

Scrutiny Children & Young People Sub-Committee Agenda



To: Councillors Councillor Richard Chatterjee (Chair), Councillor Maddie Henson (Vice-Chair), Sue Bennett, Gayle Gander, Eunice O'Dame, Helen Redfern, Manju Shahul-Hameed and Wilson

Co-optee Members

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

Reserve Members: Adele Benson, Mike Bonello, Stuart Collins, Patsy Cummings, Sean Fitzsimons, Mark Johnson, Ramsey and Luke Shortland

A meeting of the **Scrutiny Children & Young People Sub-Committee** which you are hereby summoned to attend, will be held on **Tuesday, 21 June 2022 at 6.30 pm. Council Chamber, Town Hall, Katharine Street, Croydon CR0 1NX**

Katherine Kerswell
Chief Executive
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Monday, 13 June 2022

Members of the public are welcome to view the webcast both live and after the meeting has completed at <http://webcasting.croydon.gov.uk>

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If you require any assistance, please contact Tom Downs as detailed above.

AGENDA – PART A

1. **Apologies for absence**

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

2. **Minutes of Previous Sub-Committee Meetings** (Pages 5 - 28)

To approve the minutes of the meetings held on 18th January 2022, 9th March 2022 and 22nd March 2022 as an accurate record.

3. **Disclosures of Interest**

Members and co-opted Members of the Council are reminded that, in accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct and the statutory provisions of the Localism Act, they are required to consider **in advance of each meeting** whether they have a disclosable pecuniary interest (DPI), another registrable interest (ORI) or a non-registrable interest (NRI) in relation to any matter on the agenda. If advice is needed, Members should contact the Monitoring Officer **in good time before the meeting**.

If any Member or co-opted Member of the Council identifies a DPI or ORI which they have not already registered on the Council's register of interests or which requires updating, they should complete the disclosure form which can be obtained from Democratic Services at any time, copies of which will be available at the meeting for return to the Monitoring Officer.

Members and co-opted Members are required to disclose any DPIs and ORIs at the meeting.

- Where the matter relates to a DPI they may not participate in any discussion or vote on the matter and must not stay in the meeting unless granted a dispensation.
- Where the matter relates to an ORI they may not vote on the matter unless granted a dispensation.
- Where a Member or co-opted Member has an NRI which directly relates to their financial interest or wellbeing, or that of a relative or close associate, they must disclose the interest at the meeting, may not take part in any discussion or vote on the matter and must not stay in the meeting unless granted a dispensation. Where a matter affects the NRI of a Member or co-opted Member, section 9 of Appendix B of the Code of Conduct sets out the test which must be applied by the Member to decide whether disclosure is required.

The Chair will invite Members to make their disclosure orally at the commencement of Agenda item 3, to be recorded in the minutes.

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. Children, Young People and Education Directorate Overview
(Pages 29 - 50)

This report provides an overview of the Children, Young People and Education Directorate to inform the development of the Committee's work programme including key priorities for the year; budget; performance; key risks and mitigations.

6. What Difference has this Meeting made to Croydon's Children

This item is an opportunity for the Children & Young People Sub-Committee, at the conclusion of the meeting, to review the difference made to Croydon's children from the meeting.

7. 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."

PART B

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Public Document Pack Agenda Item 2

Scrutiny Children & Young People Sub-Committee

Meeting of held on Tuesday, 18 January 2022 at 6.30 pm

This meeting was held remotely and a recording can be viewed on the Council's website

MINUTES

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

Co-optee Members

Elaine Jones (Voting Diocesan Representative (Catholic Diocese)) and Paul O'Donnell (Voting Parent Governor Representative)

Also Present: Councillor Alisa Flemming

Apologies: Josephine Copeland (Co-opted Teacher Representative)

PART A

1/22 Minutes of the Previous Sub-Committee Meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 2 November 2021 were agreed as a correct record.

The Chair also took the opportunity to extend the thanks of the Sub-Committee to Leo Morrell who was standing down from his role as one of co-opted members of the Sub-Committee.

2/22 Disclosures of Interest

There were no disclosure of interest made at the meeting.

3/22 Urgent Business (if any)

The Chair advised that the final version of the Task and Finish Group's report on school exclusions and off-rolling had been circulated before the meeting to give the Sub-Committee an opportunity to review the content before signing off the final version of the report. Members noted one particular substantive change to the previous draft relating to the number of children with special educational needs in the borough.

Resolved: That the first part of the Task and Finish Group's report be agreed.

4/22 Action List Update

The Sub-Committee considered the outstanding actions from its previous meetings. It was noted that an update on antenatal health visits would be provided at a future meeting of the Sub-Committee, most likely in the summer.

It was agreed that the Chair would meet with officers outside of the meeting to review and clear the remaining actions on the list and an update would be provided on the outcome from this work at the next meeting of the Sub-Committee on 1 March 2022.

5/22 Early Help, Children Social Care & Education Performance Dashboards

The Sub-Committee considered the performance dashboards set out on pages 15 to 30 of the agenda. The dashboards were a regular item on the agenda and provided for the Sub-Committee to give an overview of performance in the Children's Social Care and Education services. Concern was raised about indicator EH7 which detailed the percentage of cases closed due to families no longer requiring services, which had consistently been above the 10% target throughout the year. It was advised that some families no longer required support from Early Help because they had engaged with alternative services themselves. The service was managing its waiting list through a duty system, with regular check-ins scheduled with families to ensure their needs were being met. Given it was a demand led service, the Sub-Committee acknowledged that it could be difficult to achieve some of the targets within the social care system.

Indicators could be affected for a variety of reasons, with the fluctuation in caseloads, staff turnover and recruitment having an impact. Recently scheduling visits had been more challenging due to the impact from the omicron variant on staff absences.

Given the need to make significant savings within the Service, it was agreed that indicators on the financial performance of the directorate would be added to future iterations of the dashboard to provide the Sub-Committee with reassurance that budget were being appropriately managed.

Conclusions

Following the discussion on this item, the Children & Young People Sub-Committee agreed the following conclusions:-

1. It was recognised that there was a range of factors that could have a negative impact upon service delivery, but it was acknowledged that the Senior Management were aware of these factors and were actively managing these risks.
2. In light of the budget savings required from the Service in 2022-23, it would be important to include financial indicators in the dashboard, to allow the Sub-Committee to monitor progress made in delivering the budget.

6/22 Children, Young People & Education Budget Scrutiny Challenge

The Sub-Committee considered a report set out on pages 31 to 42 of the agenda along with a supplement, which provided a response to the three areas within the Children, Young People and Education budget targeted by the Sub-Committee for in-depth scrutiny. The three areas selected were: -

1. The review of care packages for children with disabilities aged 0-17.
2. The impact of the reduction in spend on the adolescent service.
3. The funding gap for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children

The Sub-Committee was asked to consider whether the savings identified were deliverable, sustainable and did not present an unacceptable risk. Consideration was also given to whether the potential impact upon service users and the wider community from the savings was understood by the senior management of the service and the Cabinet Member, and that all reasonable alternative options had been explored and no better options existed. The conclusions agreed by the Sub-Committee would be reported to the Scrutiny & Overview Committee at its meeting scheduled for 15 February.

The Sub-Committee considered each of the three areas in turn, starting with the proposal to review care packages for children with disabilities up to the age of 18. During the introduction to this section provided by the Head of Social Work with Families & Children, Rodica Cobarzan, the Sub-Committee was given an overview of the review process for care packages. This included the work with the Transitions service for young people approaching the age of 18. Case studies which had resulted in both reduced and increased care packages were also provided to the Sub-Committee.

Following the introduction, it was acknowledged by the Sub-Committee that the budget position of the Council required difficult decisions to be made. However, reassurance was sought that reassessments would not lead to an adverse impact upon the children or their families. It was confirmed that care packages were continually reviewed and reassessed to ensure the best outcomes for the child were being achieved. It was likely that the efficiency savings required would be achieved through reviewing service providers, rather than the level of care provided.

It was highlighted that many families were opting for the direct payment model, which delivered a saving to the Council. This led to a concern being raised by the Sub-Committee that the direct payment system allowing families to buy their own agency support may not have the same level of quality or consistency required as opposed to the higher quality support acquired using local authority input.

In response to a question about whether there had been any challenge from families because of the changes introduced, it was confirmed that there had been no tribunals. Assessments would be reviewed as required to ensure there was full transparency between the Council and families over decision

making. There had been a low number of complaints received to date, which had been responded to as a priority.

It was acknowledged by Members that it was an ongoing challenge to ensure that commissioned services met the needs of the community, particularly given the level of resource available. However, this meant there needed to be a clear focus on the outcomes delivered by these services to ensure community needs were being met. It was questioned whether there was sufficient data available to inform the commissioning process going forward. It was important to use both quantitative and qualitative data to gain a full understanding of local need. Reassurance was given that Service understood the importance of reviewing the provision of commissioned services and had been improving its monitoring processes over several years, which had been reflected in the recent SEND inspection.

Concerns raised by the Sub-Committee about the history of overspending within the service were acknowledged by officers. It was confirmed that financial control had been prioritised over the past year, which had resulted in a much more robust and visible indication of costs being available. It was agreed that consideration would be given to what metrics could be provided to the Sub-Committee to provide ongoing reassurance that the finances within the service were being effectively managed.

Members were keen for further information on the processes used to be able to make a judgement on the robustness of the financial controls within the service. It was advised that the importance of ensuring that all current packages were recorded accurately, with a clear trail for expenditure for each child had been emphasised to officers throughout the service and this would continue.

