

# Scrutiny Children & Young People Sub-Committee Agenda



To: Councillor Jan Buttinger (Chair)  
Councillor Sean Fitzsimons (Vice-Chair)  
Councillors Sue Bennett, Patricia Hay-Justice, Maddie Henson,  
Maria Gatland, Bernadette Khan, Andrew Rendle, Dave Harvey,  
Elaine Jones and Leo Morrell

Reserve Members: Simon Brew, Margaret Bird, Sherwan Chowdhury,  
Patsy Cummings, Humayun Kabir, Andy Stranack and David Wood

A meeting of the **Scrutiny Children & Young People Sub-Committee** which you are hereby summoned to attend, will be held on **Tuesday, 17 October 2017** at **6.30 pm** in **F10, Town Hall, Katherine Street, Croydon CR0 1NX**

JACQUELINE HARRIS-BAKER  
Director of Law and Monitoring Officer  
London Borough of Croydon  
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Monday, 9 October 2017

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

N.B This meeting will be paperless. The agenda can be accessed online at [www.croydon.gov.uk/meetings](http://www.croydon.gov.uk/meetings)

## **AGENDA – PART A**

**1. Apologies for absence**

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

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

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 20 June 2017 as an accurate record.

**3. Disclosures of interest**

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

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

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

**5. Missing Children (Pages 13 - 24)**

**6. Work Programme 2017-2018 (Pages 25 - 26)**

**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.”

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## MEETING OF THE

### CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 19 September 2017 at 6.30pm

#### WRITTEN MINUTES – PART A

**Present:** Councillor Jan Buttinger (Chairman)  
Councillors Sean Fitzsimons, Maddie Henson, Bernadette Khan, Andrew Rendle and Andy Stranack

Elaine Jones, Diocesan co-optee  
Dave Harvey, teacher representative co-optee

**Also in attendance:**

Councillor Alisa Flemming, Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Learning

**A26/17 Apologies for absence (agenda item 1)**

There were no apologies.

**A27/17 Disclosures of interest (agenda item 2)**

There were none.

**A28/17 Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 20 June 2017 (Agenda item 3)**

The minutes were agreed.

**RESOLVED THAT:** the minutes of the meeting held on 20 June 2017 be signed as a correct record.

**A29/17 Urgent business (agenda item 4)**

There was none.

**A30/17 Exempt Items (agenda item 5)**

There were none.

**A31/17 The Ofsted inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers (agenda item 5)**

The following officers were in attendance for this item:

- Sarah Warman, Head of Commissioning and Improvement (People)
- Sarah Moorman, Director of Human Resources

The Cabinet Member gave an overview of action taken by the Council to tackle the issues highlighted in the Ofsted report. She reminded the Sub-Committee that Ofsted had made 21 recommendations on children's services, 19 of which related to front-line services.

The Cabinet Member advised members that both she and the Shadow Cabinet Member for Children and Young People would sit on the Improvement Board. She also confirmed that the Commissioner for Children's Services Eleanor Brazil would be monitoring the progress made on the Improvement Plan.

The Director of Human Resources outlined her role and reported on action taken to improve children's services. She stated that a lot of feedback had been obtained throughout the inspection, allowing the council to draw up a transitional action plan and to start implementing changes. A further two year Improvement Plan is to take over from the transitional plan to make significant improvements in children's services. The Director explained that the department would be carrying out a series of "deep dives" into areas of particular need and that the first one would focus on missing children, whose numbers are high in Croydon.

Members were advised that there had already been changes in personnel, with the appointment of a new Chair of the Safeguarding Children's Board and the replacement of the Director of Children's Services.

The Council will be required to produce a written "statement of account", the first draft of which is due to be sent to Ofsted by 3 October. Officers have been asked to ensure the action plan focuses on "the living experience of children". Ofsted is due to carry out a visit on 9 October to check on progress in improving children's services.

