalities experienced by children and young people in our borough. It will do this by using evidence to assess the issues and outcomes and then by putting plans in place to effect change and embed a consistent equalities-focused approach across all our services. Consequently, an additional principle, as set out in the Croydon Renewal Plan, has now been included in the set of principles set out above.

In order to make this principle a reality, the CCIB will do the following:

### (i) Children and Young People

- Embed a focus on equalities into the MTFS savings projects, looking at the outcomes and impact of the service on different groups of children and young people, in order to assess where there may be inequality. Through this focus, enabling the service to develop measures to tackle the causes and monitor progress on an ongoing basis into a business as usual activity.
- Champion positive examples of where inequality has been tackled across the service, how this was done and what can be learned.

### (ii) Workforce

#### **Children's Services Race Equality Review Board and Equalities, Diversity & Inclusion Board**

Following the report and action plan of the CSRERB, it is proposed that the CCIB keeps a watching brief on next steps and takes a twice yearly updates on progress from the proposed Equalities, Diversity & Inclusion Board and/or Race Equalities Review Board in relation to the CFE Workforce.

### (iii) Partners

Partners will also be invited to present examples of where equalities gaps are being bridged in the offer to children and young people, and where there are known issues and gaps which need addressing.

# 1. Medium Term Financial Strategy Savings and Growth

This section of the plan focuses on key projects in the Croydon Renewal Plan to reduce spend and live within our means whilst sustaining improvements in children’s services to deliver the Medium Term Financial Strategy savings, as set out in the CFE Delivery Plan

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<b>1</b>	<b>Reduce Early Help</b> <b>Project Manager: Iain Low</b>	<b>MTFS Ref: CFE SAV 02</b>								
<b>Project description</b>		<b>Savings identified £000s</b>								
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with partners to identify opportunities to enhance service delivery through multi-agency working, use of partners' settings and building on locality services</li> <li>• Reduce the Early Help offer to a targeted service that continues to provide step down from statutory CSC and contribute with our partners towards early intervention where this will prevent, delay or reduce the need for statutory services, and where not to do so would lead to a direct increase in cost.</li> <li>• Reconfigure as a centralised integrated offer operating with a local footprint, retaining current functions on a reduced footprint e.g. family key worker interventions, parenting workers, domestic abuse and substance misuse specialists.</li> </ul>		<table border="1"> <tr> <td style="background-color: #800080; color: white;"><b>2021/22</b></td> <td style="background-color: #800080; color: white;"><b>2022/23</b></td> <td style="background-color: #800080; color: white;"><b>2023/24</b></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">424</td> <td style="text-align: center;">185</td> <td style="text-align: center;">0</td> </tr> </table>			<b>2021/22</b>	<b>2022/23</b>	<b>2023/24</b>	424	185	0
		<b>2021/22</b>	<b>2022/23</b>	<b>2023/24</b>						
424	185	0								
		<b>Croydon Renewal Plan performance measures</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Percentage of Early Help cases closed that were stepped up to CSC (EH 9)</li> <li>• Percentage of CSC referrals that were stepped down from CSC into Early Help (EH 25)</li> </ul>								

Ref	Actions	Owner	By when	Progress
1.1	Remove vacant posts	IL	01/04/21	complete
1.2	Work across the partnership to develop a revised Early Help offer : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Re-establish the Early Help Partnership Board</li> <li>• Recruit an Early Help Programme Manager to lead and facilitate activity across partners</li> <li>• Develop options for change</li> </ul>	IL	01/04/21 31/07/21 31/10/21	Complete In progress
1.3	Launch reorganisation options	IL	01/12/21	Not started
1.4	Implement new structure	IL	01/04/22	Not started

<b>2.</b>	<b>Review of Children with Disabilities care packages 0-17</b> <b>Project Manager: Rodica Cobarzan</b>	<b>MTFS Ref: CFE SAV 04</b>								
<b>Project description</b>		<b>Savings identified £000s</b>								
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve social care for children with disabilities and their transition to adulthood</li> <li>• Develop and implement new commissioning frameworks for frequently used provision e.g. home care, family support reducing spot purchasing of care</li> <li>• Introduce new governance arrangements for the recording of provider costs and enforcement of disciplines for accurate forecasting and financial management</li> </ul>		<table border="1"> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;"><b>2021/22</b></td> <td style="text-align: center;"><b>2022/23</b></td> <td style="text-align: center;"><b>2023/24</b></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">126.4</td> <td style="text-align: center;">126.4</td> <td style="text-align: center;">126.4</td> </tr> </table>			<b>2021/22</b>	<b>2022/23</b>	<b>2023/24</b>	126.4	126.4	126.4
<b>2021/22</b>	<b>2022/23</b>	<b>2023/24</b>								
126.4	126.4	126.4								
		<b>Croydon Renewal Plan performance measure</b> Percentage of Children in Need who had review on time (those allocated to CWD teams) (CIN 7)								

Ref	Actions	Owner	By when	Progress
2.1	Establish a review team led by a Head of Service to systematically and rapidly review all open cases 0-25	RB	01/04/21	complete
2.2	Repeat exercise in 2.1 in 2021/22	RC	30/09/2021 and 31/03/22	Not started
2.3	Update Policies and Protocols Review and update the following: a. Eligibility Criteria 0-17 and 18-25 b. Short Breaks Statement and Policy c. Family Support Strategy d. Transition Protocol	RC, OC	June 2021	Completed
2.4	Review Calleydown Respite Unit to ensure it is offering quality and value for money- Transformation funding agreed.	RC	01/08/2021	In progress

2.5	Recommission value for money Family Support Services from the market	PB, MW	01/04/2021	Complete
2.6	Review of current short break provision to inform commissioning intentions for 2021 and beyond and agree next steps	PB,MW	01/09/2021	In progress
2.7	Procurement of a Framework for home/personal care provision for 0-17 and 18-25 respectively is being developed, aiming for implementation by end of calendar year	PB,MW	01/01/2022	In progress
2.8	<p>Review end to end business processes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Further development and implement ContrOCC for child/YP and carer related payments</li> <li>• Review &amp; Improve CSC Child Payment Processes &amp; Flows</li> <li>• Develop the financial role, responsibility and capacity of Business Support across CSC (and EH)</li> <li>• Improve the CWD service's Financial Recording processes &amp; management oversight</li> </ul>	ST, RC	01/04/2022	In progress

