

# Corporate Parenting Panel Agenda



To: Councillor Alisa Flemming (Chair)

Councillors Maddie Henson, Bernadette Khan, Pat Clouder, Mike Bonello, Sue Bennett and Maria Gatland

## Co-optee Members

Angela Christmas (Foster Carer Representative), Manny Kwamin (Foster Carer Representative), Shelley Davies (Virtual School), Angela Griffiths (Virtual School), Sarah Bailey (Virtual School), Sue Goode (LAC Nurse/Doctor), Dr Julia Simpson (LAC Nurse/Doctor), Emily Collinsbears (EMPIRE), Julie Ralphs (EMPIRE), EMPIRE (EMPIRE), Porsha Robinson (EMPIRE), Roneeta Campbell-Butler (Health Commissioner) and Charity Kanotangudza (Health Commissioner)

A meeting of the **Corporate Parenting Panel** which you are hereby summoned to attend, will be held on **Wednesday, 27 April 2022 at 5.00 pm** in

KATHERINE KERSWELL  
Chief Executive and Head of Paid Service  
London Borough of Croydon  
Bernard Weatherill House  
8 Mint Walk, Croydon CR0 1EA

Michelle Ossei-Gerning  
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[www.croydon.gov.uk/meetings](http://www.croydon.gov.uk/meetings)  
Tuesday, 19 April 2022

The agenda papers for all Council meetings are available on the Council website [www.croydon.gov.uk/meetings](http://www.croydon.gov.uk/meetings)

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

## **AGENDA – PART A**

**1. Apologies for absence**

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

**2. Minutes of the previous meeting (Pages 5 - 12)**

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 16 March 2022 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 (DPs) and gifts and hospitality to the value of which exceeds £50 or multiple gifts and/or instances of hospitality with a cumulative value of £50 or more when received from a single donor within a rolling twelve month period. In addition, Members and co-opted Members are reminded that unless their disclosable pecuniary interest is registered on the register of interests or is the subject of a pending notification to the Monitoring Officer, they are required to disclose those disclosable pecuniary interests at the meeting. This should be done by completing the Disclosure of Interest form and handing it to the Democratic Services representative at the start of the meeting. The Chair will then invite Members to make their disclosure orally at the commencement of Agenda item 3. Completed disclosure forms will be provided to the Monitoring Officer for inclusion on the Register of Members' Interests.

**4. Urgent Business (if any)**

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

**5. Update on actions agreed at previous meeting(s)**

**6. EMPIRE: Update on activities and engagement**

To receive an update from E.M.P.I.R.E.

**7. Annual Report of the Fostering Service 2021/22 (Pages 13 - 52)**

The Annual Report of the Fostering Service, Statement of Purpose & Croydon Foster Carer's Association report is attached.

**8. Corporate Parenting Panel Annual Report 2021-2022 (Pages 53 - 74)**

The Annual Report of the Corporate Parenting Panel is attached.

**9. Children in Care Performance Scorecard (Pages 75 - 78)**

The Children in Care Performance Scorecard for March 2022 is attached.

**10. How has the Panel helped Children in Care today?**

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

**11. Work Programme (Pages 79 - 82)**

To consider and approve the Panel's work programme for the municipal year 2021/22.

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

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

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

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# Public Document Pack Agenda Item 2

## Corporate Parenting Panel

Meeting of held on Wednesday, 16 March 2022 at 5.00 pm  
This meeting was held remotely

### MINUTES

**Present:** Councillor Alisa Flemming (Chair);

Councillors Sue Bennett and Maria Gatland

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

Angela Christmas (Foster Carer Representative), Manny Kwamin (Foster Carer Representative), Dr Julia Simpson (LAC Nurse/Doctor), EMPIRE (EMPIRE) and Porsha Robinson (EMPIRE)

**Also Present:** Roisin Madden (Director of Early Help and Children's Social Care)  
Shaun Hanks (Head of Quality Assurance)  
Julie Daley (Interim Head of Transformation)  
Hannah Franklin (Missing Lead)  
Maret Arselgova (Young Director)  
Lajay Taylor (Youth Engagement Worker - EMPIRE)

**Apologies:** Councillor Maddie Henson, Bernadette Khan, Pat Clouder and Mike Bonello

### PART A

#### **10/22 Minutes of the previous meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 8 February 2022 were agreed as an accurate record.

#### **11/22 Disclosures of interest**

There were none.

#### **12/22 Urgent Business (if any)**

There was none.

#### **13/22 Update on actions agreed at previous meeting(s)**

The actions were not completed.

## **14/22 EMPIRE Update**

The Panel was updated on new staffing within EMPIRE and welcomed the new Practitioner Lajay Taylor.

EMPIRE discussed with the Panel a document titled the Financial Policy Guidance Transition to Adulthood, which was re-released in November 2020, and highlighted the rights and entitlements for care experienced young people who were not receiving what was listed within the document.

The Director of Early Help and Children's Social Care informed that part of the work of the service was to raise awareness of the rights and entitlements and how it would be applied to care experienced young people. The Head of Quality Assurance added that young people were able to apply for driving lessons and other financial grants within means. Starter packs and small grants were also available upon request, and the service were also working towards the local offer provided for young people. Young people who were not receiving their entitlements were to be reviewed.

Further, EMPIRE shared with the Panel of their successful participation in a Walk for Cancer on 12 March 2022 raising money for Cancer, which saw some Panel Members in attendance.

## **15/22 Children in Care and Care Experienced Young People**

The Corporate Parenting Panel considered the Care Experienced Young People report which provided an overview of support for Care Experienced young people [statutory Care Leavers]. The Panel received a short presentation overview from the Head of Quality Assurance, Shaun Hanks.

In brief, the presentation highlighted an overview of the numbers and issues raised in relation to Leaving Care:

- At the end of February 2022, there were 679 aged 18-25 Care Experience young persons who were receiving support through an active pathway plan.
- Young people over the age of 21 were deemed independent and were welcomed for additional support through the service.
- There were 66% of unaccompanied asylum seeking children, however, not all had leave to remain, which made resources difficult.
- There was a significant number of male children looked after that mostly fell within the unaccompanied asylum seeking children.
- Ethnicity showed over 60% of an over representation in both Asian-British and Black-British young people. [This also mirrored the Looked After Children population.]
- The service had a duty to keep in touch with the young people every two months [less than keeping in touch with Children Looked After] and there was better improvement since last year, seeing results of 92% in 17-18 year olds, and 98% in 19-20 year olds.

- There was a gradual increase and improvement with pathway plans. The performance indicator had been a very helpful tool to address improvement as the service currently saw an 82% increase over the last few months.
- Education, Employment and Training had seen some difficulties within the last two years in the wake of the pandemic, however 75% of Care Experienced young people were in Higher or other Education, Employment or Training, which was above their statistical neighbours. The percentage highlighted that some unaccompanied asylum seeking children had no resource to public funds and other access matters.
- The service had improved in working towards providing pleasant suitable accommodation for Care Experienced young people, by ensuring the property was seen by a personal advisor before being let out; and helping to provide alternative accommodation following a short notice of an eviction. Independent Living with support was used more, and Staying Put was well received particularly for the 17–18 year olds.

In response to queries raised by the Panel, the Head of Quality Assurance, clarified the following:

In relation to the issues in the monitoring and performance of pathway plans, there was a better timeliness in the older group (18-25 year olds) than the younger group (16-18 year olds) mainly due to the misunderstanding of care and pathway plans, though with the gradual improvement on the pathway plans, the service was making monitoring and performance improvement sustainable.

In relation to ethnicity, the data was collated from an overview in comparison to neighbouring local authorities and did not provide an overview of the service's own position.

**ACTION: To provide information on (1) whether there was a change within the ethnicity data of Care Experienced young people and Looked After Children; and (2) the disproportionality in employment within the Care Experienced population particularly highlighting how many Asian and Black young people were in employment, education, or training.**

In response to the service's vision for the Care Experienced Leavers Club and the offer for Care Experienced young people particularly as participation was different to Children Looked After and Care Leavers such as transport or travel money, no internet access, it was said that the service needed to make better ways for Care Leavers involvement using better communication and online digital participation to participate in the Club. Following the pandemic and other contemporary issues, change included peer to peer support. Further, there was also Care Experienced societies and unions available for the Care Experienced Club to explore, reaching out to adult care leavers and sighting helpful links to education, universities, and employers.

The Panel **RESOLVED**: To endorse the areas of focus for 2022-23

**Focus for 2022:**

- Ensure caseloads remain manageable to enable the best support for an increasing number of Care Experienced young people.
- Further develop peer support and a 'Care Experienced Club' to focus on the needs of young people entering work and becoming independent.
- Understand better the support needs and risks for our Care Experienced young people, particularly for our asylum-seeking population.
- Expand training opportunities and learn from young people's experiences.
- Improve the accommodation offer for young people to ensure the right help is available to enable young people to achieve independence with a stable support network.

The Chair thanked officers for their report.

**16/22 Children Missing**

The Corporate Parenting Panel considered the Children Missing Review report, which provided an update regarding Missing Children and the continued improvement in performance and quality of practice.

The Panel received a short presentation overview from the detailed report from the Interim Head of Transformation, Julie Daley, and the Missing Lead, Hannah Franklin.

In brief, the presentation highlighted:

- There was a 20% reduction in the total number of missing children in (January – December) 2021 in comparison to 2020.
- 25% (105) of the 425 children had been subjected to the Multi-Agency Child Exploitation protocol in relation to child criminal exploitation with concerns mainly relating to County Lines Drug Dealing.
- 31% (134) of the 425 children were in care of the local authority, which was 23% lower than for 2020.
- The top twenty missing children were in care of the local authority and accounted for 41% of all missing episodes.
- Key themes of repeat missing children included 95% of criminal and/or sexual exploitation; 85% were of Black, Asian or ethnic minority background; 80% were of Children Looked After of which 20% were unaccompanied asylum seeking children; 75% were children aged 17 years and above; 55% were male and 45% were female.
- The Return Home Interviews (RHIs) was a statutory responsibility to understand why children go missing. The data showed 93% of RHIs was offered to children and 49% of the RHIs were completed. This was a result of children having the option to decline an interview. The



service reviewed their process on this to enhance better practice in the interventions of children and young people.

- There had been a development in capturing areas for improvement [such as building relationships between the young person and their social worker, foster carer or key worker] and working with EMPIRE in responding to missing episodes.

In response to queries raised by the Panel, the Interim Head of Transformation and the Missing Lead, clarified the following:

Foster Carers had a vital role to support the reduction of missing episodes in young people. With the depth of knowledge, it was key for liaisons with social workers to address observations, communications and other known contributing pull factors of a young person going missing, though it was noted that a balance of an independent person would see a young person reach out. Further, there was also within the RHIs a section for foster carers to contribute to the risks and understanding of missing episodes as standard practice. Additionally, The Director of Early Help and Children's Social Care highlighted the legal requirement of corporate parents to ask young people of their wellbeing; there was more support provided for young people who presented missing, and further encouragement for parents and carers to signpost the young person to speak to an independent person so their voice could be heard.

During the consideration of the recommendations, the Panel discussed the following:

EMPIRE welcomed the flexibility in the relationship building with other key workers for young people to benefit from a better RHIs outcome.

The Chair welcomed the continued focus on children missing and missing episodes particularly with the 17 year olds and facilitating RHIs. In support, other Members were also pleased to see an increased focus on missing children and RHIs and supported the continuity of this focus, as the number of missing episodes in the past had been a concern. With the learned comments relating to relationship building, Members were in support for the renewed work around this.

The Panel **RESOLVED**: To

1. Note the progress made to date including improved quality of practice.
2. Note the further improvements proposed, which is designed to embed further cultural and operational changes to achieve positive and sustainable change to the quality of services provided to children and families of Croydon.
3. Provide Corporate Leaders with an understanding of progress made to date and an understanding of the continuous improvements.

The Chair thanked officers for their report.

## **17/22 Children in Care Performance Scorecard**

The Corporate Parenting Panel considered the Children in Care Performance Scorecard which provided an overview of the February month. The Panel received an overview from the Head of Quality Assurance, Shaun Hanks, who highlighted the following red and yellow performance indicators:

- The numbers of Children Looked After had continued to reduce.
- Visits within six weeks had been a continued issue, and the service was working on the performance which currently stood at 92% of their 95% target.
- The percentage of children with an up-to-date care review was at 96%, 2% under the year to date target.
- The participation review was 75% which was under performed over the year.
- Up to date care plans was at 81% for 0-18 year olds
- Up to date pathway plans was at 69% for 16-18 year olds, and at 81% overall for care leavers aged 18 plus.
- The percentage of health assessments up to date was at 87%
- The performance for the same social worker – is red at 65% being the target. The year to date performance was at 56%. Reason based on the restructure of the service. This will not change for a while.
- Children Looked After placed within twenty miles from home had a percentage of 83% of the 90% target, though the service was doing well in this area there was more room for improvement as the National review highlighted the importance for young people to be closer to their community.
- Announced foster carer visits within timescales (6 weekly with a supervised social worker) highlighted pressures within the team factoring a low percentage of 89% of the 95% target.
- The percentage for young people in employment, education, or training was at low at 61% of the 85% target for young people aged 17 to 21; and also low at 59% of the 85% target for young people aged 19-21.

In response to queries raised by the Panel, The Head of Quality Assurance clarified the following:

In relation to the operational guidance for social work visits, within Croydon, visits were to be held within four weeks; the national minimum for visits was within every six weeks. The Croydon service continued the four weekly visits to develop the importance of building relationships and to review the stability of the young person within their placement, though there was room for systemic changes upon review and sign off. At 73%, the service was working to better the performance.

**18/22 How has the Panel helped Children in Care today?**

The Panel welcomed the gradual improvement in the pathway plans and the continued focus in this area.

The Panel welcomed the important conversations addressed relating to Care Leavers and the challenges of the Care Experienced Hub and noting the balance of young and experienced care leavers on the Panel.

The Panel welcomed the beneficial review of the Children In Care service to Members and the Panel.

**19/22 Work Programme**

The work programme was received for information.

**20/22 Exclusion of the Press and Public**

This motion was not required.

The meeting ended at 6.30 pm

**Signed:**

**Date:**

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REPORT TO:	Corporate Parenting Panel 27 <sup>th</sup> April 2022
SUBJECT:	<b>Annual Report of the Fostering Service 2021/22</b>
LEAD OFFICER:	Róisín Madden; Director Children’s Social Care
CABINET MEMBER:	Cllr Alisa Flemming Cabinet Member for Children, Young People & Learning
WARDS:	<b>All</b>
PUBLIC/EXEMPT:	

**SUMMARY OF REPORT:**

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

Children’s Services has been successful this year in placing a significant number of children with in-house foster carers and an increased number of children have been placed with connected families. The overall number of foster carers has not increased this year, due to the number of new approvals being cancelled out by the number of carers who have resigned or retired. The service is a stable one with few staff changes and we have more children remaining with their foster carers at age 18 through Staying Put arrangements than statistical neighbours. Recruitment and retention of foster carers remains a priority particularly for older children, sibling groups, children with disabilities and long-term placements.

Since fostering recruitment was brought in house (on 01 November 2020) we have been more flexible in our approach, focusing recruitment on foster carers to meet our placement sufficiency objective. The relationship between the fostering service and the foster carers has vastly improved, which has helped to further develop our support structure for foster carers, particularly where is deemed necessary to provide more intensive support for the first six months of their first child being placed; there is continued use of experienced foster carers for mentoring and promoting the CFCA.

This report complies with Standard 25.7 of the Fostering National Minimum Standards with the Fostering Service Manager monitoring and reporting to corporate parenting members about the management and outcomes of the service, see appendix 1 Statement of Purpose.

**COUNCIL PRIORITIES 2020-2024**

This report identifies how our practice, systems and services are in line with the Council’s priority of:

We will focus on providing the best quality core service we can afford. First and foremost, providing social care services that keep our most vulnerable residents safe and healthy.