The teacher representative commented on the problems frequently experienced by schools in trying to access social worker support. He stated that he was encouraged that there was an Improvement Plan in place but emphasised the sense of urgency, explaining that children's social care services had been unavailable to help various pupils at risk in the borough on a number of occasions. He stated that teachers were very reluctant to call the police in such cases as they preferred to provide support to help children resolve a problem and engage with their education. He added that teachers had no issues about the professionalism of social workers but commented that there were too many delays and too high a turnover of social care staff. He hoped that improvements would progress apace so that no outside services would be called in to take over children's services.

The teacher representative highlighted the fact that the inspection report did not provide enough information on the causes underpinning poor performance in children's services and suggested that funding issues and increasing demand for services might have contributed to the problems described in the Ofsted report.

The Cabinet Member stressed the importance of the relationship between teachers and social workers. She explained that a high number of referrals to children's social

care came from schools and that social workers relied heavily on intelligence provided by schools.

The Cabinet Member echoed the teacher representative's concerns regarding increasing demand and funding issues. In particular, she stated that two letters had been sent to central government highlighting the insufficient levels of funding for unaccompanied asylum seeking children and had received no reply. She added that some short-term measures had been taken to improve matters but that the long-term prospects for resourcing services for these children's high needs were bleak.

In answer to members' concerns regarding the long-standing high turnover of social care staff, officers stated that efforts were being made to create a good working environment and an attractive package for prospective social workers, in order to improve recruitment and retention in response to Ofsted recommendations.

Members pointed out, however, that *agency* staff made their unique contribution to social work teams as they had worked in a number of different councils and brought fresh ideas to local practice.

The teacher representative stressed that he was keen to ensure unaccompanied asylum seeking children got all the support they needed despite significant funding issues. He remarked that these pupils were an asset to their schools and impressive role models to others in their classes as they overcame language barriers and other difficulties to achieve good results.

Members were pleased to hear that schools had representation on the Improvement Board. They raised concerns that referrals to social care from schools were often acknowledged but not followed up and stressed that action needed to be taken to tackle this trend. The Cabinet Member undertook to take up this issue with the Executive Director (People).

Members discussed issues relating to eligibility criteria for support services. They had come across a number of cases where schools felt such support was needed but social workers disagreed. Members stressed that if a child's needs escalated through lack of early support, the services needed to resolve his/her needs at an acute stage were usually far more costly. The Cabinet Member concurred that early help was essential to nip problems in the bud and gave assurances that work would be carried out on thresholds for support in line with Ofsted recommendations.

Members expressed concerns at the fact that children were appointed a new social worker at "transition points" in their lives and stressed the need for continuity of care. They were advised that children who were permanently looked after had far more stable support but children whose circumstances and status changed significantly were more likely to experience such changes. Officers agreed that the council needed to minimise change and that children and young people should only need to tell their story once in view of the stress association with this process.

Members enquired about the average case load of a social worker and were told that while they varied a lot, the average was about 16 cases per officer. Some frustration was expressed about the fact that work load issues had been discussed on a number of occasions by the sub-committee without leading to any subsequent improvements. Members stressed that the council's self-evaluation processes needed to be

improved to enable management to take appropriate action to tackle problems effectively.

The Cabinet Member also highlighted the need to improve information-sharing among partners and announced that a new principal social worker had been appointed to improve this and to provide better quality assurance. The Cabinet Member added that a “deep dive” might be carried out on the collection and use of data on children’s social care and services provided to them.

Members suggested that schools might have a role in educating parents on safeguarding issues through presentations at evening meetings. They observed that many black and ethnic minority parents did not have a good understanding of safeguarding issues but that this informal approach might help them to understand the child protection process better. The Cabinet Member welcomed this idea but stressed the important contribution churches and communities could make to help parents understand this better.

Members highlighted the fact that in their experience, many partners involved in multi-agency work did not understand council processes and thresholds and needed to be better involved in the process of developing support packages for children and young people. The Cabinet Member agreed that these relationships needed to be strengthened and that the relationships within the Children’s Safeguarding Board needed to be rebuilt, with improved engagement by partners in children’s plans. This includes disseminating information on the various elements of the Best Start initiative for children aged 0-5 years far more effectively.