At this stage the discussion moved onto the second priority area, the support for vulnerable adolescents. During the introduction, it was acknowledged that this area presented significant challenges, particularly around higher risk children. These challenges were under constant review, using a multi-disciplinary approach which required careful coordination and continual refinement to ensure that the adolescents needs were being addressed.

Given the potential risks, it was questioned how these were being managed and whether the response was constrained by the budget. It was confirmed that it was important to have a flexible response, including having the ability to be able to reallocate resources as required.

It was highlighted that the recruitment and retention of staff was an ongoing issue that was mirrored across most local authorities in the country. The decline in the supply of temporary workers was flagged as a potential issue, but officers reassured the Sub-Committee that they were aware of this trend and were working with other authorities to address. The level of funding available for recruitment was not the main challenge, instead it was finding staff with the right skills. Recruitment, retention and turnover had a constant impact upon the experience available in the system.

It was questioned how the risk presented by the limited supply of staff was being managed going forward. It was confirmed that the salaries offered by the Council were competitive and transformational change was needed to ensure local staff were being retained for the sake of the children and the organisation. The latest offer had been reviewed to make it more attractive for staff to retain expertise. The Council was working with partners to establish a multidisciplinary approach to staffing which help to improve the attractiveness of working in Croydon.

It was highlighted that there was a reference in the report to work on developing new indicators for vulnerable adolescents and as such it was questioned when these would be available. It was confirmed that further work was required on the development of new indicators, with benchmarking proving to be complex and reliant on collaborative working to collect the appropriate information.

The meeting moved on to the final section of this item which concerned the budget for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC). During the introduction to this section, it was emphasised that any additional pressure would have to be met and that most of the additional cost were for over 18s. There was also a threshold at 21 years of age. The model included an estimation of the UASC who were NEET. This was not expected to be a big risk as many were not allowed to work.

In response to a question about the reliability of the estimates provided in the report, it was confirmed that these had been tested and confirmed as being reasonable assumptions on which to base the budget.

Given the actual cost of providing support to UASC had repeatedly exceeded the budgeted amount over a long period of time, it was questioned whether a reserve had been earmarked to manage this risk. It was confirmed that the additional support required for UASC in 2022-23 was estimated to be £2.9m, which had not been accounted for. Although the Government had provided one-off funding in 2021-22, the continued funding shortfall would continue to be raised as a significant challenge to the Council's budget. It was agreed that the potential risk created by the shortfall in funding for UASC would be flagged to the Scrutiny and Overview Committee as a significant concern.

At the conclusion of the item, the Chair summarised the discussion noting that a significant degree of confidence could be taken from the responses given by officers to the questions raised by the Sub-Committee. The three areas remained significant areas of risk to Council budget and would need to be revisited throughout the year by the Sub-Committee to ensure they remained on track.

Resolved: The Sub-Committee agreed that the Chair would provide a summary of its discussion to the Scrutiny and Overview Committee on 15 February 2022.

7/22 Education Estates Strategy

The Sub-Committee considered a report set out on pages 43 to 134 of the agenda which provided an overview of the Education Estates Strategy for its feedback, before consideration by the Cabinet.

The report was introduced by the Council's Director of Education, Shelley Davies, during which comparisons on persistent absences and the work focussed on analysing data were highlighted. It was advised that it was important to focus upon contributing factors, which were being reviewed in greater depth. It was acknowledged that the impact of pandemic over the past two years had affected the availability of data, however it was noted that schools should be highlighting attendance where persistent absence was an issue. Schools would also be taking other factors into account alongside absences.

The work focused on addressing surplus school places was highlighted, including an in-depth review of shared resources and exploring opportunities for schools to generate additional income.

It was questioned whether there had been any formal discussion with head teachers as a totality from both primary and secondary about the estates strategy and whether feedback from this had been included in the evaluation. It was confirmed that there had been discussions with the Schools Forum, Schools Block Working Group and Secondary Head Teachers Meeting. The Sub-Committee welcomed confirmation of the unified approach deployed and it was agreed that a briefing summarising these meetings would be shared with the Sub-Committee.

In response to a question about the support available for schools in danger of not managing their places, it was confirmed that support was provided to individual schools as well as wider conversations on a borough wide level. It was acknowledged there had been difficulties during the pandemic due to practical issues, but officers were focussing on taking this forward.

It was agreed that the decline in numbers at some schools was a significant risk, with it questioned whether there were any radical ideas that could be used to support schools whose excess spaces were above the 5% target. It was also agreed that there needed to be a greater clarity around the risks to the Council of schools going into deficit. It was advised that there was a focus on early intervention with schools and reassurance was given that it should not have an impact on the Council's budget.

The Chair acknowledged the support by the committee for a study on excess places within the Borough.

Conclusions:

At the end of this item the Children & Young People Sub-Committee agreed that:

1. The content of the Education Estates Strategy report was noted.
2. Although reassurance was provided on the risks presented by schools with excess places, it was agreed that the emphasis on early intervention and support should continue to ensure the risks were managed as well as possible.
3. Further information on the school numbers broken down by school and age groups was requested.

8/22 Croydon Safeguarding Children Board - Annual Report 2020-21

The Sub-Committee considered a report set out on pages 135 to 182 of the agenda which presented the Annual Report for 2020-21 from the Croydon Safeguarding Children Board. The Sub-Committee was asked to review the report and provide feedback ahead of its consideration by the Cabinet.

It was agreed that it was essential for the Partnership to ensure it was working effectively together in order to avoid duplication. Further consideration was needed to identify a means of providing evidence in future annual reports to demonstrate the Partnership worked efficiently and effectively together. It was acknowledged that had been a delay in provided the 2020-21 annual report, but given the pandemic this delay was understandable.

Reassurance was provided to the Sub-Committee about the commitment of the partners, which had contributed greatly to the ability of the Partnership to plan its work. It was highlighted that positive action had been identified, despite the challenges of the pandemic.

The Sub-Committee agreed that the key for next year was to look at how to identify the quality of work that had taken place, and to focus on outcomes rather than just the tasks completed.

At the conclusion of this item the Chair thanks officers for their attendance at the meeting and engagement with the discussion of the Sub-Committee.

Conclusion:

At the end of this item the Children & Young People Sub-Committee concluded

1. That it was happy for the Croydon Safeguarding Children Board Annual Report 2020-21 to be submitted to the Cabinet in its current format.
2. That further consideration needed to be given to how to demonstrate in future reports the effectiveness of the partnership, with a robust set of indicators used to track progress.
3. The Sub-Committee agreed that it would be in favour of engaging with the Board at an early stage in the development of the next Annual

Report to ensure that concerns raised about the content of this year's report were addressed.

9/22 What Difference Has This Meeting Made To Croydon's Children

At the conclusion of the meeting the Sub-Committee considered what difference the meeting had made to the children of Croydon. It was concluded that it had been a good meeting, which had benefited from the preparatory work undertaken in advance, including the budget briefing provided in November.

It was agreed that future reports on the education estates strategy should be expanded to include budgets for other areas of education spend. Should it be possible, consideration of this report should be scheduled for the autumn rather than at a later stage in the process.

It was also agreed that before reviewing the next annual report from the Safeguarding Children Board, the Sub-Committee should look to test the partnership arrangements of the Board. The format for this would need to be carefully planned to ensure that the process was effective.

The budget situation within the Service was likely to remain a challenge for the foreseeable future and would need to be closely monitored by the Sub-Committee to ensure it remained on-track for delivery.

The Chair acknowledged final comments from colleagues and thanked them for their input into what had been an interesting meeting.

The meeting ended at 9.00 pm

Signed:

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Date:

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Scrutiny Children & Young People Sub-Committee

Meeting of held on Wednesday, 9 March 2022 at 10.30 am

This meeting was held remotely and a recording can be viewed on the Council's website

MINUTES

Present: Councillors Robert Ward (Chair), Sue Bennett, Jerry Fitzpatrick, Bernadette Khan and Louisa Woodley

Also Present: Councillor Alisa Flemming

Apologies: Councillor Sean Fitzsimons and Ola Kolade

PART A

10/22 Disclosures of interest

There were no disclosures of interest made at the meeting.

11/22 Urgent Business (if any)

There were no urgent items for the Sub-Committee to consider at this meeting.

The Chair advised the Sub-Committee that it was likely an additional meeting would be held on 22 March 2022, to consider the issues raised about the work of the Croydon Safeguarding Children Partnership from the recent report on the death of a child in the borough.

12/22 Task and Finish Group Final Report: Exclusions and Off-rolling in Croydon Schools

The Sub-Committee considered a report set out in the supplement to the main agenda, which detailed the final findings from the Task and Finish Group set up by the Sub-Committee to review the issues of exclusions and off-rolling in Croydon schools. This was the second part of the report, with the first part being approved by the Sub-Committee on 18 January and subsequently endorsed by the Cabinet.

The Chair of the Sub-Committee thanked all the members of the Task and Finish Group for the significant amount of time and effort they had invested in producing their reports, which was extremely comprehensive.

The report was introduced by the Chair of the Task and Finish Group, Councillor Jerry Fitzpatrick, also thanked the other members of the group for

their support in the preparation of the report. During the introduction provided by Councillor Fitzpatrick, the following was noted.