**FINANCIAL IMPACT:**

There are no financial implications of this report

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

1. The panel notes the evaluation of the Fostering Service as set out in the Annual Report including the CFCA's report
2. The panel approves the Statement of Purpose 22/23
3. The panel endorses the key priorities for development in 22/23 as set out in this report

## **1. Role of the Fostering Service**

The Fostering Service is responsible for:

- Support, supervision and training of foster carers, including family and friend carers (connected carers)
- Ensuring provision of local safe and supportive foster placements in accordance with fostering national minimum standards
- Promoting placement stability and permanence planning for our children
- Recruitment and assessment of new foster carers, including connected carers.
- Private Fostering

The priorities are to ensure that:

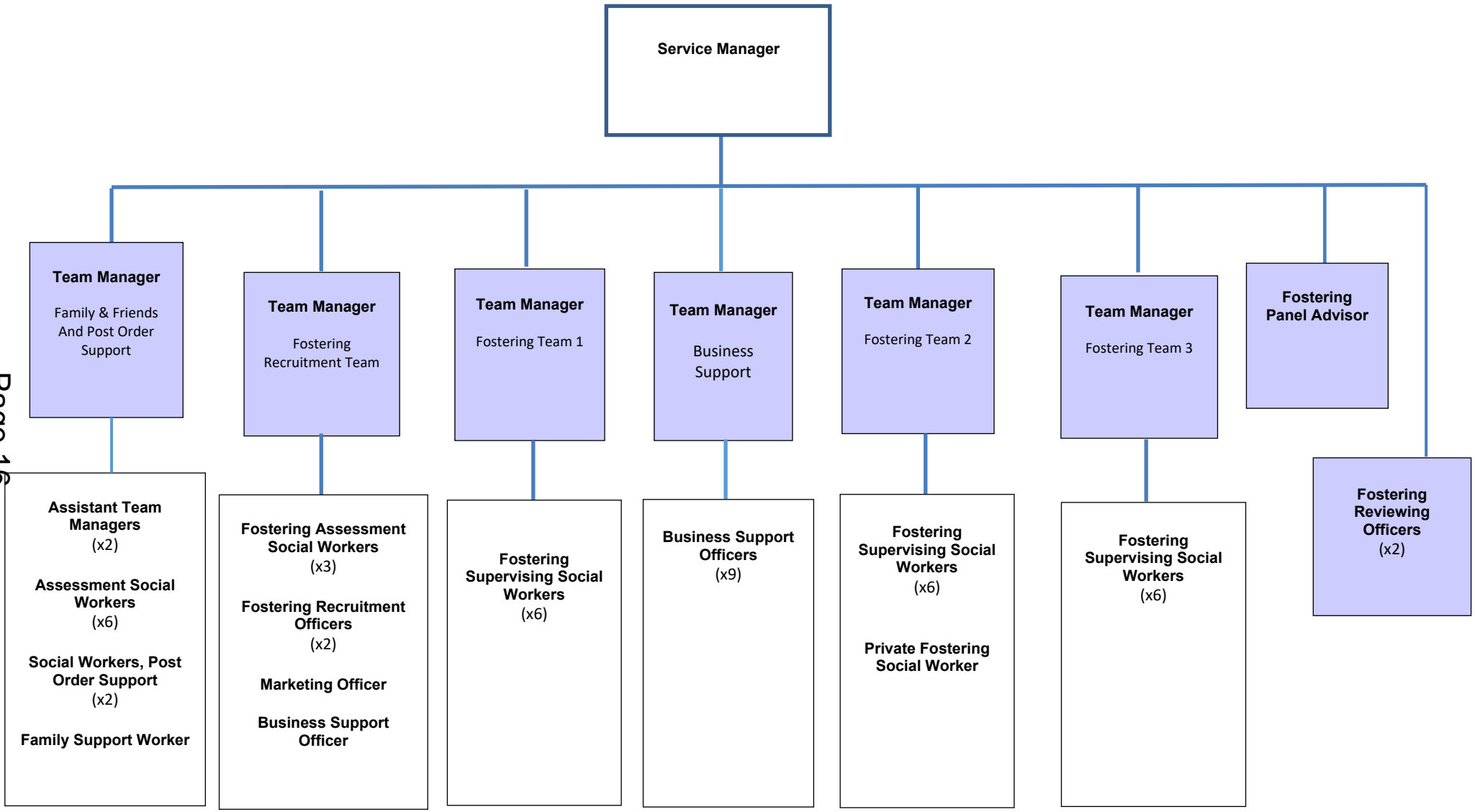
- All children who come into care have an experience of safe, secure and consistent care
- All children experience a safe place within which they can play, grow, thrive and are supported to reach their full potential
- The holistic needs of any child are addressed and supported through health, education and social development enhancing opportunity to develop resilience and achieve.
- Support for early permanence for children in care and to ensure that children who cannot safely remain at home are offered a permanent family base without delay
- Digitise our services, information, guidance and advice to promote a more efficient and effective service
- We measure and report customer experience and operational performance, taking action where we need to.

We have a varied range of foster carers with different skills and experience who provide placements including respite; transition to permanence through adoption and long term fostering. We also assess and support family and friends who want to look after children in their extended family or social network, these are called connected carers. All foster carers are supervised and supported by supervising social workers from the fostering teams and provided with training opportunities.

## **2. Service Structure**

Croydon's Fostering Service is managed under the Head of Service for Children in Care and Care Experienced Young People. There is a Service Manager with responsibility for this service. Most of the staff within this service are permanently employed.

Please note the structure chart on the next page:





The social workers assess, supervise and support foster carers, ensuring that they meet fostering standards, have an annual review and monitor quality of care, training and development of carers. The most significant aspect of their work is to ensure that children remain safe in foster care and that carers feel supported to fulfil their responsibilities. The two fostering reviewing officers are responsible for overseeing annual reviews of all our foster carers and making recommendations about terms of approval. Croydon has a part time fostering panel advisor who is a point of reference in relation to the fostering panel's policies, procedures and expectations; ensuring that panels undertake reviews of carers as required and follow regulations.

### 3. Supervision and Support to Foster Carers

We have 205 fostering households as of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022. Croydon looks after 559 children who are placed in a variety of placements in accordance with their care plan.

<b>Tab 1a. Current LAC by Placement Type and Status</b>	<b>Local</b>	<b>UASC</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>A6 - Placed for adoption with placement order (under section 21 of the 2002 Act) not with current foster carer</b>	11		<b>11</b>
<b>H5 - Semi-independent living accommodation not subject to Children's Homes Regulations</b>	22	2	<b>24</b>
<b>K2 - Children's Homes subject to Children's Homes Regulations</b>	27		<b>27</b>
<b>P1 - Placed with own parents or other person with parental responsibility</b>	18		<b>18</b>
<b>R2 - NHS/Health Trust</b>	3		<b>3</b>
<b>R5 - Young Offender Institution or prison</b>	3		<b>3</b>
<b>S1 - All Residential schools</b>	1		<b>1</b>
<b>U1 - Foster placement with relative or friend- long term fostering</b>	28		<b>28</b>
<b>U3 - Foster placement with relative or friend- not long term or FFA</b>	41	6	<b>47</b>
<b>U4 - Placement with other foster carer- long term fostering</b>	107	24	<b>131</b>
<b>U5 - Placement with other foster carer who is also an approved adopter- FFA</b>	2		<b>2</b>
<b>U6 - Placement with other foster carer - not long term or FFA</b>	180	82	<b>262</b>
<b>Z1 - Other placements</b>	2		<b>2</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>445</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>559</b>

At 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022, 43% of our children in care were placed with in-house foster carers, the remainder were placed with independent fostering agencies, residential units or in semi-independent accommodation, with some being placed at home with their parents and a number placed for adoption.

Since April 2021, 17 households (26 foster carers) were deregistered.

Deregistration reasons	Foster Home
Connected foster carers who secured permanence via a legal order or who turned 18.	4
Due to ill health	1
Carer resignation	7
Connected carers where children have returned home	1
Fostering for another council or agency, or moved out of borough	1
Deregistered due to standards for care	2
Retired	1
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>17</b>

## Training and development

Training and development of foster carers is important to the service and further specialist training was commissioned and had started at the beginning of 2021/2022. The training provides experienced and newly approved foster carers opportunities to learn how best to meet the needs of our children, including our most complex who are likely to be traumatised.

Training has included:

- Research in Practice and Foster Talk tools and research
- Introduction to Systemic and Trauma Informed Practice (supported by our systemic family therapists)
- Gangs (delivered by YOS specialist)
- Children Looked After education (delivered by virtual school)
- Caring for children with disabilities (delivered by disabilities youth service)

Development for supervising social workers and foster carers has included:

- Systemic clinical therapists facilitating reflective social work conversations with staff to promote better understanding of our children's emotional needs and empower them to support foster carers to meet these needs. They also provide consultations to supervising social workers and have supported foster carers to improve placement stability.
- Structured consultations for foster carers with CAMHS, which are also attended

by the supervising social worker and child's social worker.

- Training a cohort of foster carers to deliver UASC specific training which staff also attend to ensure joint learning.
- Systemic practice training for supervising social workers and managers.
- The mentoring programme continues for foster carers.
- Croydon Council continues to support Croydon Foster Carers Association (CFCA) and their work with foster carers. See appendix 2 Report from CFCA.
- Communication and Support: Support groups continued to take place each month facilitated by CFCA but the service has begun to execute its plan to expand on this to cover a wider area and need. We have improved our written and direct interaction with carers and increase the opportunities for feedback and challenge.

#### Areas for development: gaps in provision

- Parent and child placements. We have approved 1 fostering household for this area, but they were immediately unavailable to Covid related travel abroad. We do not have any carers who are approved to take a parent or parents and child when parent is over 18 years old.
- Large sibling groups. We do not have any carers who are approved to take 3 or more children as a sibling group.
- Teenagers and children with complex needs, particularly those who have suffered trauma and present with emotional and behavioural needs.

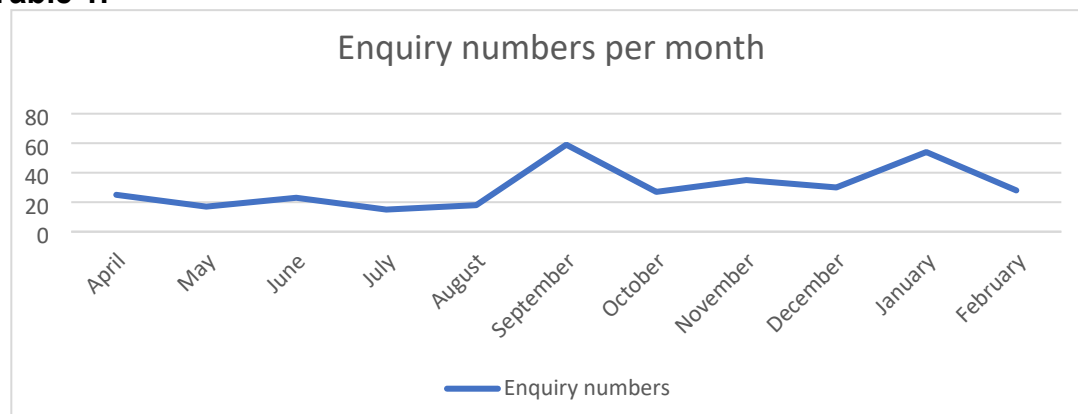
#### 4. Recruitment Activity (April 2021 to March 2022) (prepared by the Marketing Officer)

##### 5.1 Summary:

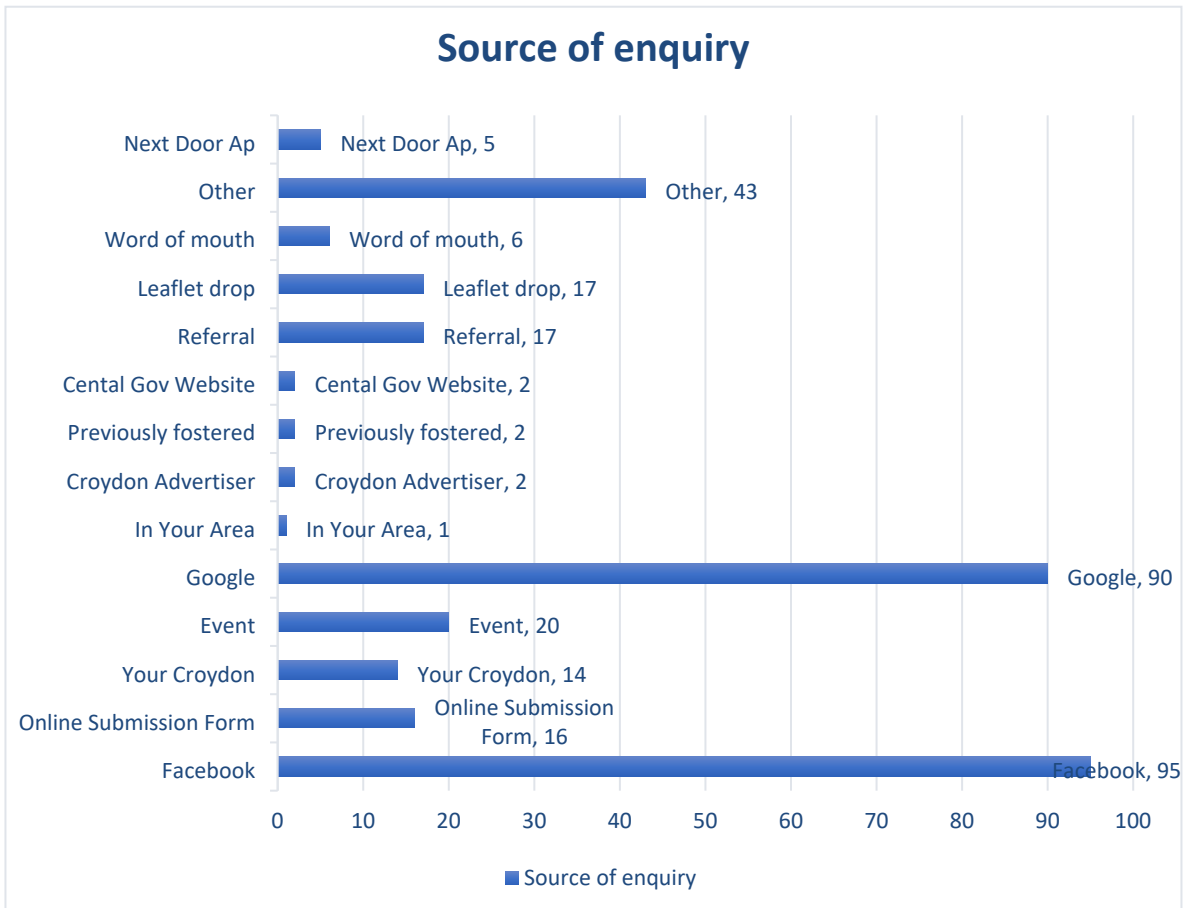
	Total requests for information	Total initial enquiries	Total hom visits	Total assessments	Total approvals
<b>Target</b>	<b>300</b>				<b>15</b>
<b>Actual</b>	<b>330</b>	<b>185</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>10 (*12)</b>

8 in active assessment  
(\*2 going to panel in March, 3 in April)

**Table 1.**

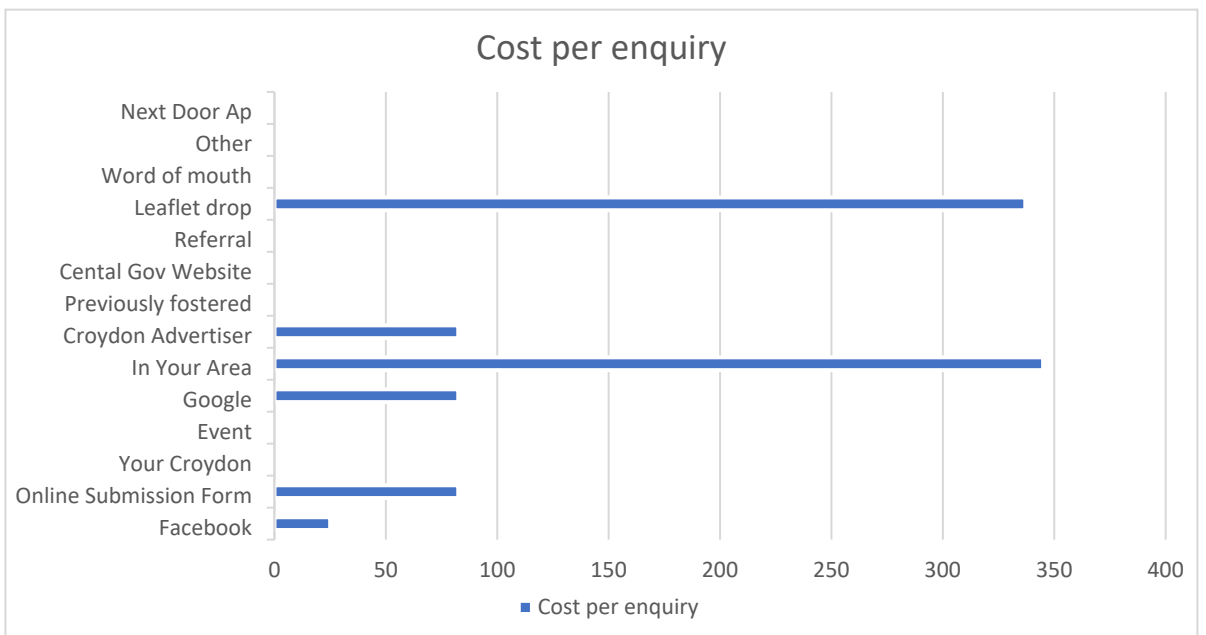


**Table 2.**



## 5.2 Cost per enquiry

**Table 3.**



### 5.3 Cost per approved foster carer: £3,333.

### 5.4 Business conversion rates:

- Requests for Information – Initial enquiry: **56%**
- Initial Enquiry – Approval – **6.5%**

### 5.5 Objectives vs Outcomes

Objectives	Outcomes/target achieved
To assess and approve 15 new sets of foster carers in 1 financial year	12/80%
Recruit carers who can care for the following groups of LAC: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 10+ age group</li> <li>• Teenagers and those involved in gangs/offending</li> <li>• Children with disabilities</li> <li>• Sibling groups Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children</li> </ul>	10+ age group – <b>8</b> carers Children with disabilities – <b>1</b> in assessment Sibling groups – <b>2</b> UASC - <b>2</b>
Demographically profiling to increase the numbers of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• White carers</li> <li>• Younger carers</li> </ul>	White carers- <b>1 and 1 mixed couple in assessment</b> Younger carers: (under 50 years of age)- <b>3</b> Under 40- <b>0</b>
To meet the current and predicted need for our LAC in foster care by targeted recruitment methods	General increase in targeted prospecting across all channels
To increase word of mouth referrals from existing foster carers	We have had one referral from an existing foster carer during this year. Work continues to encourage our carers to refer potential applicants.
To increase the number of in-house foster placements	The work continues. The foster carer population has a number of older carers who are/have been planning to retire. Net gains are likely to be achieved once this situation changes.
To increase the conversion rate from enquiry to approval	We have had an increase in enquires relevant to the last year. This is perhaps due to the impact of Covid. The conversion rate has not

	been as high as we would like. This has largely been due to enquirers' lack of understanding of the requirements and expectations of fostering.
To establish and maintain a consistent cost per carer & return on investment	100%