Officers explained that a draft Improvement Plan was due to be presented to the Improvement Board on 3 October, prior to an Ofsted visit on 9 October and submission of the final plan in December. Two key challenges to be tackled in this work are 1) how to prioritise the work and 2) how to get assurances that the plan is having a real impact.

Councillors expressed some concerns regarding the Improvement Plan. Members felt confused by the fact that one part of the information given quoted work to be carried out on “three Ps”, People, Practice and Performance, while the Transitional Action Plan for the first three months after the inspection focuses on four areas, namely Strategic, Structural, Operational and Communication and that no explanation was given as to how the two action plans fitted together. Members stressed that the action needed to link in clearly with Ofsted recommendations and should be easily read by a layman so that all could understand how the council proposed to improve services and make a tangible difference to the circumstances and prospects of children at risk in the borough.

Members expressed serious concerns about the column in the report which relates to resources needed to implement improvements: they felt it contained very little information and a worrying number of rows showing “to be confirmed” or “not applicable”. They sought assurances that proposed actions would be affordable and sustainable. Officers stated that a Children’s Finance Group involving the Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Learning and the Cabinet Member for Finance and Treasury was being set up to agree budgets and tracker systems to monitor expenditure on the Improvement Plan. Members were given assurances that the budget for improvements would be ring-fenced except for some expenditure on



services for 0-25 year old children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities.

Members heard that about two thirds of Ofsted inspections of children's services in the country had led to an "Inadequate" rating, which had led to a recognition that action needed to be taken nationally to improve matters. However, sub-committee members were told that no additional funding was forthcoming in the short term.

Officers announced that the Commissioner for Children's Services would be reporting on the monitoring of improvements in December and that her report would be a public document.

Members highlighted the need for a clear "line of sight" to the frontline of services and asked how this might be improved as many stakeholders were not part of children's services. They were advised that the Commissioner and the new chair of the Croydon Safeguarding Children Board would have a major role to play in this respect. As the Ofsted recommendations included one on the involvement of members as corporate parents, officers were asked how "line of sight" would be extended to councillors. The Cabinet Member stated that this was being addressed. Training on safeguarding had also become mandatory and efforts were being made to make it easier for councillors to be kept informed regarding the needs of looked after children and services being provided to them. It was observed, however, that the Transitional Action Plan contained very little in the way of improved councillor involvement, and the Cabinet Member agreed that this plan as well as the final Improvement Plan needed to include clarification on the engagement of Corporate Parents and participation in improvements.

Officers confirmed that the sub-committee would be involved in monitoring the Improvement Plan and the dashboard of statistics such as staff numbers and trends in complaints. They added that the statistics would be clear and easy to understand so that all stakeholders could interrogate it easily. Members stated that they would welcome the opportunity to carry out visits and talk to staff to gain a deeper understanding of children's needs and services available to them.

Members agreed that the Improvement Plan would be monitored at every meeting of the sub-committee during this municipal year.

Members asked for the up-to-date Improvement Plan to be circulated to the sub-committee. They also asked for a "Red Amber Green" column to be included in the plan so that progress could be followed more easily.

RESOLVED that:

1. The Sub-Committee consider the up-to-date Improvement Plan for children's services at every meeting of this municipal year
2. That the plan should include a "Red Amber Green" column so that progress can be followed more easily.
3. That learning and development visits should be organised in order to enable members to gain a better understanding of children's services and the needs of service users and enable them to monitor the quality of services more effectively

**The Children's Workforce (Agenda item 7)**

A presentation on the children's social care workforce was given by Sarah Moorman, Director of Human Resources.