<b>3. Reducing the Spend on Children in Care</b> <b>Project Manager: Shaun Hanks</b>	<b>MTFS Ref: CFE SAV 05</b>						
<b>Project description</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reducing the numbers of children in care by systematically reviewing cases, looking at where children currently in care may be able to be safely placed at home or with wider family with the right support mechanisms in place</li> <li>• Reducing placement costs in order to ensure best value, with a new accommodation strategy to underpin this</li> <li>• Undertaking a thorough review of our payments systems and processes to ensure that providers are paid on time to maximise value for money to foster strong relationships with providers and maximise choice and buying power in the market</li> <li>• In addition, a one-off investment to right size the budget in 2021/22</li> </ul>	<b>Savings identified £000s</b> <table border="1" style="margin-top: 10px;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="text-align: center;"><i>2021/22</i></th> <th style="text-align: center;"><i>2022/23</i></th> <th style="text-align: center;"><i>2023/24</i></th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">794</td> <td style="text-align: center;">1,654</td> <td style="text-align: center;">1,385</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p><b>Croydon Renewal Plan performance measure</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of local CLA (CLA 3)</li> <li>• Rate of local CLA per 10,000 under 18 population (CLA 2a)</li> </ul>	<i>2021/22</i>	<i>2022/23</i>	<i>2023/24</i>	794	1,654	1,385
<i>2021/22</i>	<i>2022/23</i>	<i>2023/24</i>					
794	1,654	1,385					

Ref	Actions	Owner	By when	Progress
3.1	<p>Continue to reduce the numbers by gatekeeping entry to care, diverting from care and reviewing and reuniting where safe to do so</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Care Panel to gate keep entry to care, with multiple approval points to reduce expenditure</li> <li>Care Review Panel to review high cost placements, and agree targeted support to return children home from care</li> <li>Children's Continuous Improvement Board, independently chaired providing assurance on sustained service quality</li> </ul>	<p>RM</p> <p>SH</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Complete</p>
3.2	<p>Smarter commissioning and procurement underpinned by benchmarking and financial modelling based on the cohort and population analyses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Financial modelling to underpin accommodation strategy</li> <li>Accommodation strategy, commissioning plan and procurement timetable agreed, including cross-Council</li> <li>Procurement plan commences</li> </ul>	PB	<p>31/03/21</p> <p>30/06/21</p> <p>30/09/21</p>	<p>Complete</p> <p>In progress</p>
3.3	<p>Systems, business processes and payments including integrated case recording and finance system, oversight of payments processes, improved end-to-end across dept. and council (placement, non-placement and staffing spend)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Further development and implement ContrOCC for child/YP and carer related payments</li> <li>Review &amp; Improve CSC Child Payment Processes &amp; Flows</li> <li>Develop the financial role, responsibility and capacity of Business Support across CSC (and EH)</li> <li>Improve the Leaving Care Service's Financial Recording &amp; Oversight</li> </ul>	ST/SH	<p>June 2021</p> <p>Ongoing (started March 2021)</p> <p>Process in place – Oct 2021</p>	<p>In progress</p> <p>In progress</p> <p>In progress</p>

<b>4. Review Support for Young People who are Appeal Rights Exhausted</b> <b>Project manager: James Moore</b>	<b>MTFS Ref: CFE SAV 0</b>								
<b>Project description</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Appeal Rights Exhausted (ARE) describes a person whose request for asylum or immigration application has been refused, and who has made all of the appeals that they are allowed to make without any success.</li> <li>As at 31/10/20 60 young people were being supported by children's services with no grant income. A needs-based approach to withdrawing services to young people who are ARE is proposed, alongside earlier, robust triple planning with unaccompanied minors as part of the pathway plan completed for all children looked after aged 16+.</li> </ul>	<b>Savings identified £000s</b> <table border="1" style="margin-top: 10px;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="text-align: center;"><i>2021/22</i></th> <th style="text-align: center;"><i>2022/23</i></th> <th style="text-align: center;"><i>2023/24</i></th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">295</td> <td style="text-align: center;">560</td> <td style="text-align: center;">142</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <b>Croydon Renewal Plan performance measure</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Net current expenditure on Appeals Rights Exhausted</li> <li>Number of young people who have Appeals Rights Exhausted</li> </ul>			<i>2021/22</i>	<i>2022/23</i>	<i>2023/24</i>	295	560	142
<i>2021/22</i>	<i>2022/23</i>	<i>2023/24</i>							
295	560	142							

Ref	Actions	Owner	By when	Progress
4.1	HRA Training for staff- Training for staff to complete Human Rights Assessments to provide assurance that support can be safely removed	JM	March 21	Complete
4.2	For all new young people conduct triple planning if they are at risk of ARE	JM	April 21 and ongoing	In progress
4.3	Undertake in-depth analysis on a case by case basis to get a current list of ARE CYP for April,	JM	May 21	complete
4.4	Work to reduce the amount spent on accommodation, reducing the number of houses paid for by bringing places together, and reducing the void down to 15%.	JM and SC	April 21 and ongoing	In progress

<b>5. Improving Efficiency in the Practice System</b> <b>Project Manager: Roisin Madden</b>	<b>MTFS Ref: CFE SAV 07</b>						
<b>Project description</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To tackle the legacy of poor practice additional staff were recruited to reduce social workers' caseloads taking these to below both London and national averages. Focused work to improve the quality of day to day practice was effective, as noted in the 2020 inspection.</li> <li>Caseloads will now be gradually increased over 2021-23 to an average of 17. Heads of service will manage and monitor the increase closely to balance continuity of care for children and their families and manageable workloads for individual staff with the need to address the financial challenge for the service.</li> <li>Assistant team managers were appointed to larger teams of social workers to increase management direction and grip on casework and support the introduction of the systemic practice model across the whole service. As the service moves into an improved steady state this cohort will be reconfigured over 2022-24. The timing will ensure that the increase in caseloads is carefully supported and managed at the front line, and that risks are appropriately identified and held</li> </ul>	<b>Savings identified £000s</b> <table border="1" style="margin-top: 10px;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="text-align: center;"><i>2021/22</i></th> <th style="text-align: center;"><i>2022/23</i></th> <th style="text-align: center;"><i>2023/24</i></th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">1,065</td> <td style="text-align: center;">1,450</td> <td style="text-align: center;">385</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <b>Croydon Renewal Plan performance measure</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Average Caseload by worker- by service area</li> </ul>	<i>2021/22</i>	<i>2022/23</i>	<i>2023/24</i>	1,065	1,450	385
<i>2021/22</i>	<i>2022/23</i>	<i>2023/24</i>					
1,065	1,450	385					