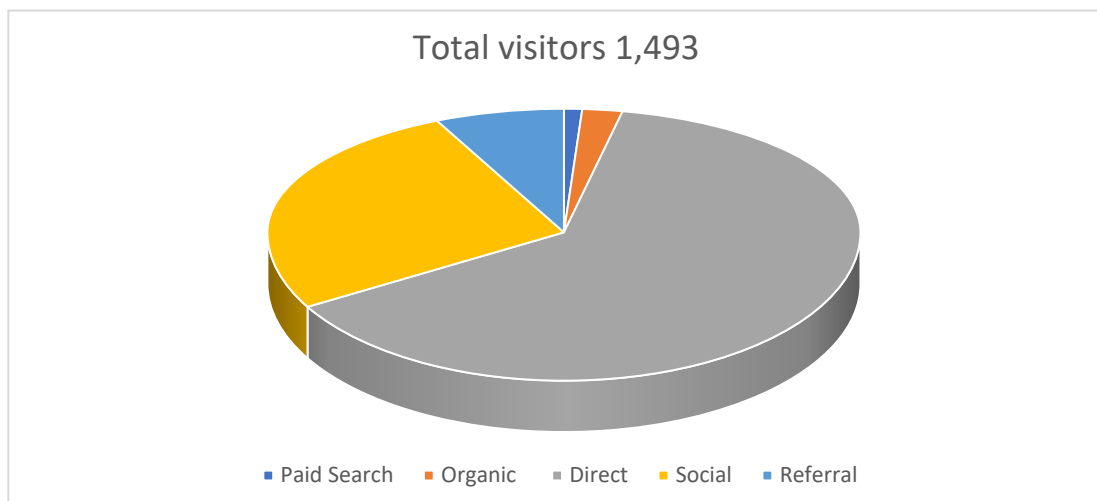
*\*No figures to reference from previous year*

### 5.6 Main barriers to recruitment:

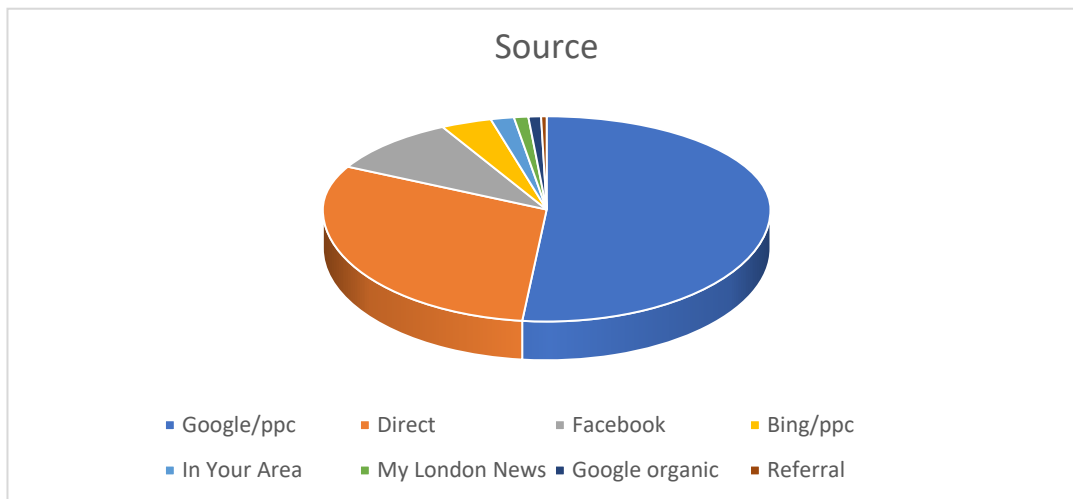
- Covid - lack of face to face events
- Lack of fostering specific social media channels
- No Outdoor advertising opportunities (contract ended with JC Decaux)
- No 'Your Croydon' print publication
- Not able to quickly take advantage of ad hoc advertising opportunities.

### 5.7 Google Analytics for landing page: [www.fosterforcroydon.gov.uk](http://www.fosterforcroydon.gov.uk)

Total visitors: **1,493**



**Source/Medium**



## 5.8 Summary and forecast

- Conversion rate from enquiry to approval is above national average
- Moving budget to online advertising and community engagement during lockdown maximized potential for enquiries resulting in a steady increase throughout the year
- New carers are approved to care for target needs of current LAC
- Improved website has provided enquirers with greater user engagement
- Creation of fostering specific social media channels has increased engagement with the community
- Raising awareness on the specific needs of our LAC in monthly online articles has increased the amount of quality enquiries
- Creating digital versions of fostering information has reduced the need to print and post and helps to portray Croydon Fostering as a forward-thinking organization.
- Forging relationships with faith and community groups has encouraged members of the public to enquire about fostering for Croydon.
- Clear and consistent messaging has enabled enquirers to understand the difference between fostering for an agency vs local authority
- Source of enquiry is not being clearly identified at first point of contact. 'Other' makes up 13% of all enquiries.
- 'Google' is too broad – did they click through from an ad, search 'fostering'? etc

- In Your Area advertising produced little results – not to continue
- Print advertising is costly and producing little results – not to continue
- Increase in online enquiries reflects lockdown and general shift to public consumer habits
- Word of mouth and referrals have increased
- Covid restrictions have limited face to face enquiries seeing a significant drop nationwide
- The move to supplying digital information and online marketing is greater than ever, next financial year will focus on re-marketing and contextual re-marketing to increase prospecting of transferring carers.
- Croydon specific, location-based advertising will be at the forefront of all campaigning in FY 22-23 as well as an increase in community engagement

## **5. Fostering Panel (prepared by the Panel Advisor)**

Here is a summary of the work undertaken by panel, practice and development, and the monitoring and quality assurance role of panel in relation to the reports presented during the period March 2021 – February 2022.

### **Introduction from the Panel Chair**

This has been another busy year with changes and some challenges. It was great to read the feedback included showing that Panel is now a positive experience by Social workers presenting and the carers attending, while being diligent in our scrutiny or assessments and reports.

The current panel advisor taking up the role in May 2021 has helped panel's goal of ongoing improvements to quality assurance and enhanced communication prior and post panel process. This has been particularly positive when panel have given advised or asked for a case to return to panel, ensuring actions are followed through.

The annual appraisals of panel members also meant a review of the central list, this was to ensure that panel had a rounded and diverse amount of experience and knowledge while providing consistency in its approach. This did see several longstanding panel members not continuing as panel members. As Chair of the panel, I am grateful for panel members' engagement to this process and the good work and commitment contributed by those who are no longer members of the central list.

Although it will be reviewed in the future, we remain delivering Panel virtually for the foreseeable future. It has been discussed that, if possible, future panel training days will be considered being delivered face to face rather than virtually.

As you will see from the data there has been a fairly high number of deferrals at panel during this period. Panel do anticipate that the ongoing collaboration between the Panel Advisor,



the Social Work team and their managers on the expectations of quality of reports, being evidenced based, capturing the voice of the child and with good analysis, that this figure will be reduced in the future.

Panel have been aware of changes in the Social Work team, again with a turnover of staff. This does seem to have settled down recently and we hope for a period of stability for the supervision and support of carers and an increase of assessments coming to panel.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank all panel members, the administrative staff (Carole in particular) and the panel advisor for the ongoing commitment, flexibility to Panel, the Young People and Foster Carers of Croydon.

## **Panel Meetings**

The Croydon Fostering Panel meets on the first, third and fourth Tuesday of each month. Panels are either a full day of 5 cases or half a day of 3 cases. The agenda depends on the cases that are ready within the timescales for distributing the paperwork, 5 working days before the meeting.

There were 30 panel meetings held during this period; 3 panel meetings were cancelled due to insufficient cases ready for presentation. All meetings were quorate **Reg 24(1)**

Panel welcomes observers to the meetings by prior arrangement and during this period have had attendees from the fostering service and other children's services.

## **Membership**

Croydon Fostering Panel is chaired by Dylan Mclees-Taylor who is highly experienced in this role and a former foster carer.

The Central List members bring a wide variety of professional and personal expertise and experiences including, Care experienced, Health, Education, CAMHS, Foster Carer, Family Group Conference, Legal and Social Work.

Croydon reviews the Central List through the appraisal process which is conducted annually **NMS 14.1/14.8, Guidance 5.8**

During the appraisal process in 2021 a Core List of members was identified to ensure consistency which is particularly relevant if a case is deferred and needs to return to panel at a later date. **Guidance 5.4**

New panel members observe at least one panel as part of their induction, sign a panel agreement, and receive a copy of Effective Fostering Panels (Coram BAAF) Panel members will also receive a copy of the Croydon Fostering Handbook. **Guidance 5.14/NMS 23**

Panel has recently appointed 2 Vice Chairs from the Central List to ensure there is always cover should the Chair be unavailable.

The Panel Advisor has been in post since May 2021 and was the third advisor to this post within a year.

Panel is extremely well supported by the senior panel administrator. Members, social workers and families are highly appreciative of the work the senior panel administrator completes prior, during and post panel. The senior panel administrator is also supported in this role when necessary.

Future recruitment of panel members will need to be mindful of considering applicants with a knowledge of living and working in Croydon, to reflect the demographics of the local community.

### **Panel training, development and appraisal**

Training and development sessions were provided for panel members in September 2021. Following the business development meeting there was a forum to discuss the recently published guidelines from Coram BAAF – *The use of National Minimum Standards (NMS) in England as a benchmark on deciding on the suitability of foster carers including kinship foster carers*. During subsequent panel meetings it is evident that this discussion has influenced the way that members view and challenge when it appears that NMS standards have not been met.

Joint training was held with the Assessment and Recruitment Team. This proved to be a positive and productive day and further joint training days with other relevant services will be arranged.

Training around allegations and complaints against foster carers followed the business development meeting and was facilitated by the Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Service Manager.

Links to recommended relevant articles/programmes/changes and updates and legislation are regularly sent to panel members and discussed in AOB at meetings.

It has recently been confirmed that panel members will be given access to Croydon Learning resources.

Croydon is a paperless and currently, a virtual panel. Applicants join meeting via Microsoft Teams. There have been some challenges, but overall feedback has identified that panel attendees are able to do this confidently albeit there will always be the occasional technical issue. The panel administrator always sends out a link for attendees to trial to ensure they are able to log on and their SSW will also offer support if needed.

Panel members prepare their questions and analysis of paperwork prior to panel and send to the Chair ahead of the meeting. The Chair collates all information and formulates the questions for applicants and social workers. To ensure the meeting runs smoothly and minimise it feeling overwhelming and intimidating, the Chair asks all the questions but is clear with those attending it is a collaborative process.

A virtual panel means team managers and social workers no longer have to book whole days out of their busy schedule or wait around for their cases to be presented. Team managers can be instantly called into meetings if necessary.

The Panel Chair and Panel Advisor meet after every panel and whenever necessary in between. Relationships between the Panel Advisor, TM's and SSW's have been strengthened by regular meetings and advice pertinent to reports before they are presented

to panel and following the decisions made by the ADM. This assists with the panel's role of quality assurance, monitoring and raising standards.

The case analysis and feedback from for SW's presenting to panel has recently been updated from the previous version that asked panel members to score 1-10. It was felt this was an unhelpful and unproductive method of giving feedback. The new form focuses on the standard and quality of the report and presentation.

## **Appraisals**

All panel members had their annual appraisal in 2021. During this process the Central List was refreshed and reduced in line with Fostering Guidance and National Minimum Standards. This was a task that was overdue but is now complete.

The ADM completed the Panel Chair's appraisal

The majority of panel members were comfortable and in agreement to continue with virtual panels, knowing that the situation would be regularly reviewed.

## **Casework**

Croydon Fostering Panel considers; Applicants, Connected Carers Assessments, Long Term Matches, Annual Reviews, Resignations, Terminations, Standard of Care, Change of Approval. Any significant changes in existing foster carers' circumstances should also be presented to panel.

Panel are seeing carers that have not been back to panel for many years, some have not been to panel since their approval. The legal functions of a fostering panel also include considering the first review carried out in accordance with **Reg 28(2)** this issue has been escalated to senior management.

As part of good practice foster carers are now being presented to panel on a three yearly basis.

During this period Panel did not see the number of assessments of new carers that was anticipated (15). Panel considered 12 new applicants and 7 connected carers.

## **Recommendations and decisions**

The table below provides an overview of cases heard in this reporting period March 2021 – February 2022. Please note that although the table reflects the cases presented, those awaiting ADM Decision are from the February panels. There are also 2 complex cases from previous panels that have not yet had an ADM Decision.

## **March 2021 to end Feb 2022**

**30 panels – 123 cases**

Type of Meeting	Number of Cases	Outcomes
Approvals	12	12 approved
Connected Persons/ Family and Friends	7	6 approved, 1 deferred
First Year Reviews	19	18 reapproved, 1 deferred
3 Yearly Reviews	55	44 reapproved, 8 deferred, 3 withdrawn
De-registrations/Resignations	13	12 acknowledged, 1 deferred
Long Term Matches	13	11 approved, 2 deferred
Other matters	6	Change of Approval, Termination, Updates

### **Themes**

Panel dates are booked well in advance, which enables all concerned including supervising social workers, foster carers and applicants to focus their preparations within a specified timeframe. For a range of reasons this has not always been achieved. Delays include unforeseen circumstances leading to key individuals not being available, delays in statutory checks being received.

Foster carer reviews have highlighted gaps in feedback from professionals connected to the child or young person. Collaboration between the service managers across the system has promoted an improvement in this area. Where feedback has been received, they have help to provide the panel with rich information, to help the panel to fully understand the child's journey with the foster carer. The panel has commented that they fund the feedback received invaluable to the review process, particularly the feedback received from the child or young person.

The Panel Advisor has regular communication with the supervising social workers and their team managers, which has helped promote the improvements seen in the quality of the preparation for foster carer reviews and the quality of the reports being submitted for panel.

Carers not returning to panel was a theme from the last report. We are still seeing this but as good practice, all foster carers will now attend panel every three years.

The recording of unannounced visits has improved. The panel had highlighted last year that level of unannounced visits being undertaken were too low. In many cases the impact of Covid restrictions were cited as the reason. In actual practice supervising social workers

have been carrying out unannounced visits (in many cases) but were not recording it as this.

Panel highlighted that there are too many instances where foster carers have not completed enough training. The practice around this has been strengthened with the relaunching of the foster carers personal development plan (PDP). The supervising social workers are now ensuring that the PDP is a standard feature of the supervision and ad hoc conversations with their foster carers. This is given that the PDP will help ensure that the foster carer has the necessary skills to meet the needs of the child they are caring for; and gaps in knowledge/skills are being addressed.

Connected Carers are not sufficiently prepared for the role of foster carer. At panel carers are saying that their responsibilities have not been explained to them, for example, daily recording and training and they do not appear to have been offered the Skills to Foster course, which is a requirement as part of the assessment process. Connected Carers coming back to panel after their first year have said they would have welcomed the opportunity to attend this course and other training, sooner rather than later. The practice around these issues has now been strengthened. The team manager for Family and Friends ensures that the expectations/requirements of being a Connected Carer is explained and addressed during the assessment process. In addition, the Skills to Foster training has been adapted for Connected Carers and sessions are facilitated for them as part of the assessment process.

### **Communication with Service/agency**

The Panel Advisor attends regular meetings with Fostering Management Team, Panel Chair and ADM. Meetings are held with the SSW as and when needed. Significant issues raised within panel are communicated to the Service Manager as they are identified and at least, following each meeting, an arrangement is made to discuss.

### **User feedback**

Attendees at panel are encouraged to provide feedback on their experience of panel. Examples are provided below, and it is evident from these that the virtual panel has been a positive experience for the majority of those people that attended.

Panel members have commented on the difference in how the meetings are now chaired, which has also been reflected in the feedback.

#### **Foster Carers/Applicants**

- *Everyone was helpful and kind.*
- *Nice experience was online. Very helpful.*
- *I felt that Panel to be very professional and gave a thorough explanation of what would happen.*
- *I was very pleased and ultimately content with the discussion throughout. The Chair was an exceptionally good representative for other Panel attendees. Thank you all.*
- *We felt at ease and comfortable with all panel members.*

- *The introduction of the panel members, the questions asked, and the overall calm atmosphere made it a positive experience.*
- *An excellent explanation and talk, by the chair of the panel.*
- *I feel that the online panel process works really well, having completed both face to face and online, I feel that the online is less daunting and really moving with the times. I appreciated the information sent prior to panel. Thank you*
- *All went well so it was positive.*
- *I was greeted with a smile and the chairperson introduced himself and explained what was involved regarding the panel.*
- *I was very happy and felt uplifted after my experience of Panel and felt appreciated in my role as a foster carer.*
- *The panel ran the meeting efficiently and professionally and made us to feel more comfortable and at ease from start to the end.*
- *The questions were fair, and I did not feel under pressure. It was supportive experience.*
- *Because the decision made was the best for my 2 granddaughters.*
- *We were made to feel at ease, and as with other panels we did not feel as though we were on trial.*
- *F/C found the feedback form difficult to complete.*
- *I felt reassured by everyone taking part. We were very satisfied with the panel meeting and the outcome.*
- *As I am meeting the children's needs in all areas, I have done a vast amount of training to improve my knowledge in specific areas and there were positive comments made about myself from other parties.*

### **Social Workers**

- *My experience was positive. I normally explain introductory/welcoming process used by the panel to the foster carers before they attend, especially carers who have not attended the fostering panel for a number of years, which gives them an idea of what to expect.*
- *F/C told me that she was made to feel at ease, she did not feel awkward at any time. She felt the panel members introduced themselves with a smile made her feel welcome. The Chairperson introduced himself and outlined the process which was very helpful. My experience of Panel attendance is positive. No improvement required.*
- *I felt it was positive for me and F/C. Prior to the date of attendance at panel I tried to reassure F/C that she would be ok, but on the day before panel, she told me that she was still nervous. So, it was pleasing to see how delighted she was when she received the feedback from the Chair of her continued approval. F/C said she felt nervous to begin with but as soon as the Panel Chair started the conversation she felt at ease. F/C said that the experience was positive for her. No improvement needed*
- *My experience of attending panel on this occasion has been positive. I felt adequately prepared, thanks to the panel advisor, who had made the expectations of the panel clear to me prior to attending the panel. This allowed me to prepare in advance and collate the necessary information required for the panellists to review when making a decision. FC shared after Panel, that she felt it was a positive experience. Prior to attending, FC had shared her anxieties around potentially being misunderstood. FC was pleased when*

reporting that she did not feel this way during the panel, and she felt “heard and listened to” .