- There was a huge number of competing demands on school leaders, including the need to be inclusive and keep children in schools. Conversely, market demand required the delivery of good exam results to ensure the high placing of a school's position in league tables, pulling demand in the other direction.
- Ofsted had previously highlighted concern nationally that some schools may be gaming the system through off-rolling pupils that may lower scores. It was understood that there may have been instances of this in some Croydon schools.
- The review undertaken by the Task and Finish Group had identified nine key findings, which were outlined on [pages 3 & 4 of the report](#).
- These included the finding that there was an increased number of children attending schools with significant additional need.
- There was a piecemeal system of schools across the borough which had been exacerbated by academisation, which made it more challenging for schools to cooperate.
- The key to ensuring inclusion was to get to the root of the problem, which required early diagnosis.
- Additional support was required to help manage the transition process between schools at the earliest possible stage.
- It could be challenging for parents who wanted to have their autistic child educated in mainstream education as a proportion of schools were not equipped or able to provide for the needs of these pupils.
- The Group had found examples of schools refusing unannounced visits from the Council, which raised questions about what was happening in these schools.
- Elective home education was an area of concern for the Group, which questioned whether the Council had sufficient policy to deliver it. There was also a huge backlog in reviewing home education provision which needed to be addressed. The need to have an increased focus on elective home education had increased following the Government's recent announcement of local authorities needing to maintain a log of home schools and to ensure these pupils were being suitably educated.
- There was a concern that the part of the elective home education policy that fell onto social care colleagues had not been taken on board, which may result in future safeguarding issues.

- Draft government guidance was likely to have huge implication for managed moves and alternative provision. One key point of the new guidance was a child would now be dual registered at both old and new schools with the purpose of seeking to reintegrate them back into school. This would mean that Croydon schools were retaining far more pupils than they do at present. The guidance would also end the practice of punishment rooms. It also meant that groups of schools would need to work together to commission alternative provision to address a child's needs, which would increase the level of school-based commissioning.
- The Council has until 31 March to respond to the Department for Education consultation and it was hoped this would be informed by the comments of the Group.
- Finally, the Group commended the excellent team of officers in the borough who were committed to inclusion and who would be tasked with implementing the new guidance.

Following the introduction by Councillor Fitzpatrick, the Council's Director of Education, Shelley Davies, provided a response, thanking the Task and Finish Group for its work and open dialogue with officers. It was important to note that the report had been delivered at a time when the Service was looking at inclusion and the recommendations made by the Group would be taken forward and responded to formally. There was a need to make sure both school leaders and parents understood what needed to happen to ensure the new policy was effective. A review of the Fair Access Panel also needed to be undertaken with school leaders as a collective. Finally, it was emphasised that this work would be delivered across Children's services.

Following the introduction to the report, the Sub-Committee was given the opportunity to ask questions about the information provided. The first question concerned one of the findings of the Task and Finish Group that further work was needed to find the root causes of a pupil's behavioural issues. It was questioned how far back a school could be expected to investigate and whether this would also include the child's parents. In response, it was acknowledged that it could be difficult to identify the root cause of behavioural issues, but there were examples of good practice in some secondary schools in the borough. However, it was important that both primary and secondary schools were able to implement these processes at the right time and that they were appropriately funded for this work. If schools were unable to deliver this work within their own expertise, there were many other good services available who could mediate between schools and parents.

It was highlighted that children's centres could be resource to work with children and parents to identify the root causes of behavioural issues and as such it was positive that these services were being maintained. It was important that the Government and other funding sources provided the level of funding required by schools to deliver effective services to support children at risk of exclusion. There was also a disproportionality in the ethnicity of

children being excluded, which needed to be addressed, including revisiting the curriculum to ensure it was relevant for all pupils.

It was noted that quiet rooms were being retained, which could be a good thing if they were not misused. It was agreed that the use of quiet rooms should only be viewed as one of a range of options that could be used by schools and needed to be used in conjunction with other support. A benefit of quiet rooms was the space they provided for the child to reflect, which was part of the road to self-regulation.

It was highlighted that the best practice schools were likely to be the ones who were doing well without a lot of funding. As such it was questioned what the Council could do to encourage the sharing of best practice and to support schools with training. It was agreed that there were schools delivering inspiring work that needed to be shared and it may be beneficial to encourage schools with similar challenges to work in partnership. There also needed to be a system in place to help children and their parents to navigate the system as this could be a significant barrier to the delivery of support.

At the conclusion of the discussion the Chair noted that an excellent report had been provided by the Task and Finish Group and the Sub-Committee agreed to forward it to the Cabinet for its endorsement. It was also acknowledged that navigating the education system could be challenging for parents and as such any assistance that could be provided to help them understand what was available and how it could be accessed was to be encouraged.

Resolved: The Children and Young People Sub-Committee agreed to:-

1. Receive and note the report of the Task and Finish Group.
2. Endorse the recommendations of the Task and Finish Group and refer the report to the next available meeting of the Cabinet to seek its endorsement.

The meeting ended at 11.45 am

Signed:

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Date:

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Scrutiny Children & Young People Sub-Committee

Meeting of Scrutiny Children & Young People Sub-Committee held on Tuesday, 22 March 2022 at 6.30 pm. This meeting was held remotely.

MINUTES

Present: Councillor Robert Ward (Chair);
Councillor Sean Fitzsimons (Vice-Chair);
Councillors Sue Bennett, Bernadette Khan, Ola Kolade, Louisa Woodley and Mary Croos (In place of Jerry Fitzpatrick)

Co-optee Members

Josephine Copeland (Non-voting Teacher representative)

Also

Present: Councillor Alisa Flemming (Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Learning)
Councillor Maria Gatland (Shadow Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Learning)
Debbie Jones (Corporate Director for Children, Young People and Education)
Shaun Hanks (Head of Service for Children Looked After and Care Experienced)
Kerry Crichlow (Director for Quality Commissioning & Performance)
Shelley Davies (Director for Education)
Fiona Martin (Detective Superintendent for Public Protection for the Metropolitan Police)
Elaine Clancy (Chief Nurse for Croydon CCG and Croydon Health Services)

Apologies: Councillors Alisa Flemming and Bernadette Khan for lateness;
Co-optee Members Elaine Jones and Paul O'Donnell

PART A

16/22 Apologies for Absence

Apologies received from Councillor Robert Fitzpatrick who was substituted by Councillor Mary Croos.

Apologies received from Co-optee Members Elaine Jones and Paul O'Donnell.

Apologies for lateness received from Councillors Bernadette Khan and Alisa Flemming.

17/22 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

There were no minutes circulated for consideration at this meeting.

18/22 Disclosures of Interest

There was none.

19/22 Urgent Business (if any)

There was none.

20/22 Action List Update

The Chair addressed that the majority of items on the action list had been completed, though there were a few outstanding items. There were new items such as the health visiting performance that was suggested for the new Sub-Committee in the new municipal year, to review.

Overall the action list was in a better position.

21/22 Early Help, Children Social Care & Education Dashboards

The Scrutiny Children & Young People Sub-Committee considered the January 2022 Children Social Care & Education Dashboard, which provided an overview of the performance within the service.

It was noted by the Sub-Committee that the staffing levels were generally good in the green zone, though timescales were still in red and yellow zones and required rapid improvement.

22/22 Home Education in Croydon

The Scrutiny Children & Young People Sub-Committee considered the Home Education in Croydon report, which had previously been highlighted by the Sub-Committee as a potential area of concern in need of further scrutiny.

The Sub-Committee received an overview from the Director of Education, Shelley Davies, who highlighted the following:

- There were currently 635 children registered as elected education with reasons as provided within the report.
- The covid-19 pandemic had impacted family's decision in education and sending children to school, though parents are legally within their rights to elected education at home.
- Safeguarding and staffing had also been addressed within the report.

In response to queries raised by the Sub-Committee, the Director of Education, clarified the following:

- In relation to the safeguarding of children that were home schooled, there were no inherent safeguarding risks for families planning to home educate their child, though if a school was to identify that a decision for home education was not appropriate for a specific individual, this would be followed up on a case-by-case basis in particular where there were safeguarding issues. There was also a safeguarding process in getting the child back to school which included notifying Children Missing Education, and Children's Services [if significant concerns were identified]. The Elected Home Education Team also worked closely with the safeguarding officer, where children would be visited every 6 months, or regularly if known to Children's Services.
- In relation to data and the 635 children registered for Elected Home Education, it was unknown of the breakdown of children in primary and secondary schools, though it was shared that anecdotally parent's decision to home school their child may often relate to a transition from primary school to secondary school, GCSE preparations or other factors. Additionally, elected home education may not be the right choice for families who may very well return their child back to school.
- In relation to the challenge of schools encouraging families to home educate their children, the service reviewed on the number of situations this had happened - an example which resulted in advice given to families to avoid exclusion. The service had addressed schools and families who needed to be supported in decision making instead of having been encouraged change that was not required for their children. It was important that education was not encouraged to be channelled at home other than what was right for the family.
- In relation to the high turnover of children moving from one local authority to another and whether there was a tracking process in place, the service acknowledged their liaison with the admission authorities in the neighbouring boroughs to ensure safeguarding is maintained. This meant that a child would remain enrolled at a school in one local authority until acknowledgement was verified by another local authority admission team. Where a child was not attending school or enrolled in another school this would alert that a child was missing from education and with safeguarding protocols in place the specialised teams would be notified.
- In relation to the suitability of elected home education and its performance, this was proven challenging to record as children were often visited once or twice yearly, where the determination of suitability would be made by professionally qualified teachers. It was noted that as there was no legislation for families to follow a specific framework or curriculum, the term suitable would not

necessarily mean the same curriculum and framework children would receive in schools, and thus the word suitability was to be used widely.