Ref	Actions	Owner	By when	Progress
5.1	Develop a modelling tool for caseloads	JF	April 21	Complete
5.2	Gather workforce finance data to work up scenarios across the service,	SS	June 21	In progress
5.3	Consult and comms with service managers	RM	July 21	Not Started
5.4	Develop a timetable for implementing changes	RM	July 21	Not started



<b>6. Review Children's Centres Delivery Model</b> <b>Project Manager: Debby MacCormack</b>	<b>MTFS Ref: CFE SAV 09</b>						
<b>Project description</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Redesign the children's centre delivery model and contracts from by December 2021</li> <li>Re-commission Best Start services</li> <li>The proposed delivery by December 2021 consists of 3 designated Children's Centre Hubs with spokes covering the North, South and Central localities. Services will be available to families across the borough with delivery prioritised in areas where there is the most need.</li> <li>Consultation responses will be taken into consideration when the final model is taken to Cabinet for approval. Any changes to the model will be within the funding envelope</li> </ul>	<b>Savings identified £000s</b> <table border="1" style="margin-top: 10px;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="text-align: center;">2021/22</th> <th style="text-align: center;">2022/23</th> <th style="text-align: center;">2023/24</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">660</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <b>Croydon Renewal Plan performance measure</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of children accessing children's centre services</li> <li>Number of children living in most deprived areas accessing children's centre services</li> </ul>	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	660		
2021/22	2022/23	2023/24					
660							

Ref	Actions	Owner	By when	Progress
6.1	Agree in-year savings approach with Children's Centre Headteachers	SD, DM	11/2020	Complete
6.2	Review and identify delivery options to reconfigure children's centres to hub & spoke model based on a locality footprint	SH, DM	31/03/21	Complete
6.3	Launch public consultation – extended to 20/06/2021	DM	04/06/21	In progress
6.4	Full Cabinet to agree children's centres strategy	SD	31/08/21	Not started
6.5	Procurement of new provision completed <i>Contracts awarded 20.09.21</i> <i>Mobilisation and TUPE transfer 21.09.21-22.10.21</i>	DM, SH	Sept-Nov 2021	In consultation
6.6	Implement new delivery model	DM, SH	Dec 21	

<b>7</b>	<b>SEND Strategy - support inclusion and access to local provision</b> <b>Project Manager: Kathy Roberts</b>	<b>MTFS Ref: CFE GRO 04</b>								
<b>Project description</b>		<b>Savings identified £000s</b>								
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This one-off investment is in line with the Dedicated Schools Grant Deficit Recovery Plan and aims to inject pace to how quickly the deficit can be recovered.</li> <li>Inclusion support for schools and early intervention will ensure the Council is meeting its statutory duties and the needs of our pupils through the delivery of the 0 – 25 SEND strategy, efficiently and effectively and with a continued focus on securing the best outcome for children and their families.</li> </ul>		<table border="1" style="width: 100%; text-align: center;"> <tr> <td style="background-color: #800080; color: white;"><b>2021/22</b></td> <td style="background-color: #800080; color: white;"><b>2022/23</b></td> <td style="background-color: #800080; color: white;"><b>2023/24</b></td> </tr> <tr> <td>866</td> <td>0</td> <td>0</td> </tr> </table>			<b>2021/22</b>	<b>2022/23</b>	<b>2023/24</b>	866	0	0
<b>2021/22</b>	<b>2022/23</b>	<b>2023/24</b>								
866	0	0								
		<b>Croydon Renewal Plan performance measures</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Under development at SEND strategic Board;</li> <li>To focus on increase in children attending in-borough mainstream schools and caseloads for EHCP workers</li> </ul>								

Ref	Actions	Owner	By when	Progress
7.1	Recruit additional locality-based 0-25 SEN staff to increase capacity to complete EHCP annual reviews	KR	July 2021	In progress
7.2	Recruit Local Offer website content and communication manager to ensure up to date advice and signposting to parents and carers	KR	July 2021	In progress
7.3	Recruit locality-based SEN Support in Mainstream Schools (Inclusion project) Teachers	KR	July 2021	in progress

## 2. Practice priorities – Early Help & Children’s Social Care

This section of the plan focuses on the priorities for improvement in early help and children’s social care practice. It addresses the recommendations of the ILACS inspection March 2020 as well as improvement priorities identified through the Windows into Practice cycle of performance management and quality assurance. It also includes actions in response to the June 2021 Ofsted Focused Visit. Progress against the priorities will be reviewed as part of Windows into Practice. Priorities and key activities will be kept under review and adjusted, for example as a result of further focused visits from Ofsted or external reviews commissioned by the department.

Ref	Priorities and key activity	Delivered through	Lead (s)	By when	Success measures impact for children, young people and families
1	<b>Identify and reduce risks to vulnerable children &amp; young people</b>				
1.1	<p><b>Responses to homeless 16 &amp; 17 year olds</b></p> <p>Improve our response to homeless 16 &amp; 17 year olds including assessment of their needs and emergency housing (section 20 and section 17)</p> <p><b>[Ofsted ILACS recommendation]</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commission appropriate emergency and longer term accommodation for 16 &amp; 17 year olds</li> <li>• Work with young people to consider how they want to lead on their CiN Reviews when offered housing through S17</li> <li>• Test the impact of practice through dip sampling/audit activity</li> </ul>	<p>✓ Access, Support and Intervention Service Plan</p>	IL	30/09/21	16 & 17 year olds at risk of becoming homeless are supported to stay at home safely. Where this can’t happen we work with young people to secure a safe home
1.2	<p><b>Responses to children in care at risk of exploitation or going missing.</b></p> <p>1.2.1 Develop and implement a whole service approach to improve the response for children in care at risk of exploitation or going missing. To include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Embedding the Contextual Safeguarding Framework and Risk Exploitation tool</li> </ul>	<p>✓ Adolescent support team plan &amp; service plans</p>	SH	30/09/21	Children and young people in care who may be at risk of exploitation benefit from robust risk assessments and