- The panel advisor has been a very positive ‘go-to’ panel member. She explained the expectations of panel, as well as sharing advice on how information required can be obtained and presented to panel. With the support of the panel advisor, preparation for the Panel was not the overwhelming task I had envisioned it to be, considering the lack of information at hand for this particular case. The process was smooth, and I felt supported throughout the process due to the collaborative approach experienced with the panel advisor in the lead up to the panel date.
- Panel was a positive experience, panel members were welcoming and asked relevant questions, they gave lots of praise and positive feedback. The applicant expressed that panel was a positive experience. I understood the role of panel as I have attended panels previously.
- Whilst I understand that it is difficult to always keep within panel’s agreed time slots, it does add additional stress on applicants who are waiting to be presented.
- Positive. Panel was very welcoming to the foster carers, who initially were very concerned about attending Panel, despite my reassurances. The couple had not returned to Panel for a number of years and were evidently anxious. Thank you to the panel advisor and for all the Panel for a positive experience for both the foster carers and myself.
- "Positive for the following reasons:
  - The demeanour (smile) of the Chair and his tone of voice set the tone of the meeting
  - The fact that questions were predominantly asked by one person rather than different panel members made it less daunting for the applicants, and for myself." The carers expressed that they had preconceived ideas that it would be a nerve-racking process however they were pleasantly surprised. The panel provides an essential level of scrutiny in assessing the suitability and capability of applicants to meet the needs of children. I am not sure if there are any plans to resume face-to-face panels, however I feel that using a virtual conferencing platform creates a less intimidating atmosphere. Consideration could be given to its continued use.
- Positive – questions and feedback provided in a sensitive and supportive manner.
- F/C said it was a positive experience for her, she was less nervous than when she was being approved as a carer. F/C said she felt that she was well prepared for Panel. Panel is well organised from my perspective, Panel Advisor is excellent, she always ensures that we are well prepared, for example, if a document is missing, she would ensure that we have the necessary documents available. Although I am always nervous about attending Panel, it is generally an enjoyable experience for me, I actually get some tips to improve my practice, based on the questions which are presented to me.
- Very positive. It was good
- Positive, made to feel relaxed when participating in the review.
- Felt people were listening when I was speaking as they were making eye contact and showed expression listening
- The applicant expressed feeling overwhelmed with the amount of panel members. She was initially anxious seeing that amount of people. But then as the review began, she felt at ease. She was happy with panel’s comments about her care and delighted with the decision of continue approval.

## Conclusions and recommendations

**Guidance 5.2** states that; *Fostering panels are intended as multi-disciplinary bodies with a considerable element of independence from the fostering service. Panels therefore play an important quality assurance role, providing objectivity and having the ability to challenge practice. Panels are required to give regular feedback to the fostering service.*

One of aims of panel over the last year has been to drive up the standard of reports presented to them. This is progressing and aided by the regular communications with the fostering service. Building and strengthening relationships with the Assessment, Fostering, Family and Friends, and Child Care Teams is ongoing and positive. Supervising social workers have expressed they appreciate the constructive feedback and guidance in order to amend reports prior to them being distributed to panel.

The feedback and analysis from Panel on reports presented; Form F assessments need to be more robust, and the Coram BAAF guidelines followed more routinely. Safeguarding issues to be more thoroughly explored and risk assessments completed where necessary.

The quality of Foster Carer reviews is improving but still variable and there are instances where the National Minimum Standards have not been met. In some cases, better evidence could have been provided on how the foster carer was supported to meet these. However, there are strong evidence that the standard of reviews are improving.

It still appears to be a struggle for supervising social workers to receive feedback from all other professionals for the foster carer reviews, and this is ongoing. The importance of this has been communicated to the relevant teams and it is hoped the situation can be improved.

Panel will defer cases that do not provide all relevant information or evidence discussions have been had around areas of potential vulnerability.

Panel members are committed to contributing to the safety and well-being of the children that Croydon look after and ensuring the people that do that are fully supported.

Panel have met some amazing carers over the last year and feel humbled and privileged to be a part of the process that means children and young people feel safe, happy, heard, wanted, and are receiving the care they deserve.

## **6. Impact of Covid 19**

The restrictions continued to impact on our ability carry out the recruitment events. However, as the restrictions are lifting (or have lifted) we have started to facilitate our recruitment events again and this is gathering pace.

There was significant impact on how training and support has been delivered and accessed as it has had to be mainly virtual. This has been particularly challenging for those carers who are not confident or proficient in using technology, as well for those whose personal circumstances do not enable them to engage effectively online.

Supervising social workers and assessing social workers have used creative means to minimise the impact of the restrictions; working safely to support carers in carrying out their fostering tasks and applicants to engage effectively in assessment process.

## **7. Escalation Policy**



Whilst there are no management data available to support this notion anecdotally, we know that the escalation policy for foster carers is having a significantly positive impact. Feedback from the CFCA committee and other foster carers informs of this. Also, since the implementation of the escalation policy (September 2020) the fostering service has had no more than 2 complaints via corporate complaints.

The CFCA committee has highlighted that some foster carers have disclosed their apprehension about using this escalation policy, as they have a good relationship with their supervising social worker and would not want to affect that relationship. All carers are being encouraged to activate the policy/procedure if their issue has not been resolved by their supervising social work (at stage 1).

Because of how the escalation policy was designed to be used it would not be possible to pragmatically capture data as stage 1. Consideration is being given to how data could be captured at stage 3.

Currently, escalation is triggered manually in writing or verbally.

## **8. Key achievements during 2021/22**

- The implementation of the extensive programme of improvement has gathered pace and is having a positive impact. Feedback from the foster carers and others within the children's social care system supports this notion.
- The fostering panel advisor has spearheaded strong and sustainable improvements in relation to the fostering panel and its interface with children's social care.
- The role of the fostering reviewing officers have been strengthened. They work closely with the IRO service, ensuring that the care provided by the foster carers and the support provided by the fostering service and the wider children's social care system remains robust. The performance around the timeliness of fostering reviews have remained excellent (around 98%).
- Foster carer reviews presented at the fostering panel on the first year following approval and then on a 3 yearly cycle routinely happens routinely.
- Extended the Fostering Panels, to support permanency through long term foster care matches.
- Increase in fostering enquiries since 2020 and the 30 for Croydon campaign is taking hold.
- Croydon foster carers respond positively and in general offer our young people the option of "Staying Put" when they reach 18 years old. Increase seen in the number of Staying Put arrangements.
- Extensive work continues in terms embedding the improved working relationships with other social work teams and services (Virtual School, Health, etc.), which is having a good impact.
- Foster carers participating in the development of systems, for example the

foster carer portal.

- Broadening of training programme with arrangements to deliver foster carer training and development based on their PDP.
- Development of the mentoring offer, ensuring that robust support is provided to connected carers, newly approved carers and those who from time to time might need support from a mentor.

## **9. Key priorities for development during 2022/23**

- Strengthen the service's relationships with Foster Carers by using systemic practice and develop confidence, competence and resilience to support children achieve a full sense of stability and security.
- Increase in children achieving permanency either by a court order or by making the arrangements in foster carer permanent. This increases the children sense of belonging and provides them with the stability that will contribute towards their overall well-being.
- Use our placement stability guidance and support children to develop ways of managing their difficulties and carers to provide non-judgmental and nurturing care that is supported by systemic practice.
- Reviewing and developing foster carer support groups (to include specific groups for connected carers).
- Improve retention through improving benefits package available to foster carers as well and as a more responsive service.
- Further improve the digital presence of Croydon Council Fostering Service.
- Improve carers understanding of the issues around leaving care and preparing young people for independence.
- Increase involvement of young people in training for our foster carers and Young People being involved in Skills to Foster Training.
- Increase participation of our Children Looked After and Care Leavers, to help shape the fostering service.
- Enhance our links with the professional network around the child.
- Enabling the service to learn from Ofsted inspections and audits.
- Increase the number of approved carers in line with the sufficiency strategy.
- Begin the work to further develop the fostering service, enabling enhancements to be made to the support to foster carers via an extended family approach.

1. **CONSULTATION**  
N/A
2. **LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS**  
N/A
3. **HUMAN RESOURCES IMPACT**  
N/A
4. **EQUALITIES IMPACT**  
N/A
5. **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT**  
N/A
6. **CRIME AND DISORDER REDUCTION IMPACT**  
N/A
7. **DATA PROTECTION IMPLICATIONS**
- 7.1 **WILL THE SUBJECT OF THE REPORT INVOLVE THE PROCESSING OF 'PERSONAL DATA'?**  
**NO**
8. Approved by: Róisín Madden Director Children's Social Care

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**CONTACT OFFICER:** *Brian Amos*, Service Manager, Fostering; [Brian.Amos@croydon.gov.uk](mailto:Brian.Amos@croydon.gov.uk)

#### **APPENDICES TO THIS REPORT**

1. Croydon Council Fostering Service Statement of Purpose 2022/23
2. Croydon Foster Carer's Association Annual Report to Corporate Parenting Panel

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# **Croydon Council Fostering Service**

## **Statement of Purpose**

### **April 2022 to March 2023**

1

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

The Statement of Purpose is a significant document that sets a framework for all of the business of the fostering service. It must be consistent with relevant legislation, regulations, National Minimum Standards (NMS) and statutory guidance. The statement must be child focused and show how the fostering service will help children achieve positive outcomes.

The manager of the Fostering Service must ensure that the service is at all times conducted in a manner consistent with the Statement of Purpose. This document will be reviewed at least once annually. Any amendments due to changes in legislation or guidance will be incorporated into a new Statement of Purpose.

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

### **Fostering Service Statement of Purpose 2022/2023**

This Statement of Purpose sets out the aims and objectives of Croydon Council Fostering Service. The Fostering Services [England] Regulations 2011 require all Fostering Services to provide a written annual Statement of Purpose setting out the aims and objectives of the service and the services and facilities provided. The information to be contained in the Statement of Purpose is prescribed in the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 and the National Minimum Standards. The Statement of Purpose is to be regularly reviewed and formally updated every twelve months. This document is made available, upon request, to foster carers and prospective foster carers, any child placed by the service, the parent of any child looked after and staff. It is also available on Croydon Council website.

The Statement is informed by:

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

## Values, Aims and Objectives

Croydon Council Fostering Service is committed to providing safe, excellent and professional foster care for every Croydon child that needs this service, in compliance with the Fostering National Minimum Standards and the Paramountcy Principle of The Children Act 1989. The most significant themes that run through the latest Standards and Regulations are:

- the foster carer as a parental figure
- the child as an active agent of change
- the importance of relationships

## Priorities – Children, Young People and Education

In line with the values and priorities set by the Council, the fostering service's aim to work in partnership with children in care, parents & colleagues across the Council and with other agencies to ensure that children in care have the same opportunities as all children within the borough. This is achieved by offering placement choices so that children are matched to a carer who can then be supported in meeting their needs.

The child's welfare, safety and needs are at the centre of their care. Children should have an enjoyable childhood, benefiting from excellent parenting and education, enjoying a wide range of opportunities to develop their talents and skills leading to a successful adult life.

Croydon Fostering Service is committed to ensuring that Croydon children are with foster carers who are in or around Croydon, unless their needs would be best met further afield. We continue to invest resources in increasing placement choices and the quality of in-house provisions. The service works closely with children's services within social care to meet the needs of children and with foster carers to continuously improve and develop the service.

The service is committed to recruiting, maintaining, supporting and training foster carers from wide range of diverse backgrounds. The diverse needs of Croydon's children and young people in terms of sexuality, ethnicity and disability require the service to address these issues with foster carers during the assessment process and after approval, and to be supported to meet these needs and feel supported in relation to their own identity.

The aims of Croydon Fostering Service are:

- To ensure that the right placement is made for the child at the right time and without delay, with clear action plans agreed to ensure the earliest achievement of desired outcomes for each child.
- To have a robust, transparent and efficient process of recruiting foster carers.
- To recruit, assess, and approve more than sufficient foster carers, within the nationally prescribed timescales, who can meet most, if not all, of the needs of every child referred to the Fostering Service.
- To ensure that a good match is achieved in all placements, and that any obstacles or potential delays are identified and dealt with at every step of the matching process.
- To provide children and young people fostered, and foster carers with handbooks, which are a guide to foster care.
- To provide fostering support service to foster carers to enable a child to remain with a foster family

and to ensure that the child reaches their full potential.

- To provide support, supervision and staff care for all those engaged by the Fostering Service.
- To provide opportunities for foster carers to increase their skills and knowledge in fostering through the provision of training and development.

## **Named Persons**

**Registered Person: Shaun Hanks**, Head of Service for Social Work with Children Looked After and Care Leavers (SWwCLA/CL).

**Registered Manager: Brian Amos**, Service Manager, Fostering Service.

**Fostering Agency Decision Maker (ADM): Shaun Hanks**, Head of Service for Social Work with Children Looked After and Care Leavers (SWwCLA/CL)

## **Qualifications and Experience**

**All senior and middle managers are qualified social workers and are registered with Social Work England.**

## **Organisation and Structure**

The Fostering Service is part of Croydon Council's Children, Young People and Education directorate. The Head of Service, SWwCLA/CL is responsible for the Fostering Service.

The Fostering Service and social workers are responsible for fostering placements and management of the assessment, recruitment, support, supervision and development of applicants and approved foster carers.

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

There are four fostering teams within the Fostering Service that are part of the Social Work with Children Looked After and Care Leavers Service.

The Fostering Service is led by the Fostering Service Manager. Supervision and support teams 1, 2 & 3, the Family and Friends team and the foster carer recruitment team are led by team managers.

The supervision and support teams provide support, supervision and development to Croydon's approved foster carers, with managers taking lead responsibility for key practice areas, for example, foster carers' support groups, continuous professional development training and Staying Put.

The Family and Friends team carries out the majority of the Regulation 24 assessments and the Special Guardianship assessment of a connected person. Occasionally, the initial stage of the Regulation 24 assessment is carried out by the child's social worker.

A Connected Person is defined as a relative, friend or other person connected with a child. The latter is someone who would not fit the term 'relative or friend', but who has a pre-existing relationship with the child. These assessments are to determine an individual's suitability to provide care (long term or short term) to a child.

The recruitment team is the first point of contact for people who are thinking about becoming a foster carer



for Croydon. They screen potential applicants and, where relevant, go on to carry out the necessary assessment and training.

The Fostering Service has a staffing establishment of:

Service Manager: 1  
Team Managers: 5  
Assessing Social Workers: 9  
Supervising Social Workers: 18  
External Sessional Assessors: 6  
Fostering Reviewing Officers: 2  
Fostering Panel Advisor: 1  
Business Support Officers: 6

### **Relevant qualifications and experiences of staff**

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

### **Services provided**

The fostering teams provide a range of fostering services:

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

**Permanent or long-term foster carers** who make a commitment to care for a child or young person until they reach independence.

**Connected persons carers, often known as family and friends carers** are foster carers approved to look after a specific child or children. These carers are family members or friends who knew the family, child or children before they became looked after by Croydon.

**Foster to adopt foster carers** who are approved adopters, temporarily approved as foster carers for a named child, where the intention and Local Authority care plan is that the child will be adopted by this family

**Parent and child foster carers** a specialist type of fostering where a parent often a mother and their baby stays with the foster carer for a short time.

### **The Fostering Task**

The task of securing high quality foster care includes:

- Advertising for and recruiting prospective foster carers;
- Quality assuring the assessment of prospective carers under Regulation 26 (The Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011) for approval by the Fostering Panel or, in the case of family and friends carers or connected persons conducting planned assessments for temporary approvals in accordance with Regulation 24 (The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010) assessments;

- Consultation with other professionals, foster carers and families around making appropriate placements for children and 'matching' children with carers who can meet their needs;
- Family-finding for children needing permanent placements, support and supervision of foster carers in their work with children, children's families, departmental social workers and other professionals;
- Attendance at various professional meetings to ensure that foster carers are actively supported in carrying out a child's individual care plan;
- Completion of annual reviews with foster carers;
- Delivering a programme of on-going training for foster carers;
- Support and training in completing the Children Workforce Development Council Standards for Foster Carers (TSD);
- Contributing to investigations into complaints and allegations made against carers and supporting them through the process;
- Providing daily fostering duty service from 9am - 5pm, Monday to Friday;
- An out of hours support service for foster carers requiring advice about a child in their care during evenings and at weekends;
- An out of hours rota of supervising social workers providing advice and support to foster carers during evenings and at weekends;
- Working in partnership with the Croydon Foster Carers Association.

## **Procedures and processes for recruiting, approving and reviewing Foster Carers**

### **Recruitment**

The two staged approach, known as Stage One and Stage Two are followed to support applicants to find out more about fostering and to assess their suitability to care for children looked after and become registered foster carers.

#### **Stage One**

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

#### **Stage Two**

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

Interested applicants can find out about fostering by telephone, completion of an online application form, visit Bernard Wetherill House or attend one of the frequently held information sessions held at the Town Hall. Details of this process are described in the Croydon Information Pack for Foster Carer Applicants which is available online on the Croydon Website, [www.croydon.gov.uk/fostering](http://www.croydon.gov.uk/fostering). The Croydon Fostering Service also has a dedicated phone number (**0300 222 2112**) and an email address: [iwanttofooster@croydon.gov.uk](mailto:iwanttofooster@croydon.gov.uk).