At 7pm Councillor Bernadette Khan attended the meeting.

- In relation to what indicators qualified educational provision, it was addressed that traditional schooling and the concept of education in public or at home was what constituted the ideology of education. The services were unable to determine choice on style of education for families and focused on reasons Elected Home Education was the chosen style to educate their child. It was recognised that the number of children being home schooled was increasing and the service focused on managing those families, by way of visiting, to ensure provision was good. This was accomplished by the elected home education staff worker who was a qualified teacher.
- In relation to tracking children who were taken out of mainstream and being home schooled, it was highlighted that a notification must be provided to the department by the family of their choice to home school. The service would then be able to keep a track record on the EHE register of all children and contact families to provide documents and other material to use.

In Conclusion, the Sub-Committee discussed the following:

Though it was recognised that the covid-19 pandemic had given families choice to home educate their children, there needed to be more data on Elected Home Education which was to include longitudinal study or case studies of success, the schools affected, ages of children, length of being home educated; additionally, the performance indicators on visits and lack of visits to children home educated.

The Chair further noted from the discussion that though there was the ability for parents to follow their own educational path, it would be interesting to review how many families follow the curriculum and framework, children completing exams and other data. Further, it was put forward that the Sub-Committee was to be clear on information required in the return to the Sub-Committee in the future.

The Chair thanks officers for their report.

23/22 Croydon Safeguarding Children Partnership

The Scrutiny Children & Young People Sub-Committee considered the Croydon Safeguarding Children Partnership report – namely the Child Safeguarding Practice Review, which provided an overview of partnerships working effectively together to protect children and young people in the

borough in particular identified lessons about working with vulnerable young and first-time mothers (and separated fathers) and the challenges of engagement in Universal and Early Help Services.

The Chair highlighted the sensitivity and seriousness of the case which was brought before the Sub-Committee and addressed that the focus of the report was the effectiveness of the partnership, and emphasised on three areas:

- The investigation: How can we do better; the things that happened and the actual event;
- The process of the way the safeguarding partnerships had evaluated what had happened and identified lessons learned; and
- What changed as a result – i.e., the multiagency action plan

Prior to the meeting the Sub-Committee received a summary of safeguarding practice review process (formally known as safeguarding case reviews) which highlighted the grounds the local authority was to take following a serious incident that included notifying the national panel.

The Head of Service for Children Looked After and Care Experienced, Shaun Hanks, highlighted that a rapid review, which was attended by all agencies together learnt immediate lessons, and as a result, more in-depth review was required which was the report presented to Sub-Committee.

Lessons learned had addressed the communication between the multi-agency partners particularly within the front door services which was now happening more frequently (on a monthly basis).

There was also an Independent Management Report that sought immediate practice of an agency and would feed into the bigger Safeguarding Practice Review.

The Detective Superintendent for Public Protection for the Metropolitan Police, Fiona Martin, addressed the Sub-Committee and highlighted their review on their system, the quantity of incoming referrals, how accidental and non-accidental injuries were undertaken, and information sharing.

Further reflection on the learning within the Police included working with the three boroughs (Croydon, Sutton and Lambeth) in understanding thresholds in strategy meetings and increasing the essential meetings to address strategies in safeguarding cases, working together with other agencies, and ensuring learning would be shared.

The Chief Nurse for Croydon CCG and Croydon Health Services, Elaine Clancy, addressed the Sub-Committee and highlighted that the health team had a governance plan which they used to educate, reinforce, increase awareness and other individual learning, in practice and in communication.

Following comments from Children's Services, Police and Health, the Sub-Committee shared their concern and sadness to the details read within the

report. A discussion of the report followed with queries raised by the Sub-Committee, and questions were answered as followed:

- In the question relating to the report highlighting that the father of the child was only heard during the review, what opportunities were agencies seeking in the engagement of parents, particularly fathers? The Head of Service for Children Looked After and Care Experienced shared that following the independent management review training sessions had been provided to staff to conduct better engagement with both parents during assessments. There was room for improvement in this area to also change language and to be more inquisitive around the relationships of a child's parents.
- In the question around the key indicator of neglect that highlighted a failure to make appointments, how could this be detected in the future and acted upon? The Chief Nurse for Croydon CCG and Croydon Health Services addressed the importance to improve health colleagues' professional curiosity as to why clients were cancelling appointments, though this was challenging as there were often cancellations or absent attendance from clients and as professionals the service needed to review protocol to address these issues to triangulate any risks or concern relating to an absent attendance.
- In the question around threshold, how had the criteria of eligibility changed in a family in such circumstances accessing resources; and, the service providers taking actions to work with the families. The Chief Nurse for Croydon CCG and Croydon Health Services addressed that at the time operational teams do not often know all the details, highlighting for better communication between partner agencies in how they identify risk to match the risk to a family. There were further points that had been identified for services to execute better communication for a clearer picture, which were part of the lessons learned. The Detective Superintendent for Public Protection for the Metropolitan Police added that there was evidence within the report of multi-agency working, information sharing, and help offered, though agencies needed to work on supporting non-engagement and how they could assist families to engage fruitfully.
- In the question around flawed decision making, how had this been addressed; also, the multi-agency working was often an issue in case reviews where it was often said there would be improvement in the future, thus concrete plans and stronger recommendations was required; further, were there any signs for support to the mother and what support was available to her? The Head of Service for Children Looked After and Care Experienced acknowledged the comments raised and highlighted that serious incident reviews were rare and found flawed decisions. The

decision taken to not conduct a child protection assessment was based on the information provided at the time of a referral, and upon review, the Children's Services recognised that they should not have had to rely on health services assessment of an action for their involvement to take place, adding that better communication should have been pursued by themselves; further, the conclusion of a no further action from Children's Services should have been sent back to the referrer. Going forward these errors had been tightened, which had been part of the lessons learned. The Safeguarding Partnership had also been conducting a series of ongoing audits to ensure lessons learned were maintained.

At 7:35pm Councillor Alisa Flemming attended the meeting.

- In the question around the clarity of partnership communication, would information such as, a child had not been seen by a health visitor for two years, be shared between agencies? The Head of Service for Children Looked After and Care Experienced highlighted that agencies do become involved with families and end their involvement after a period. Working with partnered agencies historic information would be shared, though GP records were strictly confidential. There were known information sharing issues with what could and could not be shared, which often affected how information was gathered and concluded, and this issue was amongst lessons to be learned to be better.
- In a supplementary question, not attending medical checks was deemed as an indicator of neglect, does Croydon have a policy in place around children who did not attend their medical checks? The Chief Nurse for Croydon CCG and Croydon Health Services confirmed that there were policies in places for non-attendance of medical appointments where risk management would be addressed to assess the next steps. In addition to professional curiosity, staff also would need to be trained on identifying and understanding risks to ensure the policies in place were followed through.

In the question around the status of a child in need, and supervision model for social workers, the Head of Service for Children Looked After and Care Experienced informed that in relation to a child in need, there was no push for service involvement and a choice was also given to families, though, this choice was omitted if there were safeguarding risks. In relation to supervision, this was taken in two-fold on a monthly frequency, (1) to discuss children and young person in cases in addition to and (2) personal supervision to discuss personal coping and pressures, viewpoints for reflection, challenges and sharing risk.

In further discussion, the Chair highlighted that there needed to be more evidence of improved communication between partners and in addition the multi-agency plan needed to be visible. Also, that performance indicators was to be presented to further evidence the changes following the review of multi-

agency partnership, as this would review at the way in which communications between safeguarding partners had improved, visits were better managed, and other risks mentioned.

The Corporate Director for Children, Young People and Education, Debbie Jones, addressed the Sub-Committee and shared that upon review the work that had happened since the incident had been evidenced by the regulator and inspection which took place in 2021. Further, that the purpose of a multi-agency plan was to be regularly reviewed and tested through various assurance mechanisms internally and externally, and the evidence of changes to the process was the work undertaken by the safeguarding partnership and safeguarding partners, which included Ofsted.

The Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Families, Alisa Flemming, addressed the Sub-Committee and indicated upon reflection that there had been a change of processes following the outcome of the serious review, particularly around the front door services in Children Services, in the way data was shared, and gaining consent for information to be shared was also received. The time it took to share information or follow up with a decision from a referral was also recognised as a factor for change, and that the performance indicators would better reflect the evidence of changes made.

In conclusion, the Sub-Committee noted that lessons had been learned, nevertheless, highlighted that they would like to see more:

- Evidence of improved communication happening between agency partnership.
- Better communication of how missed appointments was received, and evidence of risks improved.
- Evidence of improving fathers' involvement and for fathers to understand their rights.
- Frequent reviewing of concerned cases, which would provide insight in department position, service provision and allocation of resources.
- The importance to explore further in the lessons learned and feedback at the future Sub-Committee meetings.
- That the recommendation in 5A of the report was adhered to.

The Chair thanked all the officers present for their contribution to this item.

24/22 Cabinet Member for Children, Young People & Learning

The Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Learning introduced the item and outlined the details in the [presentation](#).