1.3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monitoring that strategy meetings continue to take place and result in robust safety plans to reduce risk</li> <li>more vulnerable CLA are presented at the complex adolescents panel</li> <li>Development of the new 18 Plus Transitional Panel to replicate the Complex Adolescents Panel for over 18s, enabling us to identify and support vulnerable care leavers early</li> <li>Embedding adolescent workers into the CLA and Leaving Care services with a particular focus on supporting return home interviews and managing risk where children have been missing.</li> </ul> <p>1.2.2 Work with foster carers to improve missing reporting, raising carers' awareness and curiosity regarding exploitation and missing risks for all children in care (including UASC) -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support Foster Carers to implement the revised missing protocol and ensure consistency of practice. keep children safe e.g. reporting children missing, emailing EDT) using a standard template.</li> <li>Deliver a training offer to carer on missing issues relating specifically to UASC</li> <li>Monitor the impact on foster carers' processes, via our QA processes.</li> </ul> <p><b>Responses to care leavers at risk of exploitation and going missing.</b></p> <p>a) Improve the responses for care leavers who are at risk of exploitation or going missing. To include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work across the CLA management team, and with the newly established 18 Plus transitional Panel to design and agree procedures for identifying and responding to care leavers at risk of exploitation and going missing, that build upon work with young people before they leave care and are appropriate to age and risk level</li> </ul>	<p>for SWwF and SWwCLA</p> <p>✓ SWwCLA service plan</p> <p>✓ SWwCLA &amp; CL service plan</p>	SH	Aug 21	<p>action planning to help keep them safe</p> <p>Children and young people in care who go missing benefit from timely strategy meetings to help keep them safe</p> <p>Risks associated with children and young people in care and care leavers are well known to the adults who support them, and they are helped to recognise and reduce the risks of harm.</p> <p>Children and young people who are missing from home, care or full-time school education (including those who are excluded from school) and those at risk of exploitation and trafficking</p>
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	<p>b) Produce practice guidance outlining the rationale and process for tracking vulnerable care leavers and share across the workforce.</p> <p>c) Test the impact of practice through programmed quality assurance activity- include a specific audit on homeless and care leavers to the Windows into Practice audit plan in addition to the bi-monthly case audits.</p>	<p>✓ SWwCLA &amp; CL service plan</p> <p>✓ Windows into Practice audit plan</p>	<p>SH</p> <p>KC</p>	<p>31/10/21</p> <p>31/12/21</p>	<p>receive well-coordinated responses that reduce the harm or risk of harm to them.</p>
<b>2</b>	<p><b>Co-produced plans, language and recording</b></p> <p><b>Improve the quality of written plans for children in need, children in care and care leavers</b> <i>[Ofsted ILACS recommendation]</i></p>				<p>Quality assurance activities show majority of planning judged good or better across child in need, care and pathway plans</p>
<b>2.1</b>	<p><b>Continue our work over the last year to raise the quality of Child in Need plans to ensure:</b></p> <p>a) Plans are SMART with clear tasks, responsibilities, next steps and timescales</p> <p>b) More plans are written with children and families, in accessible child and family-friendly language</p> <p>c) Test the impact on practice through the Windows into Practice case audit programme</p>	<p>✓ Social Work Academy Practice Improvement Plan</p>	<p>RM</p>	<p>31/03/22</p>	<p>Children in need and their families benefit from purposeful planning informed by creative direct work which supports more children and young people to remain safely within their families</p>
<b>2.2</b>	<p><b>Continue to raise the quality of plans for children in care and care leavers to ensure:</b></p> <p>a) Plans are specific about risks, vulnerabilities and actions that will be taken to reduce risks</p> <p>b) Plans are specific about health and emotional wellbeing needs and supporting actions</p>	<p>✓ Social Work Academy Practice Improvement Plan</p>	<p>RM</p>	<p>31/03/22</p>	<p>Children's care and pathway plans comprehensively address their needs and experiences, including the need for timely permanence.</p>

2.3	<p>c) Plans are written with young people in language they can understand d) Test the impact on practice through the Windows into Practice case audit programme</p> <p><b>Improve the consistency of Life Story Work</b></p> <p>Ensure every child in Croydon's care is supported to understand their history and identity through creative life story work</p>	✓ Social Work Academy Practice Improvement Plan	RM	31/03/22	They are thoroughly and independently reviewed with the involvement, as appropriate, of parents, carers, residential staff and other adults who know them. Plans for their futures continue to be appropriate and ambitious
2.4	<p><b>Child and family friendly language</b> Continue to ensure all written communication with children and families, including pre-proceedings and PLO letters, is written in accessible child and family-friendly language</p>	✓ QA Service Plan	DW	31/03/22	Children and young people co-produce their life stories, supported by skilled practitioners using a range of creative tools
2.5	<p><b>Recording</b></p> <p>Continue our work with staff across the service, with the CFS team and CDS to improve the ease of recording case work and management oversight -</p>	✓ CFS service plan	ST	31/03/22	Plans, letters and notes are accessible to children and their families, avoiding jargon and making the contents clear and unambiguous
3.	<p><b>Service development and improvement</b></p>				
3.1	<p><b>Develop and implement a new approach to referrals at the Single Point of Contact (SPOC)</b></p>		IL	30/11/21	Children and young people benefit from timely and

3.2	<p>a) Develop and implement a revised SPOC where all contacts are responded to through conversations with referrers (Thorpe Model). b) Merge the current EDT with the SPOC</p> <p><b>Develop and embed the brief intervention ‘Supporting Croydon Families’ Service</b></p> <p>a) Ensure a comprehensive professional development offer is in place to support staff across the service to implement the change supported by the Clinical team b) Ensure feedback from Managers and practitioners continues to refine and improve the operating model</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Access, Support and Intervention Service Plan</li> <li>✓ Access, Support and Intervention Service Plan</li> <li>✓ Workforce Development service plan</li> </ul>	IL	30/11/21	transparent decision making and are supported by practitioners who receive regular reflective supervision.
3.3	<p><b>Simplify access to services to children with disabilities</b>, including:</p> <p>a) a shortbreaks pathway b) a diverse family support offer c) locality based working</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ CWD Service plan</li> </ul>	RC	30/11/21	Children with disabilities and their families access tailored support when they need it.
3.4	<p><b>Clinical services</b></p> <p>a) The Croydon Family Therapy Academy, has been created within the clinical service, delivering courses for the first time at practitioner and supervisor level. Following the completion of these courses, the Academy will be seeking AFT (Association of Family Therapy) accreditation.</p> <p>b) Review the current commissioned EWMH parenting programmes to provide support and early intervention aligned with the whole-</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Systemic and Clinical Services service plan</li> </ul>	RM	31/12/21	Practitioners are equipped to meet the EWMH needs of children, swiftly drawing on specialist advice and input where needed.