The aim is to provide applicants with ongoing support, advice and information at each stage of the preparation process, whilst also assessing in a transparent way their suitability to become registered foster

carers and provide safe and quality care to Croydon's children looked after and young people.

### **Information Meeting**

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

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

### **Initial Telephone Assessment**

This is completed by one of the assessment social workers to gather more details from applicants, establish their current circumstances and to provide them with more information about fostering for Croydon. When there is the potential to progress further, an assessing social worker will undertake an initial home visit to gather more information about the applicant and to provide them with further details. If this is possible for the service and the applicants, they are invited to submit their application which triggers the start of Stage One.

### **Skills to Foster Group Training**

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

The training and groups are co-led by a social worker from the fostering team and experienced foster carers. An important secondary purpose is evaluation and applicants are informed at the beginning that the facilitators' observations will form part of the assessment process. Applicants may also be counselled out at this stage as the groups will encourage them to explore their own motivation, strengths, and abilities to foster, helping them to decide whether fostering is right for them.

### **Statutory Checks and References**

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

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

Other checks include:

- The applicants' employer (continuity of employment must be addressed and any gaps investigated)
- Previous partners
- The applicants' children's school

- A full medical history
- Evaluation of financial stability
- Safeguarding and Criminal Records (DBS checks).

Regulation 26(5) prohibits the approval of any person as a prospective foster carer where they or any member of their household is known to have a conviction or caution for specific offences. All offences must be brought to the attention of the Panel chairperson and the Fostering Service Manager who will decide whether or not to proceed with the assessment. This also concludes stage 1 of the assessment process.

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

All applicants are assessed by an individual process to establish their suitability to be registered as a foster carer, in accordance with Regulation 26 and 27. The Foster Carers' Report (Form F or Form C for connected persons) will be used to record the assessment and the format for assessment interviews will normally follow the guidelines. Applicants are encouraged to engage fully in the preparation of the assessment, including providing evidence and completing certain sections themselves where possible.

As well as the general areas covered in the Form F guidelines all assessments must cover the following specific issues:

- Health, including use of alcohol and tobacco.
- The applicant's own background and attitude to issues of race, culture, religion, sexual orientation and disability.
- Any issues of concern identified from statutory checks or referee interviews.

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

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

All Prospective Foster Carers' Report (Form F/Form C) are quality assured by the recruitment team manager; the Form F/Form C must also be signed by the assessing worker and the applicant(s).

### **The Fostering Panel**

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

The statutory functions of the panel are:

- To consider applications for approval and to recommend whether a person is suitable or not to become a foster carer and to recommend the number and age to be placed.
- To consider the first annual review of the foster carer and other subsequent annual reviews that are referred to it.

- To ensure the assessments undertaken by the assessor are balanced and of sufficient quality.
- To advise and monitor the effectiveness of procedures. To offer advice and make recommendations on any other matter or cases referred to panel by the Fostering Service.
- Consider Standard of Care issues and make recommendations as necessary.
- Consider matching of children with foster carers where the plan is for children to remain in long term foster care.
- Decisions are made by Croydon's Agency Decision Maker after considering the recommendations of the panel.

### **Presentation of Assessment Report to the Fostering Panel**

The assessing social worker must attend the Fostering Panel in person to present the prospective foster carer's report. Applicants are expected to attend the Panel. The Panel will make one of three recommendations:

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

Foster carer applicants are given written information explaining the panel process and are positively encouraged to attend. Their feedback is sought as Croydon and the Panel are committed to continuous learning and seek to consider any developments and improvements they may need to make. The feedback is collated and considered by the Service and Panel yearly.

### **Connected Persons Assessment.**

Regulation 24 of the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) 2010 provides for the temporary placement of a child with a relative or friend who is not an approved carer for a period of up to sixteen weeks. If the child is to remain beyond sixteen weeks a further eight week extension can be agreed by the Head of Service.

Before the temporary approval expires the carer must be approved under Regulation 26 of the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011. Immediate placements under Regulation 24 may only be made provided that prior to placement:

- the carer and all other persons in the household over 18, have been interviewed;
- the accommodation has been inspected;
- information has been obtained about all other members of the household;
- the carer is a relative or friend or other person connected to the child (a friend being normally defined as someone previously known to the child and a connected person someone who knows the child in a more professional capacity);
- notification in writing setting out the terms of the approval, followed by a written agreement made between the carer and the Local Authority covering the matters set out in schedule 5 to the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011; and

- The authority is satisfied that the placement is the most suitable way of performing their duty under Section 22(3) of the Children Act 1989. The child's social worker will complete a referral form, initiate DBS and other checks and refer the matter to the Fostering Service. The manager leading on recruitment and assessment will then allocate a social worker to carry out a Regulation 24 assessment of the friend and family carer with a view to seeking specific approval at the Fostering Panel within sixteen weeks. In exceptional circumstances temporary approvals can be extended for up to twenty four weeks.

### **Immediate or emergency placement by the Local Authority with a connected person**

The Children Act 1989 (amended by the Children and Young Persons Act 2008) requires a local authority to seek first to place a child looked after with a relative, friend or someone connected to him or her. This requirement is strengthened by the Public Law Outline, which requires local authorities to show that they have considered family members and friends as potential carers at each stage of their decision-making process.

A child who is placed by the Local Authority with a family member, friend or connected person, will be a Child Looked After. A Child Looked After is a child or young person up to age of 18 years who:

- Birth parent(s), or anyone having Parental Responsibility, has asked the LA to care for them on their behalf. The child is 'accommodated' under Section 20 of the Children Act 1989, or
- Is subject to a Care Order, including an Interim Care Order, under Section 31 of the Children Act 1989.

### **Criteria for making a Regulation 24 placement**

When an immediate or emergency placement is required, it can only be considered under Regulation 24. Although the determining factor in the placement being made is that it is felt to be in the child's best interests, the LA must be satisfied that those who will be caring for the child will be able to prioritise and meet their needs and will work in partnership. Therefore, an assessment is carried out prior to the child being placed.

### **Pre-placement assessment (Schedule 4 report)**

The proposed carer(s) for the child have to be approved and an assessment is carried out using Schedule 4 of the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations 2010. This outlines the information and checks, including a local police check, required before a child can be placed. The LA has a duty to safeguard and promote a child's welfare and before a decision can be made it is important to have as much information as possible about the carers and all those living in the household.

The assessment is carried out by the placing social worker or another social worker. The assessment, which must be substantially completed before a child is placed, will determine if approval is given.

### **Approval of a placement with a connected person**

The assessment is considered by the manager of the placing team in conjunction with the relevant Service Manager. The potential carers' assessment is presented to the Agency Decision Maker (ADM) for fostering, who will consider whether to grant temporary approval as foster carers for 16 weeks only. A The substantive assessment is to be completed by the Family and Friends team and presented to the fostering panel within 16 weeks. The ADM will again consider the panel's recommendations and all other relevant documents in considering whether to approve.

If the assessment is not completed within 16 weeks, temporary approval can be extended for up to 8 weeks by the ADM.

## **Applicants Not Approved By Panel**

The Agency Decision Maker will write to all applicants whose applications were not recommended for approval by the Panel and will advise the applicants of their qualified determination. The letter will give the reasons for this and advise the applicants of the various appeal routes available including the Independent Review Mechanism (IRM).

## **An equal opportunities policy that covers all aspects of fostering**

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

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

## **Foster Carer Annual Reviews**

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

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

All registered foster carers in the household must attend the review meeting.

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

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

## **Continuous Professional Development**

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

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

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

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

## **Support, Supervision and Development of Croydon Foster Carers**

All registered carers will have an allocated supervising social worker who is responsible for ensuring an appropriate level of support and supervision is offered for foster carers to successfully undertake their work in supporting, meeting the needs and improving the outcomes for children in their care.

Supervising social workers will ensure that carers have access to necessary support, advice and training to carry out their roles and responsibilities. This will vary from carer to carer, but will include all of the following:

- Complete a Foster Care Agreement with all Carers (Regulation 27 (5) Schedule 5 of Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011).
- Ensure the carer has an adequate supply of equipment.
- Ensure that carers have an up-to-date copy of the Croydon Foster Carers' Handbook.
- Ensure that carers are provided with up-to-date details of procedures and policies, including the Complaints and Suggestions Procedure, payment procedures and the service's insurance policy for carers.
- Carers automatically become members of the Croydon Foster Care Association and receive membership to Foster Talk.
- Visit the carers on a six weekly basis and whenever reasonably requested by carers or as deemed necessary by the agency to support and supervise a carer.
- Make at least one unannounced visit per annum.
- Carry out an annual health and safety inspection of the carer's home, or when the carer moves or has major work carried out on their home, and this is considered at each annual review.
- Ensure that the carer is recording placement details as stipulated by Croydon Fostering Service
- Carry out an annual review of the carer's approval.
- Identify, in conjunction with the carer, any training needs/core requirements and identify for training profile purposes ways in which these may be met.
- Attend reviews, case conferences and other planning meetings in respect of children placed when requested by the carer or the IRO.
- Investigate any complaint by or against carers' standards of care in accordance with relevant procedures.
- Ensure that lines of communication between the carer and the child's social worker are open and effective.
- Respond promptly to telephone calls and correspondence from the carer.
- Keep a record of their visits, share these with foster carers and record these on CRS.
- Supervising social workers ensure that visits are arranged in such a way that there is adequate time to address the carer's own role and development in addition to any visits that may be necessary in respect of individual placements. Carers' children are also provided with opportunities to discuss their experiences of fostering.



## **Foster Carer Charter**

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

## **Financial Allowance Policy**

Approved Croydon foster carers are paid a weekly amount, which is made up of a fee and a maintenance element. The fee element is paid to the carers as recognition of the skills, responsibilities and experience that they bring to the fostering task. The maintenance element covers the costs of caring for the child/children in their care.

Upon approval all foster carers are eligible for a setting up grant of up to £500 [subject to the provision of receipts]. In addition to the normal payments for caring for foster children, foster carers are paid an annual holiday payment. All children in placement receive birthday, festival and holiday allowances.

## **Connected Persons**

Foster carers approved as connected persons (family and friends carers) receive a weekly maintenance allowance. However, the Council also pays the remuneration element to all connected persons carers who have been approved and have completed the full preparation training. Connected persons are also entitled to the setting up grant.

## **Equipment**

Equipment e.g. pushchair or buggy, sheets, latex gloves, wardrobes, beds etc., can be ordered and delivered direct to the foster carer's home.

## **Newsletter**

A Newsletter, edited by members of the fostering team, is produced on a monthly basis to keep carers informed of:

- Advice on practice
- Changes to policy
- General information on fostering
- Staff movements within the fostering team

## **Croydon Foster Carers Association**

There is an established Croydon Foster Carers Association that is run and managed by the foster carers through a management committee. The Fostering Service Manager and other team managers attend meetings with the association approximately four times a year and the annual general meeting.

## **Support Group**

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

## **Complaints and allegations against foster carers**

Where there are complaints about the standards of care provided by a foster carer these are managed by the service. If there are allegations of inappropriate behaviour by foster carers, these are managed through the procedures for allegations agreed by Croydon Safeguarding Children Partnership (CSCP). These procedures are in line with the Department of Education guidance outlined in "Handling Allegations of Abuse made against Adults who Work with Children and Young People". The Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) process is also involved in the management of allegations against foster carers.

## **Complaints from Foster Carers**

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

## **Registration Authority**

The address & contact telephone number for the OFSTED Registration Authority is:

Ofsted  
Royal Exchange Buildings, St Anne's Sq.  
Manchester M2 7LATel: 08456 404040  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

## **The system for reviewing the Statement of Purpose**

The Statement of Purpose will be reviewed annually and is available to view on the Croydon Website.

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

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

Please contact:

Croydon Council Fostering Service:  
4<sup>th</sup> Floor, Bernard Weatherill House  
8 Mint Walk, Croydon  
CR0 1EA.

By Freephone: 0800 389 0129  
By Telephone: 0207 760 6000.  
By email: [fosteringenquiries@croydon.gov.uk](mailto:fosteringenquiries@croydon.gov.uk)  
By e-mail: [www.croydon.gov.uk/fostering](http://www.croydon.gov.uk/fostering)

## **CFCA's Annual Review for Corporate Parenting Panel 2021-22**

The CFCA (Croydon Foster Carers Association) has been attending Corporate Parenting Panel meetings regularly since 2017.

Inviting EMPIRE to participate in Corporate Parenting meetings is a good thing. The young people are able to better articulate the issues they face on a daily basis, as well as make suggestions for solutions.

The CFCA believes that better collaboration between it and all of Children, Young People and Education would not only strengthen relationship but ensure a more robust approach to resolving highlighted issues. This would include ensuring that clear SMART actions are agreed and reviews of these actions are also agreed.

The CFCA is extending an open invitation to all members of the Corporate Parenting Panel, to attend our CFCA meetings.

**Financing Support** – The CFCA would welcome further consideration by the Corporate Parenting Panel on the impact of the current financial pressures being noted across the UK and how this might impact on the quality of care foster carers are providing to the children and young people.

## **CFCA's review for Fostering Service Report 2021-22**

### **The Fostering Service.**

We have seen further improvement in the performance of the Fostering Service, and these has translated into Children Looked After receiving a better quality of care and service.

Strong collaboration between the CFCA and the fostering service manager has helped to improve the experience of foster for foster carers, as well as improve the experience of child and young people being fostered.

The CFCA have also noted improvements in the collaboration with the wider Children, Young People and Education, which is translating to improved experience of children and young people in our foster care.

The CFCA continues to hold a quarterly meeting with the Head of Service. These meetings are appreciated by all foster carers, as it reinforces the commitment of the directorate to partner with the CFCA; to ensure that the welfare needs of the children and young people in our foster care are met.

### **Children, Young People and Education**

The CFCA has noted improvements in the collaboration with the wider Children, Young People and Education. This needs to be improved further, to ensure that the experience of children with our foster carers is further improved.

The CFCA has highlighted some concern that the communication and responsiveness of some social workers and managers are not at the high standard we have set ourselves. It is also noted that this is in the context that the social work teams are experiencing significant challenges around stabilising the workforce.

The CFCA acknowledges that Children, Young People and Education continue its robust efforts to address this.

### **Conclusion**

Working together is key in our collective drive to improve the services and the lives of children looked after in Croydon.

CFCA Committee. 05.04.2022

# Corporate Parenting Annual Report 2021 - 2022

**be the change**  
for children and young people in croydon



## Forward



Councillor Alisa Flemming  
Chair of the Corporate Parenting Panel  
Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Learning

Welcome to our Corporate Parenting Annual Report, which details the work of the Corporate Parenting Panel and our services to children looked after and care experienced young people. During the last two years the Corporate Parenting Panel has embraced the virtual meeting environment and the challenges presented. The involvement of children and young people in the meetings has been invaluable in providing new perspectives and keeping our focus upon what matters.

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

The work of E.M.P.I.R.E [which stands for Empowerment. Memories. Positivity. Interesting. Respect & Education], who are our Children in Care Council, and the feedback we receive from other children and young people, play an integral part in how we continue to improve services for children. Listening and acting upon the voices of our children with care experience help us to keep focus on what really matters in order to influence development and delivery of services in the right way.

As Lead Member and Corporate Parent, I want the best for all our children. I am proud of their achievements, and we must continue to create opportunities to celebrate their successes with them at every level. It is often said that the small things are the greatest and we must never underestimate how important a word of encouragement can be. I am extremely grateful to the members of EMPIRE for the regular attendance at the Panel, it has been a real privilege to work with them throughout the year.

As a council it remains important that we continue to be ambitious and strive to be the best Corporate Parents and Corporate Family we can be. We must remain committed to doing everything that we can to support our children so that they can benefit from the many opportunities our borough has to offer.

Our ambition is that all children and young people in Croydon will be safe, healthy and happy, and will aspire to be the best they can be. The future is theirs.

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

Our annual report is a summary of the work presented to the Corporate Parenting Panel in 2021-2022 and is a celebration of the success, achievements and areas of improvement.

## 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the achievements, progress and challenges in meeting the needs of Croydon's Children Looked After and Care Leavers in 2021/2022. This year saw the gradual lifting of Lockdown and new challenges for everyone, as we learnt to live with the impact of Covid. Children Looked After and Care Experienced Young People have been remarkable in the way they have managed the uncertainty that Covid presents, and their achievements at school, college and through groups such as EMPIRE show that their lives have not been 'on hold'.
- 1.2. 2021 saw the Children Looked After, Care Leavers and Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Teams (UASC) restructured to focus on children under 16 and Young People aged 16 and above. We continue to provide support to UASC at the home office, undertake age assessments and look after unaccompanied children before they move to their long term homes across the country.
- 1.3. Despite the uncertainty and challenges of Covid performance for social work and personal adviser teams has been maintained or improved. Ensuring that plans are updated on time has been a struggle, however this has been improving since August. Children and Young People have been keen to meet face to face and EMPIRE has organised some popular and helpful events.
- 1.4. The Corporate Parenting Panel has been curious about disparities in children and young people's experience of care based on ethnic background. Nearly two thirds of Croydon's supported care leavers (care experienced) have been unaccompanied asylum seeking children. The needs and experience of Asian and Black children and young people will be a focus for our work in 2022/23.