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

A Member had asked a question in relation to historic pressures on Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) and the concerns on the possible arrival of Ukrainian children and others bringing more pressures in this area. The Cabinet Member responded that Croydon had a higher proportion of care experience leavers than any other London boroughs, and the impact of the current situation in Ukraine was in focus, where the Council's responsibility was to be a borough of sanctuary and support children and families and focus on balance and fair funding. The role of the Council was to ensure that children and young people had the opportunity to access emotional support and education, and support residents in this too. The Corporate Director for Children, Young People and Education added that though support given to UASC was good, with lessons learned, those residents who would open their home would also require support in supporting USAC families, and this included a lot of funding.

A Member had asked a question in relation to the Council's finances as Children's Services had the largest budget spend and how officers were held to account for delivering current and future budget. The Cabinet Member responded that there were various ways the budget was reviewed, which included regular meetings with the Director of Social Care, Corporate Director for Children and Young People, Cabinet meetings, the Assurance Panel, and Children's Commissioning, where a line of sight and discussions of recruitment, retention, reviewing pressures and forecasting, spot purchasing and a sustainable model of delivering services were regularly reviewed. Additionally, meeting with social workers and EMPIRE (who have a standing invitation to the Corporate Parenting Panels) the Cabinet Member would listen and understand the impact of decisions and changes made; the front door and Early Help services were also recognised as working closely with partners ensured appropriate measures were taken.

A Member had a question in relation to the task and finishing group and the highest risk areas which may affect the budget that could be reviewed by the new Sub-Committee in the new municipal year. The Cabinet Member responded that the issues of county lines, exclusion rates, serious youth violence, and adultification were amongst issues to be addressed, as well as the impact of the covid-19 pandemic affecting mental harm and trauma, sexual exploitation, the impact of social media relating to bullying and safe usage and supporting traveller families in accessing education. The Corporate Director for Children, Young People and Education added that the post pandemic hidden harm was an area where there was a rise in demand with significant pressures has yet to come.

A Member had asked a question in relation to the disproportional impact of black families with poverty and exclusion of all forms and the impact of covid-19 pandemic which shown a light of widened inequalities. The educational, health and poverty gap was enormous, what could be done to lessen and minimise the impact and what programmes could be put in place. The Corporate Director for Children, Young People and Education responded that schools had been working with families continuously throughout the pandemic and thus experienced to address any arising problem. There was always

learning to capitalise on to be ahead. In terms of disproportionality issues, this had been heightened since Child Q, and comments raised had been acknowledged. A lot of the work had made attempts to address the issue which was a challenge as the aim was to be ahead instead of reacting to an issue, and that a contingency was in place for what was to come. The Cabinet Member added that children had often said 'nobody cares', although unbeknown to them were people in higher position who would stand up for them, and thus for children, families and young people to see that people were held to account would help see the work and change in place.

A Member had asked a question in relation to the decline in numbers of children coming into the system, falling school rolls and schools with vacant places. There was a worry that schools were kept open or that there were too many vacancies, and this was not being addressed. The Cabinet Member responded that this shared concern had been a focus in discussions and highlighted that it was difficult to reduce the number of school places when the numbers of children in Croydon continue to increase. The Director of Education added that this focus had seen briefings shared at Cabinet meeting which looked at options, and there had also been discussion with schools to support in decision making. It was also noted that this issue was national and not just a Croydon issue.

A Member had made a comment addressing that a child should be legally represented on life impact situations in relation to losing education. The Cabinet Member responded addressing the importance of having an appropriate adult and how support young people were supported. Though it was difficult to always have legal representation, it was acknowledged that children and families would benefit from strengthened provision that gave them a voice and having someone to liaise on their behalf, in addition to making families aware of support at an earliest time.

The Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Learning thanked the Sub-Committee for the last four years in addressing the challenges and reflection in a firm and robust scrutiny, which had welcomed growth within her role. Benefits of constructive challenges had been welcomed by the Sub-committee and the openness and challenges were also applauded. This had set better support to making a difference to children's lives.

25/22 What Difference has this Meeting made to Croydon's Children

The Sub-Committee reflected over the last four years highlighting the leadership of the Chair and Vice-Chair in their roles to sustain scrutiny in Children, Young People and Learning following the Ofsted report in 2018 – which helped monitor the performances in Children's Services.

The Sub-Committee reflected on the covid-19, budgets, and serious case reviews where they challenged services and officers in account for improved services for the borough.

The Sub-Committee highlighted the difficulties experienced throughout the years which helped shaped genuine engagement.

The Sub-Committee had been purposeful to hear from a diverse group and the challenges had been very good.

The Sub-Committee welcomed hearing the voice of young children was great through visits and to foresee future engagement in this area.

The Sub-Committee welcomed new topics for the new Sub-Committee to review.

The meeting ended at 9.23 pm

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Date:

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For General Release

REPORT TO:	Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee Date: 21st June 2022
SUBJECT:	Children, Young People and Education Directorate overview
LEAD OFFICER:	Debbie Jones, interim Corporate Director, Children, Young People and Education
CABINET MEMBER:	Cllr Maria Gatland, Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Learning
PERSON LEADING AT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING:	Debbie Jones, interim Corporate Director, Children, Young People and Education

ORIGIN OF ITEM:	The Scrutiny Sub-Committee will receive an overview of the Children, Young People and Education Directorate to assist in work programming for the rest of the year.
BRIEF FOR THE COMMITTEE:	This report provides an overview of the Children, Young People and Education Directorate to inform the development of the Committee's work programme including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key priorities for the year • Budget • Performance • Key risks and mitigations

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 A Children, Young People and Education (CYPE) Directorate Plan 2022-24 has recently been developed to refresh the vision, values and priorities for the Directorate. The plan sets out the key priorities for the Directorate over 2022-23 and is aligned with the Croydon Renewal Plan and the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS).
- 1.2 Although the outturn figures have not yet been finalised across the Council, by August 2021 directorate monitoring indicated a significant underspend against budget was expected. Detailed analysis at month 10 examined the reasons for this underspend to identify potential budget risks for 2022/23 as well as areas where further savings could be made.

- 1.3 The Directorate's performance is monitored and reported each month against a basket of indicators across children's social care and education as part of the Croydon Renewal Plan performance management arrangements. More detailed divisional performance scorecards are reviewed on a monthly basis by Directors. Bespoke scorecards can be developed to support the CYP Scrutiny Committee's work programme and reported to each meeting to provide check and challenge.
- 1.4 Key financial and service delivery risks have been identified as part of the above developments. Mitigating actions have been identified which will be reviewed and where necessary amended as part of the Directorate performance management arrangements.

2. KEY PRIORITIES FOR THE YEAR ACROSS THE DIRECTORATE

- 2.1 The Directorate Plan is underpinned by detailed service plans led by a Head of Service and overseen by each Director. The Plan is included at Appendix 1. It includes the following vision, values and priorities:

Directorate vision

We will support families to keep children and young people safely at home, and work with education providers to offer every child and young person an opportunity to develop, learn and be inspired.

Directorate values

- Promoting equality and inclusion in the community and in our workforce
- Listening to and acting on the voices of children and young people, and celebrating their achievements
- We are one team – across the Directorate, the Council, with our partners and our community
- We will tackle difficult issues together, across the Directorate and across the Council

Top directorate priorities

- Continue to keep children and young people safe from harm, offering help early through partnership working, with sustained improvement in the quality of practice in early help and children's social care.
- Develop local SEND provision so that more children and young people with SEND attend and thrive in Croydon schools.
- Working across the Council, and with our partners, implement a one-council response to the issue of Serious Youth Violence.

- 2.2 The Directorate Plan is underpinned by detailed service plans held by Heads of Service and overseen by Directors. The Directorate Plan does not duplicate these service-level plans but rather sets out the key priorities to achieve the Directorate vision and to embed the Croydon Renewal Plan principles in the Directorate's work against the following six themes:

1. Service transformation and redesign
 2. Working in Partnership
 3. Ensuring all children and young people can develop, learn and be inspired
 4. Quality assurance and challenge
 5. Listening to the voices of children and young people
 6. Valuing our Workforce
- 2.3 Work is well advanced to establish refreshed arrangements across the Directorate to monitor and grip progress against the plan's priorities. This includes a new internal control board, the CYPE Practice and Performance Board, to replace the Children's Continuous Improvement Board that came to a close in May 2022.

3. BUDGET

3.1 CYPE has one of the largest service budgets alongside Adult Social Care and Health. In 2021/22 this was £107.217m broken down as follows:

- Children's social care £78.689m (incl. UASC budget)
- Education £12.533m (ex. DSG)
- Quality, commissioning and performance £4.935m (ex. commissioning)

3.2 The forecast outturn for CYPE at month 10 was an underspend of £15.5m. Although the final outturn figures are not yet available significant variation from this position is not expected. The underspend breaks down as:

-£14.2m children's social care
-£1.3m education

3.3 A detailed analysis using the period 10 forecast was completed in April 2022 to understand the root causes. Key contributors were identified as follows:

Children looked after placements -£4.2m
Monthly budget monitoring identified this in August 2021 and led to the agreement to give up £3m of the growth allocated in 2021/22. This is due to the quicker than expected reduction in the number of local children in care compared to the forecast for 2021/22.

Children with disabilities, care leavers -£2m
A deep dive showed a reduced uptake of short breaks and home-based care by families compared to the budget. Feedback from families suggested this was a consequence of the pandemic and the desire to shield children with additional health needs from exposure.

For the leaving care service additional grant income not budgeted for led to a corresponding reduction in General Fund spend.

Legal costs -£0.1m
This is to be expected as the number of legal proceedings have reduced over 2021/22 including legal challenges on unaccompanied children's status including age assessments.