3.5	<p>system review of early help and to achieve best value and quality, including consideration of delivering the services in-house.</p> <p><b>Family Group Conference</b></p> <p>Support as many families as possible through the Family Group Conference co-ordinators or through a family meetings supported by the systemic team, with the aim of ensuring that families and wider networks of care are supported to find safe solutions, to provide care for children.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Children's Commissioning Service Plan</li> <li>✓ SWwF service plan</li> </ul>	PB	31/10/21	<p>More children are supported to stay with their families and extended families where this is safe to do so, entering formal care as a last resort.</p>
3.6	<p><b>Young Croydon</b></p> <p>Re-launch Young Croydon bringing together: the Youth Offending Service, Youth Engagement and the Adolescent Service. Working with young people in Croydon to provide a broad range of individual support at home, school, and in community settings.</p> <p>Explore, agree and implement multi-agency working options with partners in relation to adolescents, with preferred the options being developed to sit within the SPOC</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Access, Support and Intervention Service Plan</li> </ul>	RC	31/12/21	
3.7	<p><b>Early Help</b></p> <p>Develop and deliver a revised partnership service delivery model for Early Help, reshaping the offer across children's services to deliver sustainable, good services to children, young people and their families</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Croydon Early Help Change Programme</li> </ul>	IL	31/12/21	<p>Children with disabilities move towards independence at a pace that is right for them, developing the skills and confidence they need to maximise their chances of</p>
3.8	<p><b>Transition into adulthood</b></p> <p>Improve on our work to prepare children and young people for adulthood, including children and young people who have additional needs. Our work</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ SWwCWD service plan</li> </ul>	RC	31/03/21	



	<p>with young people needs to support a seamless transition to Adult Social care or other pathway services our young people might require. We will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work collaboratively with the ASC lead to design the new transitions service, including effective 14+ transition planning including:</li> <li>• Agree a seamless transition protocol for disabled young people moving from CSC to ASC</li> <li>• Hold monthly transition meetings to ensure SEND and ASC are involved in decision making and prepared to support young people are underway and would need to be strengthened.</li> </ul> <p><b>3.9 Trauma Informed Practice</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3.10.1 Support and embed trauma informed practice through training of staff and culture change to recognise the impact of trauma on children and young people’s mental health and wellbeing. Embed this across CLA, Leaving Care and UASC practice.</li> <li>• 3.10.2 Ensure that children’s social care are active participants in the Mental Health Priority Group of the CSCP.</li> </ul> <p><b>3.10 The Voice of the child</b></p> <p>Establish a Child’s Voice and Participation Working Group to share best practice, identify gaps and ensure that action is taken on children and young people’s priorities in a timely way across the department</p>	<p>✓ Quality Assurance service plan</p> <p>✓ Windows into Practice Quality Assurance plan</p>	<p>DW</p> <p>KC</p>	<p>31/03/21</p> <p>31/07/21</p>	<p>successful maturity to adulthood.</p> <p>Children receive the right level of practical, emotional and financial support with a seamless transition into support from adult services where appropriate.</p> <p>Social workers recognise the factors that can make children more vulnerable and tailor their interventions appropriately</p> <p>Practice is informed and sustainably improved by feedback, research and intelligence about the quality of services drawing directly on the experiences of children, young people and families who use them</p>
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<p><b>4.</b></p> <p><b>4.1</b></p> <p><b>4.2.</b></p> <p><b>4.3</b></p>	<p><b>Workforce Development</b></p> <p>Maintain a responsive, agile learning and development offer that supports the continuous improvement plan, provides an exciting, innovative entry and career progression pathway for early help and children's social care and is informed by practice improvement priorities identified through quality assurance activities</p> <p>Build a sustainable CPD offer, prioritising the development of practice champions, commissioning training that includes a train the trainer element and maximising the use of digital options to record and disseminate specialist training so that the service gets maximum value for money</p> <p>Receive bi-annual updates relating to CFE workforce equalities from the new planned Equalities Diversity and Inclusion Board</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Social Work Academy Practice Improvement Plan</li> <li>✓ Family Therapy Academy Service Plan</li> <li>✓ CFE Race Equality Review Draft Action Plan</li> </ul>	<p>RM</p> <p>DJ</p>	<p>31/03/22</p> <p>31/12/21</p>	<p>Children and families benefit from well-supported practitioners who have the tools and capacity to provide consistently good services</p> <p>Effective organisational support for the training and professional development of social workers and managers and the quality of their practice improves the lives of vulnerable children, young people and families</p> <p>Ensure that a focus on equalities in relation to the children's workforce is maintained by the Board</p>
<p><b>5.</b></p>	<p><b>Ofsted Focused Visit- Early Help and the Front Door (June 2021)</b></p>				
<p><b>5.1</b></p>	<p><b>Work with the police to ensure adherence to the statutory safeguarding guidance</b> [Ofsted Focused Visit draft area for improvement ]</p> <p>(i) Key statutory partners consider examples of single-agency action to understand the context and drivers</p> <p>(ii) Working together:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Croydon Safeguarding Children Partnership (CSCP)</li> </ul>	<p>EB, DJ</p>	<p>31/07/21</p>	<p>Effective partnership work to ensure that children and young people are safe and suffer no undue stress as actions taken by partners to keep them safe consistently adhere to the statutory safeguarding guidelines</p>