## 2. Corporate Parenting Panel

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

The number and age range of Children Looked After;  
Health information;



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

2.6. Our priorities for 2022-2023 are based on the analysis in this annual report, Ofsted recommendations and our broader understanding of our children looked after and care leavers we have identified the following actions as our priorities for the year ahead that we are already working on:

- Understand the experience of care that children and young people have and identify any disparity in experience based upon factors such as race.
- Improve our support and care for children and young people aged 16-25. Recognising their continued vulnerability alongside greater independence. (see Care Experienced Focus for 2022 p16)
- Ensure that there is a better understanding of why children and young people go missing, and identify what needs to change for individual children and young people.
- Continue to develop and work from a systemic understanding of children and young people's situation and experience, and understand behaviours through a Trauma Informed approach.
- Further increase the provision of local foster placements for children and young people so that they can be Happy, Health and 'Here'.

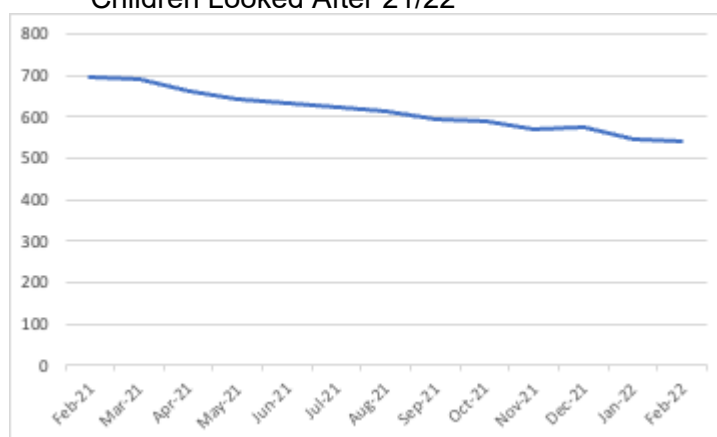
### 3. Children looked after: Demographics, health and education

3.1. The number of children that are looked after has reduced by 20% during 2021/22. With a rate of 56.7 children per 10,000 being looked after in Croydon. This continues to be higher than the statistical neighbour average of 51.8 per 10,000. If our Looked After Population is adjusted to include only the statutory number of UASC expected of local authorities (0.07% of child population) then Croydon's Looked After Population is the same as the statistical neighbours' average for 20/21-51.8 (500 children, compared to 540 children as at 28/2/2022)

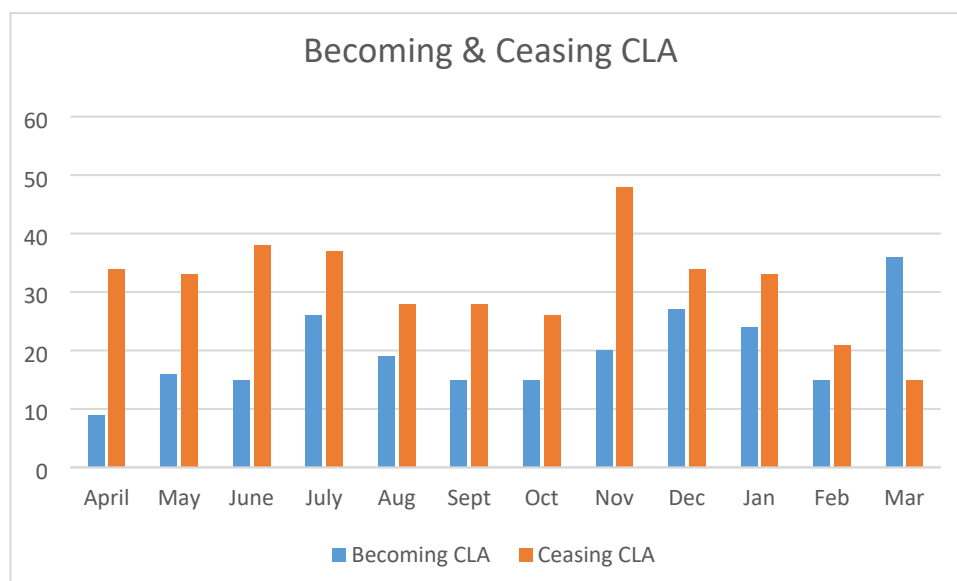


	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
<b>Croydon</b>	<b>87.00</b>	<b>83.00</b>	<b>81.00</b>	<b>86.00</b>	<b>85.00</b>	<b>72.8</b>	<b>56.7</b>
<b>Statistical Neighbours</b>	<b>56.30</b>	<b>54.20</b>	<b>54.60</b>	<b>53.70</b>	<b>52.8</b>	<b>51.8</b>	<b>Not published</b>
<b>England</b>	<b>60.00</b>	<b>62.00</b>	<b>64.00</b>	<b>65.00</b>	<b>67.00</b>	<b>67.00</b>	<b>Not published</b>

Children Looked After 21/22



- 3.2. The number of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children remaining looked after by Croydon has reduced again this year and is the main factor in the overall number of Children Looked After decreasing. With the National Transfer Scheme now mandatory for all local authorities' children and young people are moving quickly to the local authority that will provide care for them. This has seen UASC that are looked after by Croydon drop from 205 in April 2021 to 114 in March 2022, a reduction of 56%.
- 3.3. The overall reduction in children Looked after can be seen in the comparison of the number of children becoming looked after each month alongside the number of children ceasing to be looked after. Children reaching 18 will cease to be looked after and are then supported as a care leaver.



3.4. **Age & Gender:** The majority of our CLA are between 10-17 years old. Male children account for the majority of children looked after, however there has been an upturn of 6% in the proportion of female children looked after compared to the previous year.

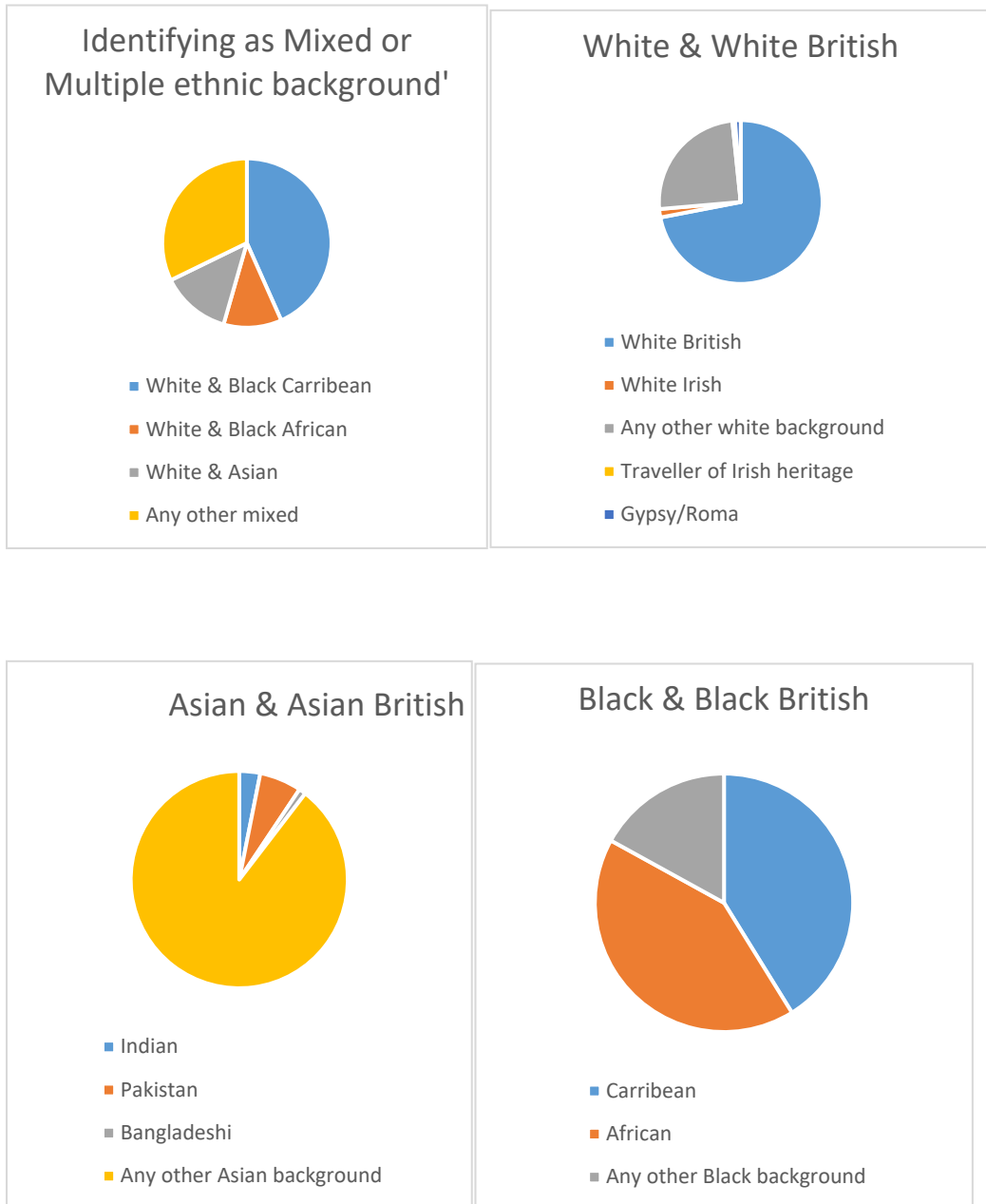
AGE AT 31 MARCH 2021			
MALE 59%		FEMALE 41%	
Under 10:	23%	Under 10:	29%
10 - 17:	77%	10 - 17:	71%

When compared to the ONS 2020 general population figures for Croydon girls make up 48% of the population and boys 52%.

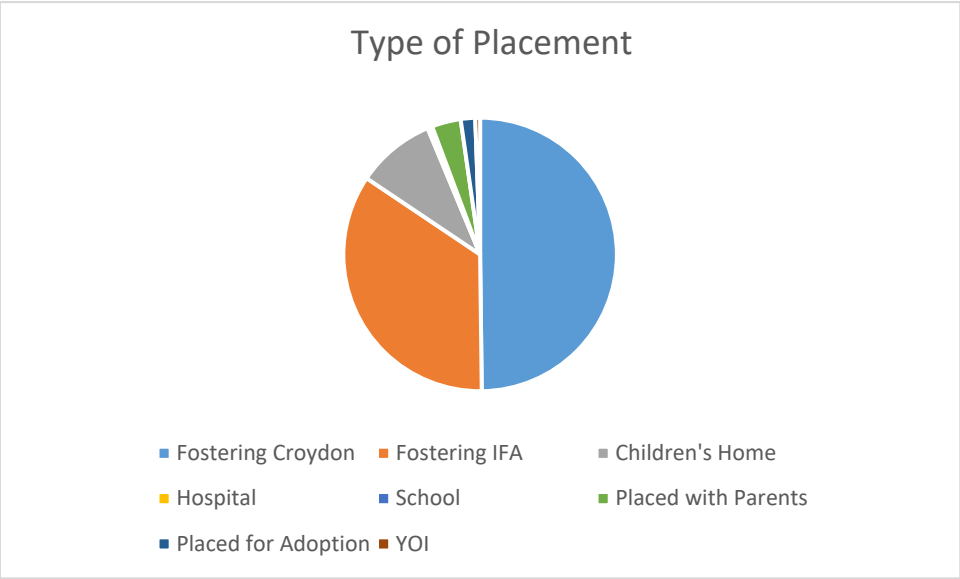
3.5. **Ethnicity:** There have been some small changes in the ethnic background of children looked after, compared to the previous year. White and White British Children have decreased overall by 4%, whilst those identifying as 'mixed' has increased by 3% and Black and Black British children have increased by 2%.

ETHNIC BACKGROUND OF CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER		2021	Mar 2022	Not UASC Mar 2022	UASC Mar 2022
White and White British	37%	33%	37%	20%	
Black and Black British	27%	29%	33%	12%	
Asian and Asian British	19%	18%	6%	64%	
Mixed	14%	17%	21%	0%	
Other ethnic groups	3%	3%	3%	4%	

A further analysis of this data using ethnicity classification used in the 2021 Census reveals more detail of the diversity in each of the above groups:



3.6. **Type of placement:** In March 2022, 84% of our children were placed in foster placements (compared with 74% of SNs and 71% England Average data 2020/21). Of those children living with foster carers 50% are with Croydon foster carers, which is slightly better than statistical neighbours (39%) and the England average (48%).



**3.7. Children missing from care:**  
 124 Children Looked After had at least one recorded missing incident during 2021/22; this represents 17% of all children looked after and whilst this is lower than pre-Covid (22%) it is higher than statistical neighbours (12%). When a child is found they are offered a 'return home interview' to help ascertain the reasons why a child/young person went missing and to help prevent a future episode. The average take up of a return home interview for children looked after was 56% and is an area that requires significant improvement during 2022/23.

#### 4. Health for Children Looked After

- 4.1. The Health Operational Group instituted in 2020/21 continues to monitor the timeliness of Health Assessments for children looked after. Although timeliness can be variable by month, as of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022 93% of children looked after for more than 12 months had an updated Health Assessment on time.
- 4.2. The Health Operational Group is guided by the CLA Health Action Plan in its focus. Whilst Health reviews have improved, audit activity has shown that there needs to be more consistency in quality and greater timeliness for the initial health assessment.



Looked after children	2020	2021	2022
Percentage of children with health assessments on time @31st March	84%	90%	93%

- 4.3. The last two years of living through Covid has brought in to focus children and young people's physical and emotional health needs. The Clinical Therapists, based within Children's Social Care, have worked alongside Social Workers and Personal Advisers to provide consultation, direct support and developed the services knowledge and skills in working with young people's emotional wellbeing.
- 4.4 There have been a small number of children that have required a hospital admission, due to their mental health deteriorating. Alongside the impact of changes in the registration of some care/support providers work is underway to develop a range of suitable support for children following discharge.
- 4.5. Care Leavers now benefit from a 'Health Passport' which helps them to have a greater understanding of their health needs and to access information.

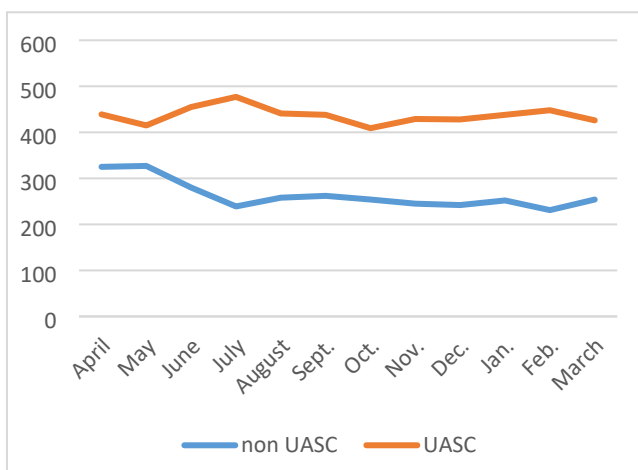


**5. Care Leavers:**

5.1. The Children & Social Work Act 2017 introduced a new duty on local authorities, to provide Personal Adviser (PA) support to all care leavers up to age 25, if they want this support.

**Profile**

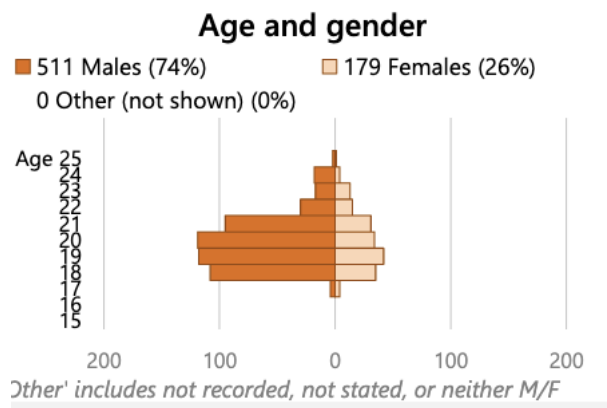
As of the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022, there were 683 Care Experienced young people, aged 18-25, eligible for support via a pathway plan. The majority of these young people (62%) have been unaccompanied asylum-seeking children.



During 2022/23 we can expect a further 123 current children looked after to become care leavers and approximately 20 current care leavers to become 25, we can therefore expect an overall increase in the number of care leavers during 2022/23.

### 5.2. Age & Gender:

Croydon's care experienced population continues to be disproportionately identified as male. This is due to the overwhelming number of unaccompanied children seeking asylum in the UK being male. The majority of these care leavers are aged 18-21.