Social Work with Families Service -£2.8m

Almost half of this variance is due to systems issues with over £1m of spend from previous years wrongly attributed to 2021/22. In addition, reduced demand for some specialist services is linked to the impact of the pandemic. For example, 12 residential mother and baby assessments were budgeted for. In fact, only 1 court-ordered assessment took place releasing £1.2m by year end. Similarly fewer supervised contact sessions for parents and children in care were commissioned compared to the budget forecast

Running cost budgets -£1.5m

An interrogation of non-staffing codes across all services identified underspent budgets that collectively make up a substantial forecast underspend. For example, some of these relate to premises costs where the council has given up a site. However with the reopening of council offices, some of this resource will need to be deployed to staff children's receptions at BWH and the Turnaround Centre

Salaries – children's social care and education -£3.8m

Front line teams have carried significant vacancies across the year. The workforce report for March 2022 shows a total of 26 vacant and uncovered posts across children's social care. This is a particular issue in the family assessment and social work with families services but there are vacancies across all services.

Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children -£0.2m

A reorganisation of the social work service working with all under and over 18s in care has led to a mis-coding of some of the staffing costs for 2021/22 which will be rectified in the budget build for 2022/23.

Education Division -£0.8m

This is made up of Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF) budget to cover the period of time the service was unable to trade due to the pandemic and also the Education Traded Service's profit.

- 3.4 The risks and required mitigations that link service risks to budget implications for 2022/23 are address in section 4 below.

4. MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2021- 25

- 4.1 The MTFs commits the directorate to making substantial savings over 2021/25 totalling £14.176m. This is set against growth of £16.343m in 2021/22. As stated above £3m of that growth has been relinquished and included in the savings for 2022/23. Full details of the MTFs growth and savings can be seen in Appendix 2.
- 4.2 The savings have been front loaded across the council. In 2021/22 CYPE achieved planned savings of £9.052m. Progress, risks and mitigations as well as further opportunities are challenged each month at a formal MTFs Assurance Meeting chaired by the Chief Executive and Corporate Director Finance. In addition the Improvement and Assurance Panel has a standing monthly meeting with the interim Corporate Director CYPE. The Panel's particular focus is on the service redesign activities needed to deliver the ambitious savings over the remaining lifetime of the programme.

5 PERFORMANCE

- 5.1 At the time of publication the May data in children's social care and education had not been finalised for review by Directors. These will be circulated, and key messages presented at the Committee meeting.
- 5.2 To support the work of the CYP Scrutiny Committee a basket of indicators can be developed into a scorecard focused on the priorities in the Committee's work programme and reported to each meeting to provide an opportunity to review and challenge performance and practice.

6 KEY RISKS AND MITIGATIONS

Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children

- 6.1 Work is underway to review and where necessary update the underlying assumptions in the financial model that identifies the budget gap due to the disproportionate number of children and in particular care leavers accommodated in Croydon.
- 6.2 Whilst the number of unaccompanied children coming into Croydon's care has continued to reduce the number and proportion of care leavers aged 18+ has not reduced at the same rate.
- 6.3 More detailed financial modelling and the impact on future budgets is being undertaken to ensure reliable and accurate figures underpin any projected budget gap.

DSG High Needs Block

- 6.4 The High Needs Block of the DSG is used to support the education of CYP with special educational needs and disabilities (with EHCPs and SEN support), ensuring that we have appropriate SEN provision within the borough. The budget funds the place funding and top up funding for individual pupils in their education placements. By way of context, we have CYP place in borough in maintained schools, special schools, Enhanced Learning provision and non-maintained independent schools outside of the borough. Over 90% of the HNB is used to fund these various educational institutions to provide SEN educational provision to Croydon students aged 0 to 25.
- 6.5 There is provision within the HNB to fund SEN services provided by Croydon. What should not be funded by the HNB is the statutory services that Croydon is providing in the administration of SEN provision and the assessment process of CYP. We must ensure that we both fund places and have staffing levels to administer the process and deliver against our Local Area SEND Strategy.
- 6.6 Croydon has an increasing HNB deficit (£28m) which will shortly come under close scrutiny from the DFE through the 'Safety Valve' programme. The DFE will no doubt argue that some HNB expenditure (staffing) should be funded from Croydon's General Fund. This risk is assessed at being between £1m and £2m. Corporate Finance have been requested to set up an earmarked reserve of £1.5m to cover this.

Children's care system

- 6.7 The number of children in care is fluid and varies month on month as does the type of placement as this is closely matched to individual children's needs.
- 6.8 There are significant safeguarding risks if children at risk of harm are not being identified. This has been a feature of the pandemic, particularly with mainstream schools in lockdown and the majority of pupils being educated at home. This is often described as hidden harm. For example, the numbers of local children coming into care each month over the last year has been variable over the past 12 months compared to a steady reduction over 2019-21.
- 6.9 In addition, the financial pressures on families post-pandemic may well exacerbate strains and stresses on the most vulnerable. Over the past six months the service has seen an uplift in children on child protection plans; at the end of April Croydon's rate was higher than the Q3 London average. This puts pressure on staff caseloads in a service area where there are a number of uncovered vacancies.
- 6.10 The service needs to anticipate and where possible mitigate an uplift in the number of children coming into care through work with families of children on the edge of care and more targeted earlier help.
- 6.11 Croydon has dipped significantly below the rate for statistical neighbour boroughs. If the council were at this benchmark rate per 10,000 there would be an additional 44 in our care. Using the average annual costs of care this represents a potential financial pressure of £2.395m in 2022/23.

Recruitment and retention

- 6.12 Recruitment to specialist roles such as education psychologists, Education Health and Care Plan co-ordinators and experienced social workers is a challenge for the directorate. Locum staff are costly and without a longer term commitment relationships with children, school staff and families can be hard to build.
- 6.13 Alongside the MTFs savings invest to save proposals have been carefully costed with benchmarking against regional and competitor LAs to create recruitment and retention strategies for these hard to recruit roles. This will directly benefit children, improve performance in some areas where caseloads are becoming too high and provide better value for money.

Systems issues

- 6.14 Almost £5.6m of the underspend in 2021/22 could be attributed to systems issues where spend was charged to the wrong year. A base budgeting exercise is planned, with the support of the DFE-funded Financial Improvement Adviser, to mitigate against these errors in the 2022/23 budget.

7. ADDITIONAL SERVICE RISKS AND THEIR MITIGATIONS

Placement Costs

- 7.1 Unit costs for care placements continue to rise and legislative changes regarding the use of unregulated provision from November 2021 have increased demand

for already scarce regulated provision, driving increases in a market which is dominated by private providers.

- 7.2 The challenge is acute in London where there are 14% of children in care nationally however only 5% of residential provision. Regional commissioning groups are developing in strength and the national Care Review has made recommendations in relation to the commissioning and provision of care placements, however these will take time to have effect.
- 7.3 Our Placements Team within the Children's Social Care Division works closely with providers through commissioning frameworks to achieve best value and keep our children close to home, however the strength of the providers means that costs may rise placing a pressure on the budget.
- 7.4 The children's integrated commissioning team leads on a programme of work to refresh commissioning frameworks to procure as efficiently as possible, including in partnership with other south London councils to maximise the joint buying power.

Children's Centre provision

- 7.5 Due to the lack of a suitable tender to deliver Children's Centre services in the South of the borough we are proposing to bring services in-house. If this is approved there will be pressure on leadership capacity within the education division. However it does provide an opportunity to develop and pilot the family hub model in this part of the borough.

Homes for Ukraine scheme

- 7.6 Nationally there are increasing reports of children arriving in the UK unaccompanied by a relative or friend and therefore in need of care and the legal status of child looked after under the Children Act 1989. To date no children have been identified in Croydon however it is likely to occur as the impact of the war in Ukraine takes effect.
- 7.7 It is not yet clear whether the National Transfer Scheme for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children would apply to children arriving through the Homes for Ukraine route. The Directorate contributes significant resource to the operational and strategic leadership of the council's response to the Homes for Ukraine scheme. While central government funding is available recruitment timescales mean that there is an immediate impact as staff are diverted from their substantive roles whilst temporary additional capacity is put in place.
- 7.8 There are a significant number of statutory school age children and young people with their families and this has put added pressure on both the admissions and parenting teams. This will be mitigated by bringing in additional capacity to the admissions team to alleviate some of this pressure.

APPENDICES:

Appendix 1

CYPE Directorate Plan 2022-24

Appendix 2

CYPE MTFS overview 2021-25

Appendix 3 - (to follow)

CYPE Performance extracted from the Croydon Renewal Plan performance report, May 2022

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:

None

CONTACT OFFICER:

Debbie Jones - Corporate Director, Children, Young People and Education

CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND EDUCATION DIRECTORATE PLAN

2022-24

DIRECTORATE VISION

We will support families to keep children and young people safely at home, and work with education providers to offer every child and young person an opportunity to develop, learn and be inspired.