	<p>(a) Children's social care, school and police reviewing actions and timeline for the case identified by Ofsted- outcome of review to be shared with partners</p> <p>(b) Service managers from Children's social care attending police safeguarding training (Jonathan Lung, Veronica Leigh, Acting DI Paul Smith)</p> <p>(c) Children's Social Care and Police agreeing protocols for young people in police stations (Inspector Mark Sexton, Veronica Leigh, Iain Low, Jonathan Lung)</p> <p>(iii) Draft guidance to enable a shared understanding of and commitment to working within the statutory safeguarding guidance in day to day practice</p> <p>(iv) Guidance to be disseminated and embedded into frontline practice across the partnership through practice workshops, seminars and briefings as appropriate</p>	✓ Ofsted focused visit action plan		<p>19/07/21</p> <p>22/07/21</p> <p>Initial meeting 05/08/21</p> <p>30/09/21</p> <p>31/10/21</p>	
<b>5.2</b>	<p><b>The effectiveness of the emergency duty team in terms of response times and quality of practice</b> [Ofsted Focused Visit draft area for improvement ]</p> <p>(i) A robust urgent response to the challenge to the EDT Consultation.</p> <p>(ii) Identify a standalone contact (telephone) solution for referrals into EDT.</p> <p>(iii) Implement the changes from the consultation: - EDT SWs based in BWH.</p>	✓ Ofsted Focused Visit Action Plan		<p>31/07/21</p> <p>30/09/21 (TBC)</p>	All children who need it receive timely help and protection no matter what time of day it is



26 July 2021

Debbie Jones  
Interim Executive Director, Children, Families and Education  
London Borough of Croydon  
8 Mint Walk  
Croydon  
London CR0 1EA

Dear Debbie

### **Focused visit to Croydon local authority children's services**

Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills is leading Ofsted's work into how England's social care system has delivered child-centred practice and care within the context of the restrictions placed on society during the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic.

This letter summarises the findings of a focused visit to Croydon local authority children's services on 15 and 16 June 2021. Her Majesty's Inspectors for this visit were Brenda McLaughlin, Louise Hocking and Christine Kennet. Inspectors looked at the local authority's arrangements for the 'front door'.

The methodology for this visit was in line with the inspection of local authority children's services (ILACS) framework. However, the delivery model was adapted to reflect the COVID-19 context. The lead inspector and the interim director of children's services (DCS) agreed arrangements to deliver this visit effectively while working within national and local guidelines for responding to COVID-19. This visit was carried out on site.

### **Headline findings**

Despite the immense challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, the significant changes to the permanent senior leadership team and the considerable, ongoing and far-reaching local authority financial challenges, staff at the front door are making safe and appropriate decisions on most referrals. Three areas for improvement were identified, as listed below.

### **What needs to improve in this area of social work practice**

- Work with the police to ensure adherence to the statutory safeguarding guidance.
- The effectiveness of the emergency duty team in terms of response times and quality of practice.
- The quality, frequency and effectiveness of supervision.

## Main findings

There have been over 32,000 cases of COVID-19 in Croydon, with a peak in January 2021. Services to children were quickly reconfigured in response to the first lockdown, with all open cases risk-assessed, and face-to-face visits maintained for those children identified as being at the highest risk. Additional support was provided to staff, and performance management information was enhanced to ensure that cases progressed.

In November 2020, a section 114 notice was issued in accordance with the Local Government Finance Act (1988). Senior leaders have responded positively to the statutory spending restrictions placed on them by the government, reassessing services to reduce spend, while maintaining statutory responsibilities and trying to minimise the risk of adverse consequences for children and families. As a result, some services have been reconfigured and reduced. This has led to some experienced social workers and managers leaving the service. The highly experienced interim DCS, appointed in October 2020, is working diligently to galvanise the safeguarding partnership and to protect frontline staff and services to children.

Good-quality early help assessments lead to clear, specific, achievable and realistic plans, helping to reduce harm and risk to children. Children and their families have access to a range of universal and early help targeted services provided by skilled and committed staff. Cases are reviewed regularly by early help managers to ensure that any emerging risks are suitably escalated to the social care daily trajectory meeting.

However, early help services are becoming stretched as the impact of financial constraints takes hold. Senior leaders are actively working to limit the impact of the savings that they are required to make on frontline services, but all teams will be expected to absorb additional work previously handled by other services. For instance, the family group conference service has been reduced and there are also significant reductions in the resources available to support vulnerable adolescents. Systems are in place to support children and families waiting for early help services; these include regular proactive calls and access to a duty worker.

Unacceptable delay in responding to some safeguarding referrals out of hours by the emergency duty team means that some children do not receive timely help and protection.

Contacts and referrals for children in need or at risk of harm are managed effectively in the single point of contact (SPOC). Social workers routinely seek information from partner agencies and take account of family history when making decisions about levels of risk. SPOC managers are taking appropriate action to improve the consistency and quality of multi-agency information-sharing. Most children receive the right level of help and protection. When there are concerns about risk to children, decisions to hold child protection strategy meetings and subsequent child

protection enquiries are appropriate and timely in most cases. However, some strategy meetings are delayed due to the lack of police availability. Decisions at strategy meetings are well recorded, with clear management rationale about what needs to happen next.

In a small number of cases, children and families experience unnecessary stress due to police undertaking inappropriate single-agency action. Prompt, formal action by the interim DCS and the Chair of the Children's Continuous Improvement Board (CCIB), together with Croydon's Safeguarding Children Partnership, has been taken to address this issue.

Children who require further help and protection are transferred swiftly from the SPOC to the Croydon Supporting Families (CSF) service. This system requires caseloads to remain low to enable social workers to carry out intensive work with children over a 16-week period. However, the departure of key senior staff, together with the financial constraints, led to further resignations and a rise in caseloads. Caseloads are now reducing as permanent staff are appointed, but there has been a dip in the timeliness of assessments.

Despite the challenges, social workers and their managers in CSF remain determined to provide vulnerable children in Croydon with the help and protection that they need. Increasingly, children are being seen face to face. Throughout the pandemic, the most vulnerable children were seen face to face and social workers continued to undertake effective direct work to gain an understanding of children's views and experiences.

CSF social workers have strong relationships with children. They see them regularly and alone, according to assessed needs. They strive to understand their lived experiences and take action to make changes that help and protect children and their families. However, there is some variability in the quality of assessments and practice. Stronger assessments demonstrate a resolute focus on the child's lived experiences. Risks and strengths are carefully tested and analysed, but this is not consistent. A small number of children have been subject to multiple and ineffective assessments and interventions without evidence of sustained change.

Insufficient exploration by managers in supervision of alternative ways of working and an absence of contingency thinking and planning contribute to delay for some vulnerable children. In some cases, a lack of professional curiosity, over-optimism plus adult-focused work have led to a 'start again' approach to vulnerable children who have lived with chronic neglect, sometimes for many years.