This began with the observation made in the Ofsted inspection report of 4 September 2017 that

*'The workloads of social workers in some teams are high and this presents a serious barrier to providing effective services for children. The turnover of staff in many teams, coupled with the many transition points, further inhibits the building of trusting relationships between social workers and children.'*

The presentation went on to outline Ofsted recommendations relating to:

- the workforce data summary as at 17 June 2017
- the objectives of the workforce strategy
- progress made on workforce data collection and
- recent progress made on recruitment and retention.

Members were advised that data was being updated and monitored on a weekly basis.

In answer to a question, the Director of Human Resources stated that social workers' caseloads varied between 12 and 20 cases per officer.

Members discussed the employment of agency staff. They were advised that many social workers opted for this avenue as a career choice. Officers added that they were exploring ways of encouraging agency staff to become permanent council officers, such as short-term loans to secure housing and financial help with season tickets.

Officers stated that the council did not offer a sponsorship programme for students but ran a very good support package for new graduates wishing to take up a post as a social worker.

Members observed that schools with a low Ofsted rating struggled to recruit teachers and asked how the council would endeavour to override the poor Ofsted rating of children's services to attract new staff. The Director stated that many social workers lived in the borough and wanted to stay in their jobs, but that career development and employment benefits needed to be improved to secure better retention.

Members challenged officers to explain what real changes were taking place to improve retention. Members reminded them that the "in-house academy" set up in previous years had not yielded the hoped-for improvements in recruitment and retention. The Director replied that a service lead had been appointed to improve collaboration to increase recruitment and retention and to carry out more innovative recruitment drives.

Members remained unconvinced by the above reply and highlighted the poor line management recorded in the inspection report and its impact on staff as a possible cause of low retention. They felt that job satisfaction was an important

motivator and noted that there was no data available on this. Officers stated that such data might previously have been collected by human resources staff but this function had been significantly downgraded over the years, leaving little capacity to monitor job satisfaction levels. Members added problems with poor I.T. as another source of frustration and stress among social workers. It was also observed that having to attend panels to justify expenditure on particular children's support packages was an additional burden on staff.

The Director gave assurances that steps to improve business support, the work environment and I.T. issues had been included in the Improvement Plan. Members suggested that a "deep dive" be conducted into staffing problems to get a clear picture of the causes of poor recruitment and retention and realistic solutions.

The Director announced that staff were to be surveyed at the end of the year on their job satisfaction. Members enquired whether this survey would be carried out across the council or only among children's services staff. The director stated that it was directed at all council staff although some discussion had taken place as to whether a separate questionnaire should be designed for children's services staff. Members felt strongly that the latter should be prioritised in view of the Ofsted inspection outcomes and that clear information was needed as soon as possible on social services staff views regarding the strengths and weaknesses of working in children's services. The director undertook to share these views with senior management.

RESOLVED:

That consideration should be given to running a dedicated staff satisfaction survey with staff in the Council's children services to identify issues hampering recruitment and retention of staff and ensure that results are processed quickly and lead to swift improvements

The meeting ended at 9.15pm

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# Agenda Item 5

<b>REPORT TO:</b>	<b>Scrutiny Children &amp; Young People Sub-Committee 17 October 2017</b>
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>CHILDREN'S IMPROVEMENT – DEEP DIVE MISSING CHILDREN IN CROYDON</b>
<b>LEAD OFFICER:</b>	<b>Barbara Peacock Executive Director People</b>
<b>CABINET MEMBER:</b>	<b>Alisa Flemming Cabinet Member for Children, Young People &amp; Learning</b>
<b>PERSON LEADING AT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING:</b>	<b>Barbara Peacock, Executive Director People Philip Segurola Interim Director, Early Help and Children's Social Care</b>

<b>ORIGIN OF ITEM:</b>	This paper follows the resolution made at the 5 September meeting of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee that each Children and Young People's Scrutiny Meeting would have a standing item to focus on a key theme in the Improvement Plan.
<b>BRIEF FOR THE COMMITTEE:</b>	This paper provides a description and analysis of the profile, performance and practice challenges in working with missing children.  It also describes actions taken by Croydon to improve interventions.