DIRECTORATE VALUES

- Promoting equality and inclusion in the community and in our workforce
- Listening to and acting on the voices of children and young people, and celebrating their achievements
- We are one team – across the Directorate, the Council, with our partners and our community
- We will tackle difficult issues together, across the Directorate and across the Council

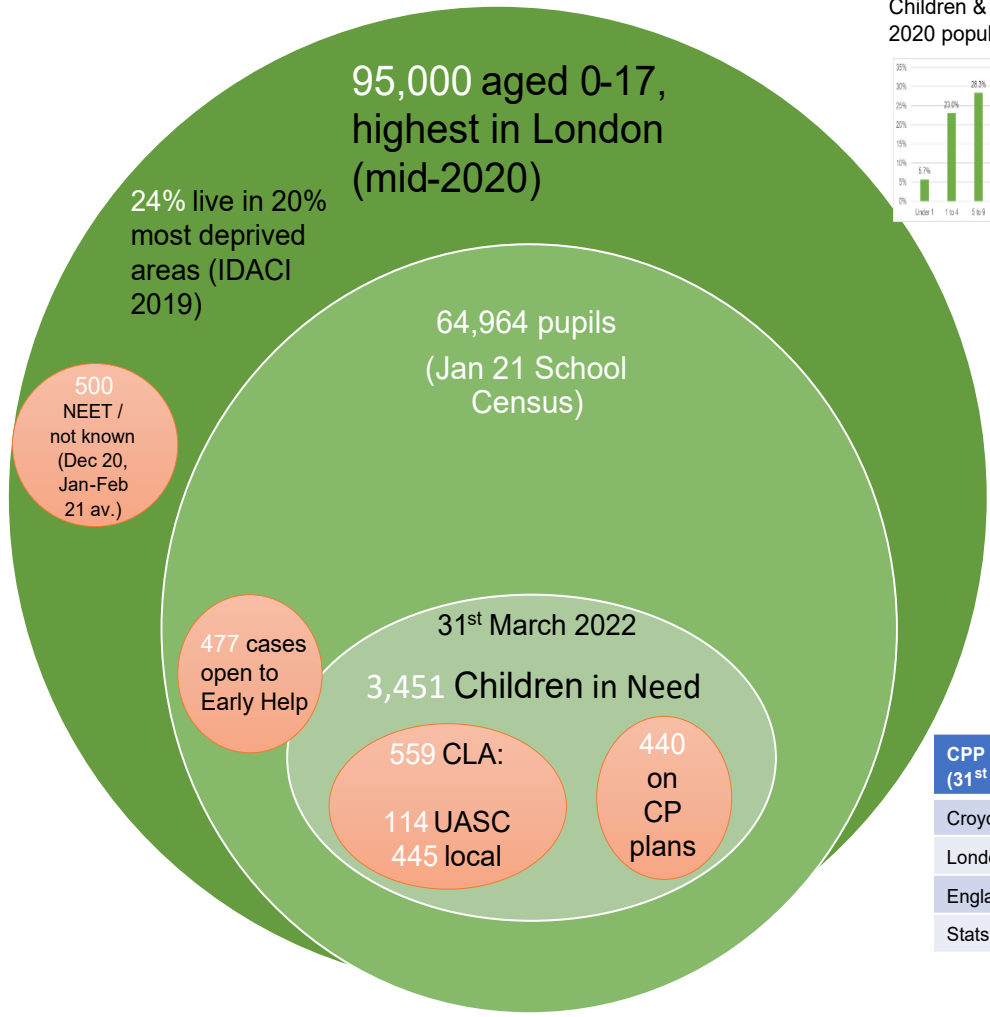
TOP DIRECTORATE PRIORITIES

1. Continue to keep children and young people safe from harm, offering help early through partnership working, with sustained improvement in the quality of practice in early help and children's social care.
2. Develop local SEND provision so that more children and young people with SEND attend and thrive in Croydon schools.
3. Working across the Council, and with our partners, implement a one-council response to the issue of Serious Youth Violence.

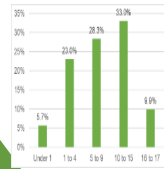
This is an exciting time for our directorate. Together we are committed to improving the outcomes for children and families in Croydon. We recognise that to do this we need to work with each other and across the council, as well as with our partners – health, the police, schools, the voluntary sector as well as with our most important partners: children, young people and their families.

We have a talented, committed and passionate workforce across the directorate, all of whom work in different but equally important ways to support Croydon's children and young people to achieve the good outcomes they deserve. As we move into a new phase where we build on the improvement work undertaken and systems and processes now in place to maintain efficient and effective good quality services at value for money, we need to ensure we have the support and opportunities in place for staff to develop and progress in Croydon.

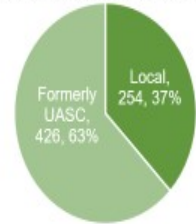
Children and Young People in Croydon



Children & Young People by age band (mid - 2020 populations estimates)



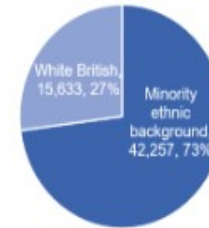
786 Care leavers (31st March 2022)



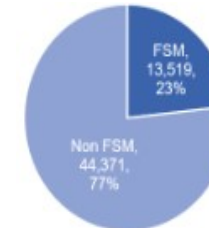
CPP - Rate per 10,000 population (31st March 2021)

Croydon	29
London	36
England	41
Stats. Neigh	38

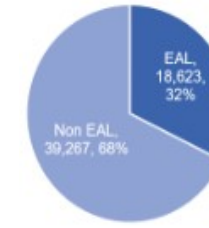
Pupil characteristics, Jan 21



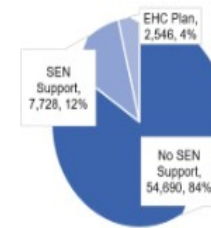
Minority ethnic background	
Croydon	73%
London	73%
England	34%
Stats. Neigh.	77%



FSM	
Croydon	23%
London	19%
England	21%
Stats. Neigh.	21%



EAL	
Croydon	32%
London	44%
England	19%
Stats. Neigh.	46%



The Children, Young People & Education (CYPE) Directorate is made up of three divisions:

- Children’s Social Care and Early Help (Director, Róisín Madden)
- Education (Director, Shelley Davies)
- Quality, Commissioning, Performance & Improvement and Deputy DCS (Director, Kerry Crichlow)

CONTEXT – Croydon and National

CROYDON CONTEXT

The service transformation that lifted children’s services from an inadequate Ofsted rating to overall good in March 2020 was underpinned by significant investment to drive the transformation of services. The children in care and care leavers services were rated as requires improvement and Ofsted made 4 key recommendations for continued improvement across the service.

In June 2021 Croydon received an Ofsted focused visit which looked at the Front Door and Early Help and reported that despite the immense challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, the significant changes to the permanent senior leadership team and the considerable, ongoing and far-reaching local authority financial challenges, staff at the front door were making safe and appropriate decisions on most referrals.

In October 2021 the SEND Local Area inspection found that leaders in Croydon understand the context of the area well and, especially since 2018, have used their knowledge to develop a coherent and ambitious SEND strategy. This has improved the pace of improvement and means that leaders are tackling the right things in the right order. Croydon is one of the few areas that was not required to complete a statement of action.

Croydon sees a disproportionate number of unaccompanied asylum seeking children arriving due to the location of the Home Office’s Lunar House. Following lengthy negotiations with the Department for Education, Home Office and Department for Levelling Up and Communities a grant award of £2.357m was secured in August 2021 to address the substantial, additional and

disproportionate costs falling to the council in 2021-22 as a result of the location of Lunar House in the borough. Modelling suggests that even with this grant, there will continue to be a gap in funding over the lifetime of this plan, and we will continue to engage with central government in order to highlight this.

Over 2021, significant work was undertaken to assess how we deliver children's social care services in Croydon in order to reduce the cost of services and work within the council's available resources, delivering ambitious savings as part of the MTFS. Recent benchmarking is showing that if the MTFS savings are achieved as planned, Croydon will have moved from one of the highest children's services spenders to below London average by 2023-24 if unaccompanied asylum seeking children costs are removed.

Croydon children's services are therefore in a much stronger position than two years ago. The directorate now needs to focus on the next phase: building on the positive feedback from regulatory visits and addressing the recommendations and learning points, retaining its sharp focus and grip on spend, and maximising opportunities with its partners to support children and young people to achieve the very best outcomes possible.

National Context

SEND Green paper

On 29 March the Government published the [SEND Review: Right support, right place, right time](#), a consultation on the special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and alternative provision system in England. The consultation sets out proposed reforms to the SEND and alternative provision (AP) system that seek to address three key challenges:

- poor outcomes for children and young people with SEN or in alternative provision
- navigating the SEND system and alternative provision is not a positive experience for children young people and their families
- despite unprecedented investment the system is not delivering value for money for children young people and families

The plans to reform the system will be open for a 13-week public consultation, and Croydon will be submitting a response.

Schools White Paper

On 28 March the Government published the [‘Opportunity for all Strong schools with great teachers for your child’](#) White Paper. The White Paper sets out proposed reforms to the education system focussed on providing an excellent teacher for every child, delivering high standards of curriculum, behaviour and attendance, targeted support for every child that needs it and; a stronger and fairer school system.

The Schools White Paper sets out a series of new measures to support the delivery of these ambitions, including:

- Schools will offer a minimum school week of 32.5 hours by September 2023
- Ofsted will inspect every school by 2025, including the backlog of ‘outstanding’ schools that haven’t been inspected for many years
- By 2030 all children will benefit from being taught in a school in, or in the process of joining, a strong multi-academy trust, which will help transform underperforming schools and deliver the best possible outcomes for children
- At least £100m to put the Education Endowment Foundation on a long-term footing so they can continue to evaluate and spread best practice in education across the country
- Councils will be able to form and run Multi-Academy Trusts under the provision of this White Paper.