Team managers are fittingly proud of their team's commitment, professionalism and determination to do the right thing for children throughout the pandemic. Staff morale is good, and this was reflected in conversations with practitioners and managers during the visit. Several agency staff are keen to pursue permanent

contracts as they feel well supported and are enjoying the opportunities to work with different communities and cultures.

A key challenge in the CSF is balancing staff capacity and workload with the competing demands of short-term targeted work alongside longer, more complex, interventions. This is currently being safely managed but team managers are concerned about sustainability, given the impact of the weakened financial position. They cited the considerable reduction in resources and are worried about the increase in caseloads, which is not conducive to their systemic practice or to effecting positive change for children.

Croydon's adolescent service is being restructured to create an adolescent support team, with much-reduced resources. It is too soon to see the impact of these changes on exploited children, those missing from home, trafficked or affected by serious youth violence. Direct work with adolescents is currently effective, with most children receiving services that are suitable for their needs. Children at the highest risk receive fuller consideration through assessments and child protection strategy discussions. Missing children considered to be at lower risk receive a more variable response. Insufficient checks with partner agencies limit the quality of information about children and their circumstances, meaning that some risks may not be identified.

Visible, highly committed service managers and the head of service at the front door are fully cognisant of the emerging pressures and are working assiduously to find solutions, albeit within limited resources. Staff report that they feel listened to and supported.

Through audits and performance information, senior managers have identified that more work is needed to improve responses to children who experience chronic neglect or who live in homes where there is poor parental mental health or high levels of conflict and violence. Many of these children have been known to numerous services, sometimes for many years. A credible improvement action plan is in place, overseen by the CCIB strategic and operational boards.

Homeless young people receive a prompt assessment if they cannot live with family or friends, and come into care if appropriate. This has increased the demand on the teams that work with care experienced children and young people.

At the time of the visit, there were approximately 850 children living with parents in temporary accommodation in Croydon. Recent rapid reviews in Croydon of children who suffered significant harm or who died have shown that they often lived in unstable homes and moved around between London boroughs. The CCIB has instigated a review of the needs of children in temporary accommodation. The relationship with housing is being strengthened, and a safeguarding housing officer has recently been appointed to the SPOC.



Senior leaders are making strenuous efforts to mitigate the impact of the necessary changes on their staff and vulnerable children and they recognise the importance of strong partnership alliances with stakeholders in this process. Leaders need to maintain an unwavering focus on the needs of children as they continue to work in the context of financial restrictions and changes to the workforce.

Ofsted will take the findings from this focused visit into account when planning your next inspection or visit.

Yours sincerely

Brenda McLaughlin  
Her Majesty's Inspector

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# Agenda Item 8

<b>REPORT TO:</b>	Children and Young People Scrutiny Sub-Committee 14 September 2021
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	Cabinet Response to Scrutiny Recommendations
<b>LEAD OFFICER:</b>	Simon Trevaskis – Senior Democratic Services & Governance Officer - Scrutiny
<b>PERSON LEADING AT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING:</b>	Councillor Robert Ward – Chair of the Children & Young People Scrutiny Sub- Committee
<b>PUBLIC/EXEMPT:</b>	Public

<b>ORIGIN OF ITEM:</b>	The Cabinet response to recommendations made by the Children and Young People Scrutiny Sub-Committee is provided for the Committee's information.
<b>BRIEF FOR THE COMMITTEE:</b>	The Children and Young People Scrutiny Sub- Committee is asked to review the response given by the Cabinet to recommendations made by the Committee and consider whether any further action is necessary.

## 1. CABINET RESPONSE TO SCRUTINY RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.1. The rights of scrutiny to make recommendations to the Cabinet, Council, non-Executive Committee, Partner Agency or Partnership Board is set out in Section 8 of Part 4E – Scrutiny and Overview Procedure Rules of the Council's Constitution.
- 1.2. When making a recommendation to the Cabinet, a response needs to be given within two months to confirm whether the recommendation has been accepted or not. If accepted, this response should include how the recommendation will be implemented.
- 1.3. To ensure the Committee can monitor the response given to its recommendations, this report will be included as a standing item on each agenda, setting out in Appendix A the response from the Cabinet to the recommendations of the Committee.
- 1.4. The Committee is asked to review the responses given and consider whether any further action is necessary.

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**CONTACT OFFICER:** Stephanie Davis Democratic Services & Governance Officer - Scrutiny

## APPENDICES TO THIS REPORT

Appendix A: Cabinet Response to Recommendations Made by the Children and Young People Scrutiny Sub- Committee.

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SCRUTINY RECOMMENDATION	CONCLUSIONS	DEPARTMENT AND CABINET MEMBER RESPONDING	ACCEPT/ REJECT RECOMMENDATIONS (inc. reasons for rejection)	IDENTIFIED OFFICER	ANY FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS	TIMETABLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS IF ACCEPTED (ie Action Plan)	DATE OF SCRUTINY MEETING TO REPORT BACK
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**Report: Early Help, Social Care & Education Dashboards** (Considered by Children & Young People Sub-Committee on 20 April 2021)

<p>1.a That future dashboards contain information that accurately reflects the landscape for SEN children and the Chair to reach an agreement with the Interim Director of Education of the level of information to be shared.</p> <p>1.b Including data on 19-21 year old NEETs to enable comparison against national benchmarks</p>	<p>The Education dashboard was lacking information on SEN reviews and it was important that the dashboard be inclusive of all the children in Croydon that we serve.</p>	<p>Councillor Fleming</p> <p>Children, Families &amp; Education</p>	<p>Accepted.</p> <p>We have already produced a Data Dashboard with the SEND information and will add the agreed information to the overall Education Dashboard.</p>	<p>Shelley Davies</p>	<p>None.</p>	<p>Data included for the next Scrutiny meeting.</p>	<p>14 September 2021</p>
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**Report: Service Impact & Budget Update** (Considered by Children & Young People Sub-Committee on 20 April 2021)