## 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 At its meeting on 5 September 2017, the Scrutiny and Overview Committee resolved that each Children and Young People's Scrutiny meeting would have a standing item to focus on a key theme in the Improvement Plan. Missing Children is the theme for this meeting of the Sub-Committee and the choice of this theme flows from its recent consideration by the Improvement Board.
- 1.2 Members of the Sub-Committee are asked to scrutinise the information provided in this deep dive, consider whether the recommendations put to the Improvement Board are adequate and offer any additional or alternative suggestions as they consider necessary.
- 1.3 The Ofsted Inspection of Children Services and Review of the Local Safeguarding Children's Board (September: 2017) made two key recommendations in this area. The Ofsted Recommendations were:

- Ensure that there is appropriate and timely action with regard to understanding and reducing risk to all children, especially those at risk of sexual exploitation and those who go missing from home or care; ensure that social workers have the necessary skills and knowledge to help children at risk of sexual exploitation.
- Ensure that children missing from home or care have every opportunity to speak to an independent person about the reasons they go missing so that appropriate action can be taken to support them effectively, and reduce risk.

1.4 The information considered by the Improvement Board, and the suggested actions, are as follows in this report.

## **2. OVERVIEW OF OUR PROFILE: HOME, CARE AND EDUCATION**

- 2.1 The cohort of missing children mirrors the national picture in that 76% of children and young people in Croydon who go missing are aged 14 to 17. 83% of missing episodes in the last 6 months were from Croydon Looked After Children (LAC). Of these Croydon LAC episodes, 56% were from Local LAC and 44% LAC Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC). Ninety-six Croydon LAC, who were placed out of borough, had a missing episode. The most frequent reason for going missing was returning to see friends or family.
- 2.2 All of the top 10 children and young people who were identified as having repeat missing episodes were looked after (6 Local LAC, 4 UASC LAC). UASC LAC who had a missing episode were 97% male. The most frequent age of UASC LAC who had a missing episode was 16 years old and their most frequent ethnicity was other white; Albanian.
- 2.3 The largest single cohort of males who went missing was UASC LAC (48% of total males who went missing). For females the largest single cohort who went missing was local LAC (37% of total females who went missing). 16 years old is the most frequent age of those who went missing, for both genders. 31% of males and 24% of females who went missing were 16 years old. In the past six months there has been a fairly sharp increase in the number of boys that went missing between ages 15 and 16 (20% and 31% respectively) compared to girls where there is an even proportion that went missing between the ages of 15 and 16 (24% for both).
- 2.4 Looked after children have a much higher count of missing episodes. White British is the single largest cohort of missing girls who are Local LAC (33%), and Black British for boys (33%). The ethnic breakdown of missing children is highly diverse mirroring Croydon's youth population with the largest group 'Any other White background' which accounts for 18.3% of the total cohort. Albanian young people are categorised within this broad ethnic code and account for 48% of missing unaccompanied minors. (A specific International Organisation for Migration project has been established to improve service and practice to this cohort).
- 2.5 The second largest group of missing children are White British (14%). There are then a range of categories including; Any other African 12%, Asian; 11%, Caribbean 10%, Any other Black 6% White and Black Caribbean 5%, any other ethnic group 4%, White and African 3%, any other mixed 3% and white Irish 1%. Indian, Pakistan, Irish traveller and not recorded made up the other 2%.

There are some limitations in the quality of data. For example; 11.6% of missing children do not have an Ethnicity recorded. Most of these children are from other Local Authorities (“OLA”).

### Children missing education – “CME”

- 2.6 The mean for referrals made from Primary and Secondary schools in 2016 was 41% and 28%. The mean for referrals made from Primary and Secondary schools in 2017 was 59% and 37%. Moving out of Croydon remains the highest reason for CME referrals. Other reasons are: children going to live outside of the borough with another parent, as well as families moving abroad. Despite the increased referrals, data shows no major shifts in the reasons for referrals.