Health White Paper - Joining up Care for People, Places and Populations

The Health White Paper [Joining up care for people, places and populations](#) , sets out the government's proposals for health and care integration

Integrated care is about giving people the support they need, joined up across local councils, the NHS, and other partners. It removes traditional divisions between hospitals and family doctors, between physical and mental health, and between NHS and council services. In the past, these divisions have meant that too many people experienced disjointed care.

Integrated care systems (ICSs) are new partnerships between the organisations that meet health and care needs across an area, to coordinate services and to plan in a way that improves population health and reduces inequalities between different groups.

We are moving to an ICS from July. This will mean that the CCG ceases to exist and instead we plan and co-ordinate these services through the Integrated Care System. This will impact on commissioning, which is an integrated team, with changes expected from April 2023. This will be an opportunity to develop an integrated approach to meeting the needs of children and young people.

Children's Social Care: National Reviews

In May 2022 the Independent Review of Children's Social Care and the National Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel's review into the deaths of Arthur Labinjo-Hughes and Star Hobson were published. The content of and recommendations contained within these reviews will take some time for local and national social care systems to consider and digest, both individually and as a profession. Opportunities to reflect and discuss in depth what the recommendations mean for Croydon and explore what they will mean for the children, young people and families who are at the centre of our work are being created. Both reviews represent an important opportunity to shape a new future for children's social care and will shape the further development of this Directorate Plan.

The Independent Care Review report can be found [here](#)

The National Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel's report can be found [here](#)

DIRECTORATE PLAN

This is the high-level CYPE Directorate plan. The details that underpin these high-level actions can be found in the relevant service plans

Theme: Service transformation and redesign			
Action	Lead	Timeframe	Expected outcome
Develop a Family Hub model which integrates Children's Centre functions with earlier help for children and young people	Shelley Davies	March 2023	Families are able to access a wide range of support and earlier interventions
Extend the locality SEND support model across the borough	Shelley Davies	March 2023	More children and young people with SEND are educated in schools in the borough (mainstream?)
Co-produce and publish our Early Years Strategy along with a plan to translate it into action.	Shelley Davies	December 2022	More children achieve the best possible health, wellbeing and education outcomes from pre-conception to age 5
Developing Young Croydon to provide an integrated and holistic response to service delivery, ensuring easy access to a range of interventions. Helping young people at an earlier stage, working systemically and collaboratively to keep families together safely whilst preventing young people from entering the care system	Roisin Madden	March 2023	Young people will remain living at home with their families safely, whilst being supported by appropriate services; leading to reductions in serious youth violence, young people open to the Youth Offending Service and young people coming into care
Transform early help in Croydon to deliver innovative services and achieve value for money	Kerry Crichlow	December 2022	Families access the right support at the right time and referrals for statutory assessment support and intervention reduce

Review the Children's Social Care Front Door to optimise triaging and signposting to other preventative services where this is a better option for the child than referral into social care.	Roisin Madden	August 2022	Families receive appropriate support at the right time. Potentially reduced costs as more children are signposted into support other than children's social care where this is appropriate.
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Theme: Working in Partnership

Action	Lead	Timeframe	Expected outcome
Work across the council and with our partners to develop a one council response to reduce serious youth violence in Croydon	Debbie Jones	On going	There is a reduction in serious youth violence in Croydon with a joined-up system of response, reduced duplication, and improved use of resource and opportunities
Work with schools to develop and agree an Education Partnership across the borough	Shelley Davies	December 2022	A well-developed and appropriate traded services offer to schools that is cost neutral to LBC
Support and enable the partnership review of the overall effectiveness of the CSCP	Kerry Crichlow	July 2022	The Partnership is able to evaluate itself, draw its conclusions and address recommendations for change

Theme: Ensuring all children and young people can develop, learn and be inspired

Action	Lead	Timeframe	Expected outcome
Review the Fair Access Panel processes	Shelley Davies	September 2022	Ensure all local schools are engaged in a Fair Access process which has been developed and agreed by the schools

			Reducing the number of managed pupil moves which take place outside of the agreed process
Agree data sharing across education provision	Shelley Davies	September 2022	Improved quality of local management information and reducing safeguarding risks
Develop and extend the use of Team Around the School	Shelley Davies	September 2022	Better shared oversight of vulnerable pupils by strengthening schools awareness and access to appropriate support

Theme: Quality Assurance and Challenge

Action	Lead	Timeframe	Expected outcome
Ensure thorough inspection and regulator visit readiness across the directorate	Kerry Crichlow	Ongoing	The Directorate has an accurate assessment of its strengths and weaknesses and sound plans in place to address
Ensure inspection recommendation responses are tracked and appropriately evidenced	Kerry Crichlow	Ongoing	Service improvement includes the evidence to address recommendations
Establish refreshed governance to monitor and provide robust challenge to performance and practice across the directorate	Kerry Crichlow	July 2022	Performance and practice challenges are identified and mitigated at an early stage, successes are celebrated and shared
Deploy data insights to shape interventions and track the impact of services	Kerry Crichlow	September 2022	A robust evidence base for the impact of services

Theme: Listening to the Voices of Children and Young People

Action	Lead	Timeframe	Expected outcome
Establish a Voice of the Child working group across the CYPE Directorate to listen to feedback and engage with CYP and their families	Roisin Madden	March 2023	CYP voices are heard, and shape and inform service development and commissioning

Theme: Valuing our Workforce

Action	Lead	Timeframe	Expected outcome
Engage with and listen to our workforce, recognising the diversity of our workforce and the value that brings, and working towards ensuring equality of opportunity for all members of staff	Debbie Jones	Ongoing	Continued engagement and communication to ensure our workforce feels able to raise difficult issues and more feel happy and proud to work in Croydon CYPE Directorate
Develop a directorate approach to recruiting and retaining staff, particularly in hard to recruit, specialist disciplines	Kerry Crichlow	September 2022	An increasingly stable, dedicated workforce by reducing reliance on agency staff and the costs associated with this. Each permanent recruit will represent a saving to the Council.

Theme: Ensuring value for the Croydon pound

Action	Lead	Timeframe	Expected outcome
Develop and implement a robust approach to benchmarking services for cost and volume	Kerry Crichlow	September 2022	Assurance on quality and value for money of services
Implement our plan to increase the number of foster carers employed by the council, enabling	Roisin Madden	Ongoing	Cost reduction in IFA employed foster carers, and a stronger foster carer

us to reduce costs of funding foster carers employed through IFAs, and to focus on ensuring high quality support and training is in place			workforce who can better support our vulnerable children and young people
Capitalise on our buying power as a large authority to secure best value from commissioned services for children and young people	Kerry Crichlow	Ongoing	Benchmarked care service costs put Croydon at or below comparator averages
Maintain a robust budget monitoring plan for the High Needs Block, and continue to implement the high needs deficit recovery plan	Shelley Davies	Ongoing	Recovering the high needs budget deficit within five years

Appendix 2 CYPE MTFs 2021-25

Ref	Saving Title	(21/22) £000s	22/23 £000s	23/24 £000s	24/25 £000s
CFE Sav 02	Reconfiguration of Early Help Services	(424)	(185)	-	-
CFE Sav 04	Review of Children with Disabilities Care Packages	(124)	(124)	(124)	-
CFE Sav 05	Reduction in Spend on Children in Care	(794)	(1654)	(1385)	-
CFE Sav 06	Review Support for Young People Where Appeal Rights Exhausted	(295)	(560)	(142)	-
CFE Sav 07	Improve Practice System Efficiency	(1,065)	(1,450)	(385)	-
CFE 09	Review Children's Centres Delivery Model	(660)	(240)	-	-
CFE 10	Reduce Non-Statutory Education Functions	(557)	(221)	-	-
COR 1	Fees and Charges	-	(1)	-	-
CFE SAV 04	Increase the Education Traded Offer		(65)	(65)	-
CFE SAV 02	Youth Service review		-	392	-
TBA	Additional Grant Income - Staying Put		(400)		
O/S Form 11	Implementation of new senior structures		(91)		
O/S Form 01	Contract Savings		(71)	-	-
CFE SAV 01	Previously Applied Growth reduction	-	(3000)	(335)	(335)
O/S Form 01	NHS Funding		(790)	-	-
CFE SAV 05	Capitalisation of System Team Staff Costs		(216)	216	-
O/S Form 06	Refocusing Public Health funding - New Youth & Wellbeing Offer		(300)		
O/S Form 06	Refocusing Public Health funding - Parenting Programmes		(100)	-	-
O/S Form 06	Refocusing Public Health funding - Parenting Programmes		-	(465)	
CFE SAV 06	Develop Family Support Centres and introduce external funding		-	-	(1300)
O/S Form 20	Increase in fees and charges	(5)	(6)		
Total		(9,052)	(9,474)	(1,630)	(14,176)

Ref	Growth Title	(21/22) £000s	22/23 £000s	23/24 £000s	24/25 £000s
CFE Gro 01	Children Looked After placements – fund demographic and cost pressures	8,431	85	77	-
CFE Gro 02	Leaving Care – fund demographic and cost pressures	2,031			-
CFE Gro 03	Children with Disabilities – fund demographic and cost pressures	2,387			-
CFE Gro 08	Realignment of budgets where other funding sources have ceased	1,719			-
CFE Gro 07	Realignment of budgets 2020/21	909			-
CFE Gro 04	SEND strategy	866		-	-
TBA	Children Looked After placements – fund demographic and cost pressures		(85)	(77)	-
Total		16,343			
Net		7,291	(9,474)	(3,072)	(1,630)