<p>1. The Draft Children, Families and Education Delivery Plan 2021-24 be reviewed to ensure appropriate acknowledgement and inclusion of Scrutiny in its governance and assurance mechanisms.</p>	<p>It was very concerning that the role of Scrutiny was not included in the assurance process of the draft Children Families and Education Improvement Plan 2021-24.</p> <p>It was disappointing that the Children's Improvement Board work programme had been developed without consultation with the Sub-Committee or GPAC on its own work programme in order to avoid duplication.</p>	<p>Councillor Fleming</p> <p>Children, Families &amp; Education</p>	<p>Accepted.</p> <p>Officers have met with the Chair of the CYP Sub-Committee to discuss how the areas of focus and workplans for the Children's Continuous Improvement Board and the sub-committee can be better coordinated.</p>	<p>Roisin Madden</p>	<p>None.</p>	<p>Better aligned workplans from September 2021.</p>	<p>14 September 2021</p>
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SCRUTINY RECOMMENDATION	CONCLUSIONS	DEPARTMENT AND CABINET MEMBER RESPONDING	ACCEPT/ REJECT RECOMMENDATIONS (inc. reasons for rejection)	IDENTIFIED OFFICER	ANY FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS	TIMETABLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS IF ACCEPTED (ie Action Plan)	DATE OF SCRUTINY MEETING TO REPORT BACK
2. The Plan to be circulated to all Councillors with a briefing note that explains the challenges and for all other departments to follow this lead when writing the plan for their service.	The Plan was well written and robust but some of the language used was ambiguous. It was important that officers be mindful of the language used which could lead to unintended interpretation.	Councillor Flemming  Children, Families & Education	Accepted.  The comment is noted for future reports to the sub-committee.	Roisin Madden	None.	June 2021.	14 September 2021

<b>REPORT TO:</b>	<b>CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY SUB- COMMITTEE 14 SEPTEMBER 2021</b>
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>WORK PROGRAMME 2021-22</b>
<b>LEAD OFFICER:</b>	<b>Simon Trevaskis, Senior Democratic Service and Governance Officer- Scrutiny</b>
<b>CABINET MEMBER:</b>	<b>Not applicable</b>

<b>ORIGIN OF ITEM:</b>	The Work Programme is scheduled for consideration at every ordinary meeting of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Sub - Committee.
<b>BRIEF FOR THE COMMITTEE:</b>	To consider any additions, amendments or changes to the agreed work programme for the Committee in 2021/22.

## 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This agenda item details the Committee's work programme for the 2021/22 municipal year.
- 1.2 The Sub-Committee has the opportunity to discuss any amendments or additions that it wishes to make to the work programme.

## 2. WORK PROGRAMME

### 2.1 The work programme

The proposed work programme is attached at **Appendix 1**.

Members are asked to note that the lines of enquiry for some items have yet to be confirmed and that there are opportunities to add further items to the work programme.

### 2.2 Additional Scrutiny Topics

Members of the Sub-Committee are invited to suggest any other items that they consider appropriate for the Work Programme. However, due to the time limitations at Committee meetings, it is suggested that no proposed agenda contain more than two items of substantive business in order to allow effective scrutiny of items already listed.

### 2.3 Participation in Scrutiny

Members of the Sub-Committee are also requested to give consideration to any persons that it wishes to attend future meetings to assist in the

consideration of agenda items. This may include Cabinet Members, Council or other public agency officers or representatives of relevant communities.

### **3 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 The Sub-Committee is recommended to agree the Scrutiny Work Programme 2021/22 with any agreed amendments.
- 3.2 The Sub-Committee is recommended to agree that topic reports be produced for relevant substantive agenda items in the future.

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**BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:** None

#### **APPENDIX 1**

Work Programme 2021/22 for the Children and Young People Scrutiny Sub-Committee.



**Children & Young People Sub-Committee****Chair:** Robert Ward**Committee Members:** Sean Fitzsimons (Vice-Chair), Sue Bennett, Jerry Fitzpatrick, Bernadette Khan, Shafi Khan, Louisa Woodley,**Co-optees:** Josephine Copeland (Teacher Rep), Leo Morrell (Catholic Diocese Rep), Elaine Jones (CofE Rep), Paul O'Donnell (Parent Governor Rep), Vacancy (Parent Governor Rep).

Workstream Priority

W 3: Supporting local people and keeping them safe. To focus particularly on the council's UASC obligations, post-pandemic child safety and safeguarding, and Special Educational Needs

<b>Meeting Date</b>	<b>Agenda Items</b>	<b>Report Lead</b>
<b>20 April 2021</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Early Help CSC and Education Dashboard</li> <li>• Service Impact and Budget Update</li> <li>• Update, Task and Finish Group: Exclusions and Off-rolling in Croydon Schools</li> </ul>	<b>Kerry Crichlow</b>  <b>Jerry Fitzpatrick</b>
<b>22 June 2021</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Early Help CSC and Education Dashboard</li> <li>• Service Impact and Budget Update</li> <li>• Refreshed Children's Improvement Journey Plan</li> <li>• Impact of Covid-19 on children and young people's mental health</li> <li>• Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children</li> </ul>	<b>Kerry Crichlow/Shelley Davies</b> <b>Kerry Crichlow</b> <b>Pasquale Brammer</b> <b>Debbie Jones</b>
<b>14 September 2021</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Early Help CSC and Education Dashboard</li> <li>• Service Impact and Budget Update.</li> </ul>	<b>Kerry Crichlow/Shelley Davies</b> <b>Kerry Crichlow</b>
<b>2 November 2021</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Task and Finish Group Final Report: Exclusions and Off-rolling in Croydon Schools</li> </ul>	<b>Councillor Jerry Fitzpatrick</b>

	It is anticipated that this meeting will focus on the priority areas in workstream 3, however the agenda will be confirmed as soon as possible before the date to ensure that there is capacity for the Committee to consider any other emerging urgent issues.	
<b>18 January 2022</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Question Time: Cabinet Member for Children, Young People &amp; Learning</li> <li>• Education Budget</li> <li>• Education Quality &amp; Standards</li> </ul>	<b>Debbie Jones</b>  <b>Kate Bingham</b> <b>Shelley Davies</b>
<b>1 March 2022</b>	It is anticipated that this meeting will focus on the priority areas in workstream 3, however the agenda will be confirmed as soon as possible before the date to ensure that there is capacity for the Committee to consider any other emerging urgent issues.	
<b>5 April 2022</b>	It is anticipated that this meeting will focus on the priority areas in workstream 3, however the agenda will be confirmed as soon as possible before the date to ensure that there is capacity for the Committee to consider any other emerging urgent issues.	