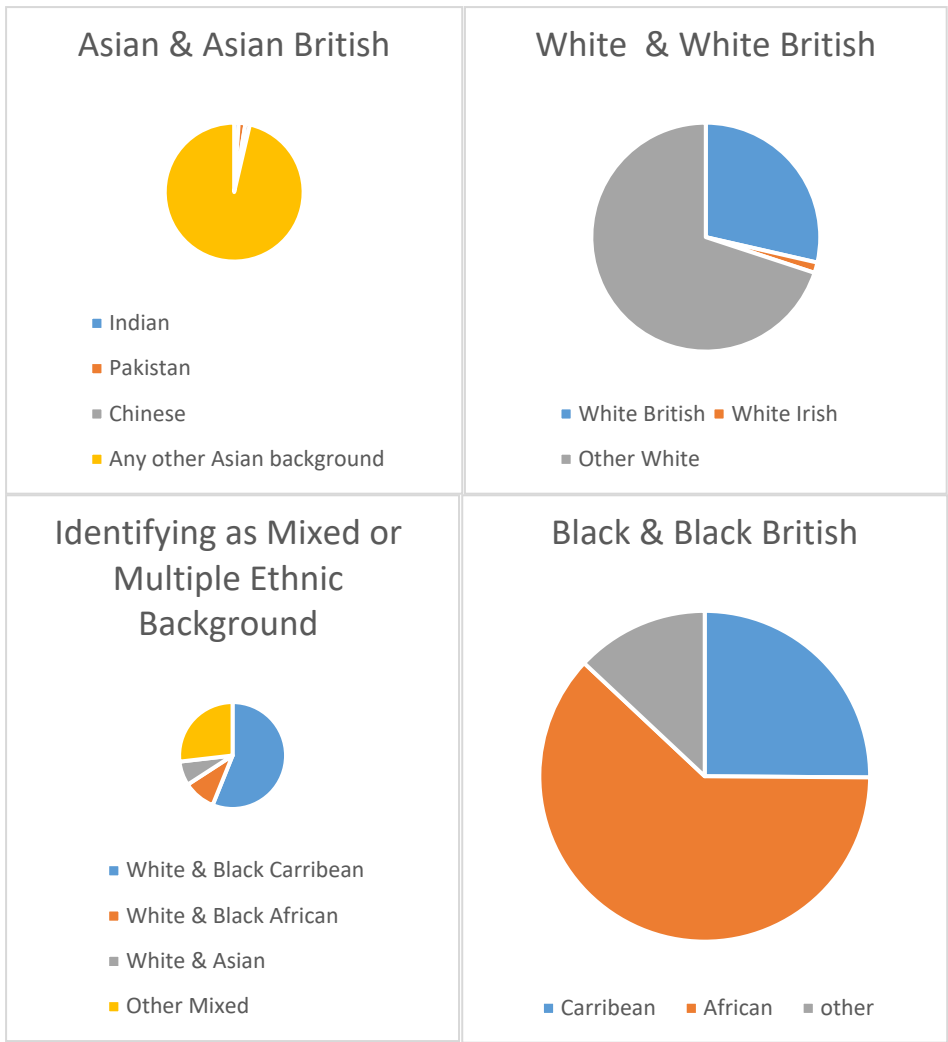


### 5.3. Ethnicity:

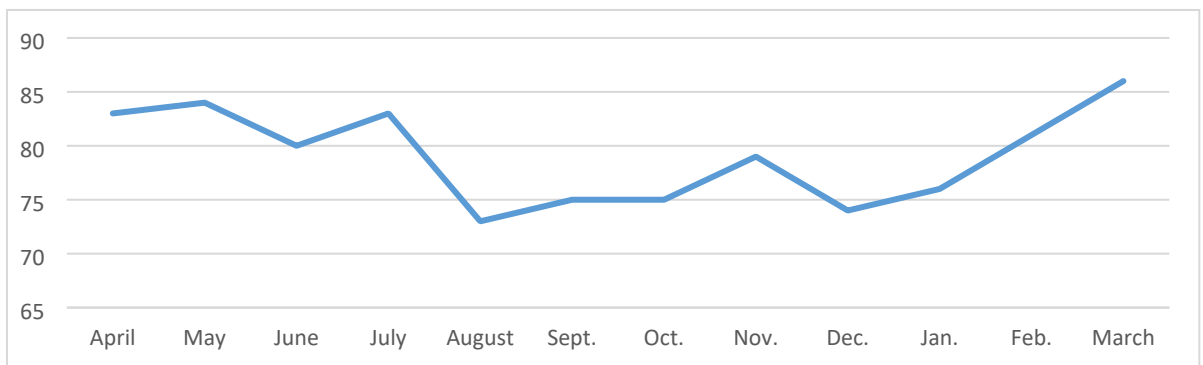
The ethnic background profile for our care experienced young people is different from that of children looked after, with more identifying as 'any other Asian background' and less as mixed. Croydon's history of looking after more unaccompanied asylum seeking children than most other local authorities is reflected in the diversity of the care leavers that we continue to support.

White and White British	30%	142 (70%) categorised as 'Other White'
Black & Black British	33%	138 (62%) categorised as 'African'
Asian and Asian British	28%	185 (96%) Categorised as 'any other Asian background'
Mixed	6%	
Other ethnic groups	3%	





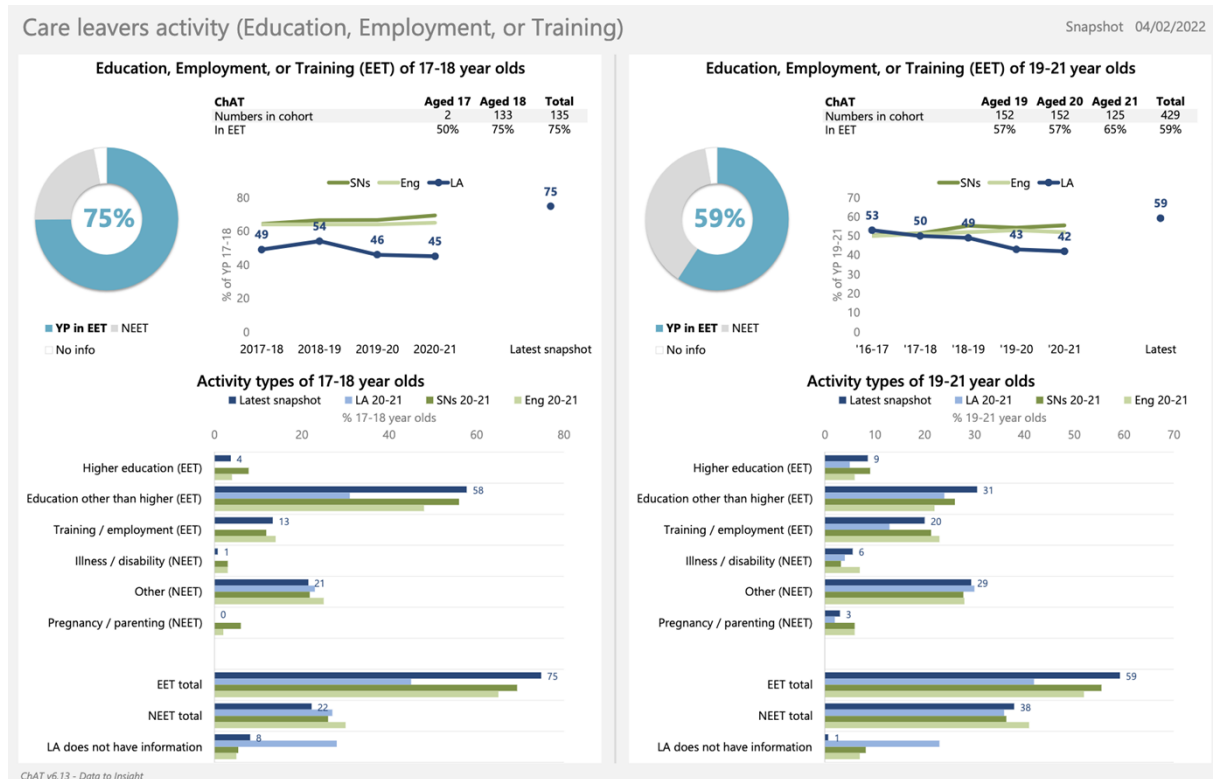
**5.4. Pathway Plans:**



Pathway plans are required to be updated, at least, every six months. Within Croydon our aim is to achieve this for at least 85% of young people. Performance dropped in this year, particularly as we came out of lockdown. Tighter performance monitoring arrangements are now in place and a gradual improvement can be seen.

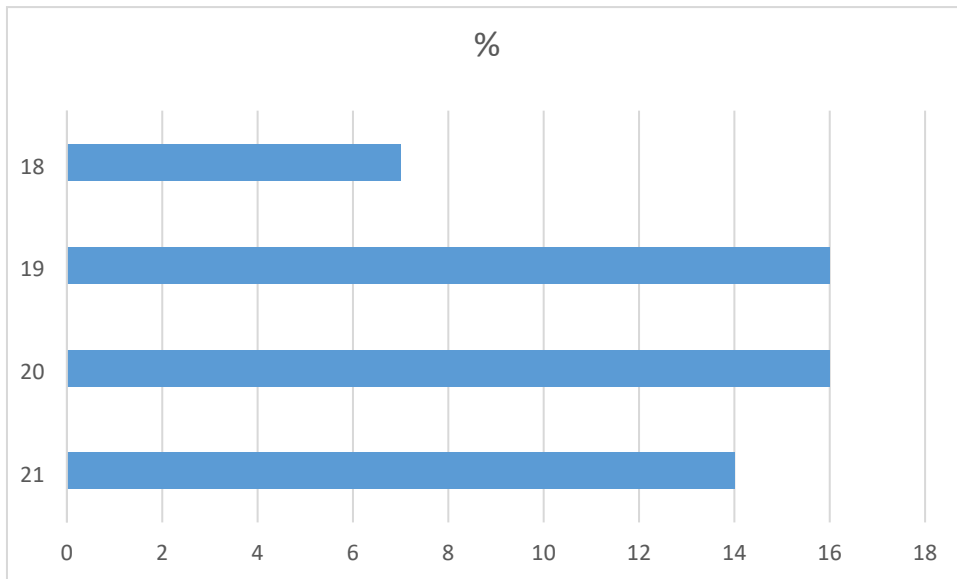
## 5.5. Education, Employment and Training (EET):

### Education, Employment & Training



As at the end of February 2022 the percentage of care experienced young people who are in Education, Employment or Training is now comparable with local and national statistics, this is an improvement on 20/21. This still means that 40% of those aged 19-21 and nearly 25% of those aged 17-18 are not in education, employment or training. Some of these young people have unresolved immigration matters which prevents them progressing to Education, Employment or Training (38 young people- 6%).

For some young people there are other factors that can prevent them being able to access EET (e.g., Custody; Parent to under-five; immigration status). When these factors are taken in to account the % that are NEET by age are:



This is below the national average reported figures.

Some first-hand examples of the challenges and support provided to improve this vital aspect of young people's lives are provided in the quotes below:

I'm really proud of what this young person has achieved... they've removed themselves from

University wasn't for them, and they have now successfully gained employment in Croydon.

Despite issues with health and housing ....graduating with a

They were going to walk out after a week; however, we worked together, found alternative

# Accommodation



The work to ensure that more young people can stay with their carers is something we are proud of. Independent Living is higher than other local authorities and we are working hard to ensure that for our vulnerable young people the quality of this accommodation is suitable as well. There are currently 15 priority Croydon tenancies per annum for us to make use of, we would like this to increase.

## Care Experienced Focus for 2022:

- Ensure caseloads remain as low as possible to enable the best support for an increasing number of Care Experienced young people.
- Further develop peer support and a 'Care Experienced Club' to focus on the needs of young people entering work and becoming independent.
- Understand better the support needs and risks for our Care Experienced young people, particularly for our asylum-seeking population.
- Expand training opportunities and learn from young people's experiences.
- Improve the accommodation offer for young people to ensure the right help is available to enable young people to achieve independence that is not isolated and unsupported.

## 6. Fostering

6.1. As of March 2022, the Fostering Service supports 207 Foster Carer households and cares for 43% of our children looked after. During the year there have been 27 Fostering Assessments undertaken, with 12 new foster families approved so far. There have been 17 foster families leave Croydon for a variety of reasons.

6.2. These fostering households offer short break care, short term foster carers and long term foster carers. This include the “Connected Persons Foster Carers” who are approved to care for specific children.

6.3. The independent Fostering Reviewing Officers have continued to ensure that foster carers annual reviews have been held on time (95% on time). This allows opportunities to identify support needs for both carers and children with additional scrutiny.

6.4. The Fostering Panel considered 123 fostering arrangements during 2021/22. Membership of the Fostering Panel was refreshed , in line with national guidance, to provide a mix of new and experienced perspectives. All panel members received an appraisal during 2021. Panels have been undertaken virtually during Covid and feedback has been positive regarding how the panel functions and is experienced by attendees.

6.5. Croydon Foster Carers have continued to provide outstanding support, care and love for our children looked after and an increasing number of young people remain with their foster carers after they turn 18.



## 7. Adoption & Permanence

- 7.1. Croydon Council no longer operates as an Adoption Agency. Adopt London South (ALS) is our Regional Adoption Agency (RAA) and was established in July 2019. ALS is one of the four RAAs that provides adoption services across 23 London Boroughs.
- 7.2. ALS is the largest partnership involving 9 Local Authority services: **Croydon**, Kingston and Richmond operating as AFC, Lambeth, Lewisham, Southwark, Sutton, Merton and Wandsworth. ALS recruits and assesses new adoptive families and finds families for children in partnership with the LA's.
- 7.3. ALS also provides post adoption support to families, children and adopted adults. Services are also available for birth parents and a letterbox system enables indirect contact between birth families and children.
- 7.4. During 2020-2021, 14 Croydon children were adopted. Throughout the year there were an average of 10 children waiting to be matched with a prospective adoptive family at any point. Average time between entering care and moving in with an adoptive family, for children who were adopted (491 days) has reduced from the previous year (536) and remains better than our SN's (549).



## 8. Voice of children and young people in our care

- 8.1. Croydon's Children in Care Council (E.M.P.I.R.E.) has an active membership and continued to meet virtually throughout the pandemic. With the lifting of lockdown more opportunities to meet face to face have taken place. The appointment of a Young Director and apprentices is assisting in ensure that children's views are heard and valued. The group has provided invaluable feedback throughout the year. A summary from E.M.P.I.R.E is provided below:

Over the last two years, E.M.P.I.R.E'S reputation within the local voluntary and statutory sector has grown considerably, most notably through our work with high-risk young people. Alongside this, we are seen by many as a beacon of good practice in terms of our youth work, systemic practice and finding creative solutions to some of the most complex issues facing young people today.

For some young people, simply taking part in activities when emotions and feelings are not declared off-limits is very important. We have a system which allows young people to find a level of involvement that suits them. This could mean attending weekly sessions, taking part in Corporate Parenting Panel or simply attending one activity.

### **Overview of activities:**

- **Vision Board Session** - This was a powerful session as all the young people were able to make physical vision boards to map out their goals no matter how big or small. The young people then had the opportunity to work with staff 1-1 to map out the steps that need to be put in place and the support that is required to make all their goals achievable.
- **Goal Setting Workshop** - Linking into Vision Board session as a follow up.
- **Pan London Children in Care Council** - The E.M.P.I.R.E staff and young people attend the Pan London CICC meeting along with all Children in Care Council's across London Borough of Croydon Council.
- **Online Mental Health Wellbeing Sessions**
- **Youth Hub (Weekly)** – These sessions take place every week at the Council owned Youth Centre – Samuel Coleridge Taylor Centre
- **Cookery** – We hosted 4 cookery session to support the young people build up their independent living skills
- **Accredited Money Management Course** – All children looked after and care leavers were given the opportunity to gain a level 1 qualification in Money Management
- **Pancake Day**
- **Easter Egg Hunt**
- **Go-Karting**
- **National Association of Virtual School Heads** - 3 E.M.P.I.R.E young people were selected to represent all children looked after and care leavers from the Croydon Borough. They had the opportunity to sit down at a round table with the virtual school head teachers and ask them questions on what they are doing to help improve and support young people in their schools. This was an amazing opportunity for the young people which helped them use their voice to implement change for all young people and generation coming up behind them. The young people had the privilege to openly challenge thoughts and behaviours of Virtual School Heads to give them an insight and some struggles of what various children looked after face during their time in education.
- <https://lbcccloudadcroydongov.sharepoint.com/:v:/s/srv-129/es/vs/EYaNf4Xd8oBAJWEM4X5Ib4BTAIX5PvQWPiXnjY5Utzkaw?e=wXDE83>



## **9. Independent visiting & Mentoring & Advocacy**

- 9.1. The Independent visiting service has continued to provide an independent contact for children. During 2021-2022 there was an average of 73 children and young people matched with an Independent Visitor and the service has expanded to support 21 care experienced young people as well.
- 9.2. The three Independent Visitor co-ordinators are managed by the IRO Service Manager, building on the external scrutiny and support that the roles provide.
- 9.3. Many of our children looked after and care leavers, including unaccompanied asylum seeking children access services from Bernardo's and other community Advocacy Services, which increases their social network and provides safety and support
- 9.4. Our Children access mentoring, independent visitors or community services from:
  - Independent Visitor Service
  - Learning Mentor Volunteer Scheme
  - Young Roots- Department for Education grant funded mentoring Scheme
  - Croydon Council UASC mentoring scheme (run by YP from migrant background)
  - Community Services: Red Cross, Refugee Council etc.





## 10. Key Achievements & Conclusion

- 10.1. 2021/22 was marked by the continuing impact of Covid and a need to adjust again to more freedoms and returning to a 'new normal'. Many of our children and young people have coped amazingly well, however for some the continued uncertainty has impacted significantly. The improved partnership working through the Health Operational Group and the in-house clinical service has helped identify and implement support quickly. We still have work to do in identifying carers that can manage the needs of children and young people coming out of hospital.
- 10.2. We have maintained statutory visiting frequencies and view this as central to providing meaningful support for children and young people. The restructure of the service is now in place and providing focussed support for younger children (under 16) and for those aged 16-25.
- 10.3. The introduction of the National Transfer Scheme for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children has assisted in ensuring that Croydon does continue to look after a disproportionate number of children. Overall numbers of Looked After Children (under 18) have decreased because of this, enabling more manageable caseloads and ensuring that children make connections in the area they are going to live as soon as possible.
- 10.4. We have continued to provide a significant number of foster homes locally for our children, ensuring that they remain connected to Croydon and their community.

- 10.5. Once again, the real praise needs to go to all our children Looked After and Care Experienced Young People who have engaged with their education and further training whilst managing the uncertainty of Covid.
- 10.6. Our continued aim for 2022/23 is to ensure that we increase our local provision so that all our children looked after and care experienced young people remain Happy, Healthy and Here.