### 3. Performance information. How well are we doing?

- 3.1 All data was reported from the 1st March to the 31st August 2017. Following the inspection Croydon have enhanced and developed the dataset referred to as a Missing dashboard which is available to the Improvement Board upon request. Croydon can now provide a detailed range of information about missing children. Croydon is confident in the robust nature of this data.
- 3.2 Between March and August 2017 there was a total of 1090 missing episodes recorded. This involved 262 children (“MISP” – missing people) of whom 172 were Looked After to Croydon. In order to better connect data to improving practice, we will include the addition of alerts to social workers and managers when children go missing.

No of children “MISP”	263	100%
No of children with “MISP” – Council LA	172	65%
No of UASC with “MISP”	76	29%
No of Missing Episodes	1092	100%
No of Missing Episodes - 1 day or more	800	73%
No of Missing Episodes - 2 days or more	365	33%
No of Missing Episodes - 5 days or more	134	12%
No of Missing Episodes - Council LA	928	85%
No of “MISP” Episodes - rc as Away from placement	798	73%
No of Missing Episodes - Council LA - Outside LA	696	64%
No of Missing Episodes - 1 day or more - Council LA	328	30%
No of Missing Episodes - 2 days or more - Council LA	215	20%
No of Missing Episodes - 5 days or more - Council LA	91	8%

- 3.3 The service which has the most number of missing children is Permanence 1 & 2. Within these service Permanence 2 Unit 1, had the most numbers recorded 25, which is 13.5% of the total number of children recorded as “MISP”.
- 3.4 The highest number of Return Home Interviews (RHI) offered were in the month of July, but the acceptance rate was less than 50% at 33.64%. Figures show that the average RHI acceptance rate has been less than 50% for the past 6 months. Out of the 436 RHIs offered 195 were accepted, which is 44.72%. Breaking down this performance further the highest number of RHIs offered were in the month of July, but the acceptance rate was less than 50% at 35 %. Figures show that the average RHI acceptance rate for Council Looked

After Children (CLA) has also been less than 50% for the past 6 months. Out of the 354 RHIs offered only 151 were accepted, which is 42.65%. The table below provides an RHI performance report by month.

### RHIs percentages from March 2017 – August 2017

Month of Start Date	March	April	May	June	July	August
No of RHIs Offered	52	39	47	90	108	68
No of RHIs Accepted	19	18	22	48	38	34
No of RHIs Offered - CLA	37	31	31	69	89	64
No of RHIs Accepted - CLA	13	13	12	37	27	31
No of RHIs Accepted - CLA Outside LA	10	8	10	27	21	25
RHI Offer Rate % - Episodes	31.9%	26.17%	26.4%	40.91%	45.38%	47.22%
RHI Offer Rate % - Episodes - CLA	26.81%	24.8%	21.99%	37.50%	42.58%	48.85%
RHI Acceptance Rate % - Episodes	36.54%	46.15%	46.81%	53.33%	35.19%	50%
RHIs Done % Episodes	11.66%	12.08%	12.36%	21.82%	15.97%	23.61%
RHIs Done % Episodes - CLA	9.42%	10.4%	8.51%	20.11%	12.92%	23.66%

- 3.5 The total number of referrals for Children Missing Education (CME) between March and August 2017 was 554. That is an increase of 164 referrals for the same period last year. Total CME cases currently open at 20/09/2017 is 89. Despite this increase of referrals, CME have improved on the average number of days open from 32 days in 2016 to 28 days in 2017, with the number of cases closed under 30 days increasing slightly from 63% to 65%.
- 3.6 The rise in referrals is likely to be related to the changes in the Pupil Registration Legislation in September 2016, which now requires all schools to inform the local authority of any pupil removed from their roll. This has opened up a range of new notifications from private schools that have previously been unrecorded. In light of these changes CME internal processes and referral systems were reviewed. These changes have enabled the local authority's CME and Croydon schools to improve tracking and monitoring of pupils of the London Borough of Croydon.
- 3.7 Despite the increased referrals CME have been able to close 65% of cases within this period under 30 days. We aim to improve on the number of referrals closed within 30 days, by reviewing our processes, this includes making quicker referrals to Attendance Improvement Officers. When families do not fully engage with the CME officer School Attendance Orders will be actioned.

## 4 AUDIT FINDINGS

- 4.1 An audit was completed in September 2017 to evaluate social work practice and compliance with Croydon's Missing from Home and Care procedure (v2015). A dip sample of 15 children and young people who are currently missing or were missing between September 2016 and 2017 were audited. The children and young people were either subject to child protection plans or looked after by the local authority. From the local procedure, the following definitions are used:
- Missing: a child or young person who is away from their home or placement and their whereabouts are unknown.



- Unauthorised Absence: a child or young person who is not where they are expected or required to be and their whereabouts are known or could be established.

4.2 In summary, the audit confirmed Ofsted's findings with discrepancies and inconsistencies in compliance with the procedures. A range of practice improvements were identified. These areas are summarised below:

- The missing procedure is not comprehensive in detail to support good practice and assist understanding of the actions required.
- There is a lack of understanding of the missing procedures (missing vs unauthorised absences) by the social workers, Unit Managers, Child Protection (CP) Chairs and Independent Reviewing Officers.
- The Children's Record System (CRS) process needs to be revised.
- Supervision and management oversight is not evident on CRS.

### **Summary of Findings**

4.3 Recording and Compliance - The quality of recording remained inconsistent as is the application of procedure. For example: Missing episodes were recorded but additional missing events were identified in case notes and not captured in the missing workflow. NSPCC completed RHIs were not consistently uploaded into CRS despite being sent to social workers.

4.4 Missing/High Risk Panel - While there was evidence noted on case records that a child was presented to missing panel none of the children's files contained panel minutes. The missing policy does not outline the purpose and referral process of the panels and does not include Missing Mondays (meetings to discuss CME) and the role of the high risk panel.

4.5 Return Home Interviews (RHI) - Although interviews are occurring only 2 children had RHIs within the required timescale of 72 hours. Some children went missing again shortly after returning making it impossible to meet the required timescale, while others by definition were not missing but had repeated unauthorised absences, where they returned within 24 hours. Subsequently there is inconsistency in the completion of interviews which are not completed for every missing episode. There is also inconsistency in who is completing interviews; sometimes it is the social worker other times it is an independent worker from NSPCC. Clarity is needed about when NSPCC should complete an RHI (the revised Missing policy addresses this).

4.6 Strategy meetings - 9 children had strategy meetings and 4 were within timescale. There was inconsistency in timing of strategy meetings without a recorded rationale, IROs were chairing many strategy meetings rather than the unit manager and there was a lack of multi-agency involvement in strategy / missing meetings and risk reduction planning was not robust (the revised policies will clarify that chairing strategy meetings is the line managers' responsibility).

4.7 Risk understood - In 66% of cases the risks to the young person, when going missing, as well as those risks the young person presents to the public, were well understood.

- 4.8 Risk assessment completed - Just under half of the cases had a missing risk assessment completed. There was a lack of seriousness/importance associated with completion of the missing risk assessment with staff reporting this as a tick box exercise with social workers not using the form to inform their thinking. From a systems perspective it is noted that the risk assessment is not mandatory in CRS for every missing episode and is not linked to the workflow (however no other Local Authority has a missing workflow).
- 4.9 Clear plan to reduce risk - Findings from risk assessments featured in four care plans to reduce missing. Findings from RHIs are not consistently included in the child's plan to reduce the risk to them while they were missing. These plans were not always noted in the care plan. These were found in the LAC review case notes, strategy meetings, and case notes.
- 4.10 Partnership working - Six children's records had evidence that there was partnership working however not all strategy meetings included key (police/gangs/YOS) agencies.
- 4.11 Plan shared - Four children's records provided clear evidence that the "plan" was shared - the plan being any kind of intention they want to achieve.
- 4.12 Progress toward positive outcomes - Six children's records evidenced progress toward positive outcomes - progress being missing episodes ceasing, reducing or better management by professionals.
- 4.13 Direct Work - three young people's records evidenced direct work from NSPCC or Safer London.
- 4.14 Reflective group supervision - 2 children's records showed evidence of reflective supervision.
- 4.15 Supervision - As with previous audit findings no records showed consistent 4 weekly supervision. There were months without supervision which contributed to risk when considering the age and vulnerabilities of who the children who went missing regularly. When supervision occurred it was inconsistent, task oriented and not reflective with no discussion of risk/safety planning.