Indicator Number	Indicator Title	Polarity	2021/22												RO	2021-22 Target	RAG	YTD/LATEST	2021-22 YTD or latest	Comparative Data			
			Apr-21	May-21	Jun-21	Jul-21	Aug-21	Sep-21	Oct-21	Nov-21	Dec-21	Jan-22	Feb-22	Mar-22						DfE Published Croydon 2020-21	Stats Nbr Average 2020-21	London 2020-21	England 2020-21
<b>Children Looked After (CLA)</b>																							
CLA 1	Number of CLA at the end of the month		661	641	633	622	616	595	589	570	575	547	540	559	SH	NA	Grey	LATEST	559	683	500	9,670	80,850
CLA 2	Rate of CLA per 10,000 under 18 population		69.4	67.5	66.4	65.3	64.6	62.4	61.8	59.8	60.3	57.4	56.7	58.7	SH	NA	Grey	LATEST	59	72.0	51.8	47.0	67.0
CLA 2a	Rate of CLA per 10,000 under 18 population excluding UASC		47.8	47.6	48.5	49.2	49.3	48.1	47.3	46.9	47.3	45.6	45.4	46.7	SH	NA	Grey	LATEST	47	51			
CLA 3	Number of CLA at the end of the month who are Local CLA (Non-UASC)		456	451	462	469	470	458	451	447	451	435	433	445	SH	NA	Grey	LATEST	445	69%			
CLA 3b	Number of Ceased CLA in the month who are Local CLA (Non-UASC)		24	14	12	16	16	17	13	29	23	14	13	6	SH	NA	Grey	YTD	197	31%			
CLA 4	Number of CLA at the end of the month who are UASC		205	190	171	153	146	137	138	123	124	112	107	114	SH	NA	Grey	LATEST	114	211	36	1,330	4,070
CLA 4b	Number of Ceased CLA in the month who are UASC		10	19	26	21	12	11	13	19	11	19	8	9	SH	NA	Grey	YTD	178	116			
CLA 5	Number of new CLA in month (total)		9	16	15	26	19	15	15	20	27	24	15	36	SH	NA	Grey	YTD	237	195	187	4,250	28,440
CLA 6	Number of new CLA in month who are UASC		4	3	3	6	8	4	12	6	6	11	2	16	SH	NA	Grey	YTD	81	51			
CLA 7	Rate of adolescents entering care per 10,000 (13-17 year olds) population excl. UASC – <b>New</b>		14.5	19.4	29.0	35.1	29.0	26.6	24.2	25.4	26.3	26.6	28.2	29.0	SH	NA	Grey	LATEST	29.0				
CLA 8	Rate of adolescents leaving care per 10,000 (13-17 year olds) population excl. UASC- <b>New</b>		19.4	12.1	9.7	13.3	14.5	14.5	14.5	17.5	16.7	17.4	18.0	19.0	SH	NA	Grey	LATEST	19.0				
CLA 9	Percentage of the under 18 years population who are UASC – <b>New</b>						0.15%	0.14%	0.14%	0.13%	0.13%	0.12%	0.11%	0.12%	SH	0.07%	Grey	LATEST	0.12%				
CLA 10	Percentage of CLA for whom a visit has taken place within statutory timescales (6 weekly Visits)	BIB	95%	93%	96%	94%	93%	95%	94%	95%	90%	87%	92%	92%	SH	95%	Amber	LATEST	92%	95%			
CLA 10a	Percentage of CLA for whom a visit has taken place within statutory timescales (4 weekly Visits) <b>New</b>	BIB								82%	77%	75%	73%	73%	SH	NA	Grey	LATEST	73%				
CLA 11	Percentage of CLA children with an up to date review	BIB	94%	94%	94%	93%	91%	91%	95%	93%	92%	93%	96%	92%	DW	95%	Amber	YTD	93%	95%			
CLA 12	Percentage of CLA who have participated in Reviews (aged 4+) in the month	BIB	86%	76%	68%	73%	75%	72%	78%	75%	70%	73%	83%	82%	DW	80%	Amber	YTD	76%	75%			
CLA 13	CLA 13 - Percentage of CLA at SSA (Statutory School Age) with a Personal Education Plan (PEP) reviewed & completed in the last 6 months.	BIB	98%	97%	96%	97%	97%	94%	87%	77%	97%	98%	97%	91%	SH	85%	Green	LATEST	91%	93%			
CLA 14	Percentage of eligible CLA with an up-to-date Care Plan (6 months)	BIB	82%	84%	87%	77%	69%	66%	74%	92%	88%	82%	81%	77%	SH	95%	Red	LATEST	77%	85%			
CLA 15	Percentage of eligible CLA with an up-to-date Pathway Plan	BIB	71%	74%	79%	73%	65%	57%	57%	74%	70%	66%	69%	71%	SH	95%	Red	LATEST	71%	82%			
CLA 16	% of children in care for at least 12 months for whom health assessments are up to date.	BIB	86%	82%	84%	86%	86%	89%	84%	82%	85%	88%	87%	93%	SH	95%	Amber	LATEST	93%	95%	92%	94%	91%
CLA 16a	Number of children in care for at least 12 months for whom health assessments were due in the month (RHA's completed in the year to date/Health reviews due in the year from April to date)		14/90	13/108	23/105	38/107	22/99	25/79	24/100	37/121	29/93	33/87	21/75	31/60	SH	NA	Grey	LATEST	31/60				
CLA 17	% initial health assessments requested for health service within 3 working days of date child become looked after.	BIB	63%	62%	44%	47%	62%	64%	60%	47%	26%	37%	36%	TBC	SH	NA	Grey	NA	TBC	43%			

Indicator Number	Indicator Title	Polarity	2021/22												RO	2021-22 Target	RAG	YTD/LATEST	2021-22 YTD or latest	Comparative Data			
			Apr-21	May-21	Jun-21	Jul-21	Aug-21	Sep-21	Oct-21	Nov-21	Dec-21	Jan-22	Feb-22	Mar-22						DfE Published Croydon 2020-21	Stats Nbr Average 2020-21	London 2020-21	England 2020-21
CLA 18	% initial health assessments delivered within 20 working days of date child became looked after.	BIB	60%	73%	89%	56%	89%	55%	100%	82%	28%	38%	46%	TBC	SH	95%	Grey	NA	TBC	83%			
CLA 19	Percentage of CLA that have been in care for 12+ months, that have had same social worker for last 6 months	BIB	73%	75%	62%	57%	57%	54%	55%	53%	57%	56%	56%	65%	SH	65%	Green	LATEST	65%	72%			
CLA 20	Percentage of CLA under 16 in care for more than 2.5 years: in the same placement for 2+ years	BIB	70%	74%	72%	70%	72%	72%	73%	73%	72%	72%	72%	71%	SH	75%	Amber	LATEST	71%	70%			
CLA 21	Percentage of CLA at end of month with 3 or more placements during the year	SIB	4%	5%	5%	6%	5%	5%	5%	3%	6%	5%	6%	6%	SH	8%	Green	LATEST	6%	5%			
CLA 22	Percentage of CLA placed <20 miles from home	BIB	83%	85%	83%	82%	84%	84%	84%	83%	85%	84%	83%	85%	SH	90%	Amber	LATEST	85%	85%			
CLA 23	Number of CLA allocated to CWD		21	21	22	22	22	22	20	18	16	16	16	16	RC	NA	Grey	LATEST	16	23			
CLA 24	Percentage of CLA for whom a visit has taken place within statutory timescales (Allocated to CWD teams)	BIB	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	94%	100%	100%	100%	100%	RC	95%	Green	LATEST	100%	100%			
CLA 25	Number of CLA who returned home (E4A, E4B, E13, E41)	BIB	8	3	5	7	7	5	4	3	2	3	4	2	SH	NA	Grey	YTD	53	39	40	810	4,610
<b>Fostering</b>																							
F 1	Total number of foster carer households	BIB	221	217	218	216	213	212	210	209	211	207	204	203	SH	NA	Grey	LATEST	203				
F 2	Percentage of DBS Checks within time	BIB	99%	99%	99%	100%	100%	99%	98%	97%	97%	99%	98%	98%	SH	95%	Green	LATEST	98%				
F 3	Percentage of Annual Reviews of Foster Carers completed on time	BIB	93%	92%	93%	95%	93%	93%	90%	92%	93%	98%	99%	95%	SH	95%	Green	LATEST	95%				
F 4	Percentage of Foster Carers' most recent announced visit within timescales (6 weekly)	BIB	89%	89%	95%	92%	90%	87%	87%	87%	87%	93%	89%	82%	SH	95%	Red	LATEST	82%				
<b>Adoption</b>																							
AD 0	Number of Adoption Orders achieved in the month	BIB	2	2	1	1	0	2	0	1	3	2	0	0	SH	NA	Grey	YTD	14				
AD 1	Number of children for whom the agreed plan is adoption (ADM)	BiB	1	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	TBC	SH	NA	Grey	YTD	4				
AD 2	Number of children waiting to be matched to an adopter		11	7	11	10	10	8	11	11	13	12	12	TBC	SH	NA	Grey	LATEST	TBC				
AD 3	Number of children placed in the month	BiB	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	TBC	SH	NA	Grey	YTD	3				
AD 7	Average time between a child entering care and moving in with the adoptive family , for children who have been adopted (days) (12 Months rolling average)	SIB	549	549	545	492	492	461	437	449	449	492	491	TBC	SH	558	Green	LATEST	TBC				
AD 8	Average time between the LA receiving court authority to place a child and the LA deciding on a match to an adoptive family (days) (12 months rolling average)	SIB	238	238	233	205	206	201	191	191	190	192	171	TBC	SH	226	Green	LATEST	TBC				
AD 9	Number of special guardianship orders made in the month (from care)	BIB	5	5	0	0	2	4	0	9	2	0	2	0	SH	NA	Grey	YTD	29				

Indicator Number	Indicator Title	Polarity	2021/22												RO	2021-22 Target	RAG	YTD/LATEST	2021-22 YTD or latest	Comparative Data			
			Apr-21	May-21	Jun-21	Jul-21	Aug-21	Sep-21	Oct-21	Nov-21	Dec-21	Jan-22	Feb-22	Mar-22						DfE Published Croydon 2020-21	Stats Nbr Average 2020-21	London 2020-21	England 2020-21
<b>Care Leavers</b>																							
CL a	Care Leavers with an Up-to-date Pathway plan	BIB	83%	84%	80%	83%	73%	75%	75%	79%	74%	76%	81%	86%	SH	85%	Green	LATEST	86%				
CL 1	Number of Care Leavers in employment, education, or training (EET) now aged 17th to 21st Birthday	BIB	352	350	348	356	353	342	326	369	349	354	355	367	SH	NA	Grey	LATEST	367				
CL 1a	Percentage in employment, education, or training (EET) now aged 17 to 21	BIB	58%	59%	61%	65%	65%	64%	59%	64%	61%	60%	61%	62%	SH	85%	Red	LATEST	62%				
CL 1b	Number of Care Leavers in employment, education, or training (EET) now aged 19 to 21 (New*)	BIB					259	255	253	261	254	256	254	265	SH	NA	Grey	LATEST	265	273	165	3950	16900
CL 1c	Percentage in employment, education, or training (EET) now aged 19 to 21 (New*)	BIB					63%	61%	60%	61%	58%	58%	59%	60%	SH	85%	Red	LATEST	60%	42%	56%	55%	52%
CL 2	Number of Care Leavers not in employment, education, or training (NEET) now aged 17 to 21	SIB	256	239	219	194	187	194	184	185	192	200	197	189	SH	NA	Grey	LATEST	189				
CL 2a	Percentage not in employment, education, or training (NEET) now aged 17 to 21 Birthday	SIB	42%	41%	39%	35%	35%	36%	33%	32%	34%	34%	34%	32%	SH	NA	Grey	LATEST	32%				
CL 2b	Number of Care Leavers not in employment, education, or training (NEET) now aged 19 to 21 (New*)	SIB					153	163	153	153	164	167	163	157	SH	NA	Grey	LATEST	157	234	108	2590	13260
CL 2c	Percentage not in employment, education, or training (NEET) now aged 19 to 21 (New*)	SIB					37%	39%	36%	36%	38%	38%	38%	36%	SH	NA	Grey	LATEST	36%	36%	36%	36%	41%
CL 3	Number of Care Leavers in suitable accommodation now aged 17 to 21	BIB	583	565	550	531	518	514	488	533	518	539	532	536	SH	NA	Grey	LATEST	536				
CL 3a	Percentage in suitable accommodation now aged 17 to 21	BIB	95%	95%	95%	95%	94%	95%	88%	92%	91%	91%	92%	92%	SH	90%	Green	LATEST	92%				
CL 3b	Number of Care Leavers in suitable accommodation now aged 19 to 21	BIB					399	405	391	396	402	410	405	409	SH		Grey	LATEST	409	476	254	6110	28870
CL 3c	Percentage in suitable accommodation now aged 19 to 21 (New*)	BIB					95%	95%	92%	93%	92%	93%	93%	93%	SH	90%	Green	LATEST	93%	74	87	86	88
CL 4	Number not in suitable accommodation now aged 17 to 21	SIB	29	28	28	30	32	31	33	32	34	31	31	29	SH	NA	Grey	LATEST	29				
CL 5	Percentage in touch with the authority now aged 17 to 21	BIB	96%	95%	92%	91%	91%	90%	94%	98%	97%	97%	97%	97%	SH	95%	Green	LATEST	97%				
CL 5a	Percentage in touch with the authority now aged 19 to 21 (New*)	BIB					98%	97%	97%	98%	98%	98%	98%	98%	SH	95%	Green	LATEST	98%	77%	90%	90%	91%
CL 6	Care Leavers - LOCAL (non-UASC)		325	327	280	239	258	262	254	245	242	252	231	254	SH	NA	Grey	LATEST	254				
CL 7	Care Leavers - UASC (non-LOCAL)		439	415	455	477	441	438	409	429	428	438	448	426	SH	NA	Grey	LATEST	426				
CL 8	Number of young people who have Appeals Rights Exhausted New *						6	6	7	5	4	4	3	5	SH	NA	Grey	LATEST	5				

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<b>REPORT TO:</b>	<b>CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL</b>
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>WORK PROGRAMME 2021-22</b>
<b>LEAD OFFICER:</b>	<b>Stephen Rowan, Head of Democratic Services and Scrutiny</b>
<b>ORIGIN OF ITEM:</b>	The Work Programme is scheduled for consideration at every ordinary meeting of Corporate Parenting Panel.
<b>BRIEF FOR THE COMMITTEE:</b>	To consider any additions, amendments or changes to the agreed work programme for the Panel in 2021/22.

## 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This agenda item details the Panel’s proposed work programme for the 2021/22 municipal year.
- 1.2 The Panel 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 consider the work programme in the context of the Panel’s terms of reference and whether the proposed items will support the Panel in meeting its delegated responsibilities.

### 2.2 Additional Items

Members of the Panel are invited to suggest any other items that they consider appropriate for the Work Programme. However, due to the limited time available at Panel meetings, Members are strongly encouraged to not propose meeting agendas that contain more than three hours of substantive business in order to allow full consideration of the items on any given agenda.

The Panel should also be mindful that the Council is operating under both very restricted resources and, while no longer formally subject to section 114 spending restrictions, the Council has resolved to continue to operate in accordance with such restrictions. To that end, Members should be mindful

that requests for additional reports will need to be considered in the wider context of demand for Council resources and the requirement for the Council to only incur expenditure on statutory functions.

### 2.3 **Participation in Corporate Parenting Panel**

Members of the Panel are also requested to give consideration to any persons that it wishes to attend future meetings to assist in the consideration of specific agenda items.

## 3 **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 The Panel is recommended to agree the Work Programme 2021/22 with any agreed amendments.

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**CONTACT OFFICER:** Michelle Ossei-Gerning  
Democratic Services and Governance  
Officer- Council and Regulatory  
020 8726 6000 x 84246

**BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:** None

**APPENDIX 1:** Work Programme 2021/22 for the  
Corporate Parenting Panel.



# Corporate Parenting Panel Work Programme 2021/22

Meeting date	Thurs 24 Jun 21 <b>NEW DATE</b>	Wed 8 Sept – Postponed to <b>NEW DATE – Wed 22 Sept</b>	Wed 10 Nov	Wed 12 Jan 22 – Postponed to <b>NEW DATE – Tues 8 Feb</b>	Wed 2 Mar – Postponed to <b>NEW DATE – Wed 16 Mar</b>	Wed 27 Apr
Theme	<b>SUFFICIENCY</b>	<b>EDUCATION</b>	<b>HEALTH</b>	<b>ADOPTION</b>	<b>CARE LEAVERS</b>	<b>FOSTERING</b>
	CIC Performance Scorecard	CIC Performance Scorecard	CIC Performance Scorecard	CIC Performance Scorecard	CIC Performance Scorecard	CIC Performance Scorecard
	Annual Report of Corporate Parenting Panel 2020-2021	Exam Results Exclusion SEN	Initial Health Assessment and Review Health Assessment Report	Summary of ASL Adoption activity	Care Leavers and Support for Care Leavers	Annual Report of Fostering Service and Panel  Statement of Purpose
	Update on the South London Commissioning Programme (Service/Strategy)	Mentoring and Careers guidance for LAC an CL Mentoring and Independent Visiting Report work	Update on Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health Offer for Children Looked After	Croydon Social Care update on children with a plan for adoption	Leaving Care Offer and pledge	Recruitment and Deregistration
	IRO Annual Report	Engagement Achievement (inc. complaints and leaving opportunities)	EMPIRE Presentation	Renewal Plan and the Impact on Children	Missing Children	Review of Fostering Services Escalation Policy for Foster Carers
	Children's Social Care Placement Sufficiency	Annual Report of Virtual School	IRO Annual Report		EMPIRE Update	Annual Report of Corporate Parenting Panel 2021-2022
	Terms of Reference	EMPIRE – the summer provision overview report				EMPIRE update
		EMPIRE – Engagement Report				

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