### **Audit Recommendations**

- 4.16 The audit report made a number of recommendations all of which have been accepted and actioned.
- i. Missing policy and procedures to be updated. The protocol requires further clarification about the role, purpose, and function for the Missing panels.
  - ii. Minutes from the Missing Panels need to be uploaded on CRS
  - iii. Training for all staff on updated missing policy and procedures.
  - iv. Social workers / administrators to upload reports and information from external service providers and partner agencies (i.e. Safer London/NSPCC)
  - v. Photographs of children to be uploaded on CRS
  - vi. Supervision Audit to ascertain the scope of the compliance with the supervision policy
  - vii. CRS missing workflow to link episodes, Risk Assessment, Strategy Meeting with an outcome safety plan and the use of alerts needs to be added.

- viii. Social workers to clearly identify the risks within each missing episodes by completing the Risk section consistently.

## **5. A SUMMARY OF PRACTICE DEVELOPMENTS TO THE MISSING PROCESS IN CROYDON**

5.1 Croydon is strengthening how services respond to children who go missing and this report summaries current and planned developments:

- i. Croydon has reviewed its processes, researched best practice models from other Local Authorities and identified additional resource adopting a similar model to Kent County Council to manage their missing children, (an authority which was rated 'good' in their most recent OFSTED inspection March 17).
- ii. Croydon has developed a single dataset (15.9.17) which has been developed into a 'live' 'Missing and RHI' dash-board reported from CRS which is refreshed three times per day. (Example available upon request). This dataset pulls together data from Croydon police for children residing in Croydon and information for children placed away from Croydon. This dataset will be developed further in relation to how we report repeat missing episodes by the end of October. A weekly monitoring report (commencing 25.9.17) will be reviewed by the Children's Senior Management Team (CSMT) each Monday analysing completion, compliance and timescales. (Example available upon request).
- iii. Children Social Care are currently establishing a Missing Team. This will consist of five roles: a missing coordinator, two administrators and two return home interview officers which will increase the Council's capacity to complete RHIs, and provide capacity to deploy resources quickly to meet the child. The two return home officer posts will be managed by the Missing coordinator whose role it will be to allocate RHIs and manage the NSPCC contract.
- iv. This new resource will also provide Croydon with the capacity to input and track all missing episodes, record when children return and coordinate and track the progress of Return Home Interviews (RHIs) to inform children's plans. This administration function, overseen by a Missing Coordinator, will act as the 'powerhouse' to drive performance and practice improvements as well as improve the quality of information. This approach, adopted from good practice in other boroughs, will ensure a robust and reliable dataset to assist and challenge social workers and managers alike develop an overview of all missing children, our responses and impact of our interventions on children's' outcomes as well as better inform partners and the Croydon Safeguarding Children Board. The Missing Team will further support and drive procedural compliance.
- v. The Return Home Interview officers will provide RHIs to any child that goes missing from home.
- vi. Return Home Interviews for Croydon Looked after Children will be offered and completed by their allocated Social Worker who should have an

existing relationship with the child. The Missing Coordinator will monitor compliance and support social workers and managers ensure RHIs are completed. The Return Home Interview officers will provide additional training and support to social workers and role modelling how an RHI should be completed for LAC.

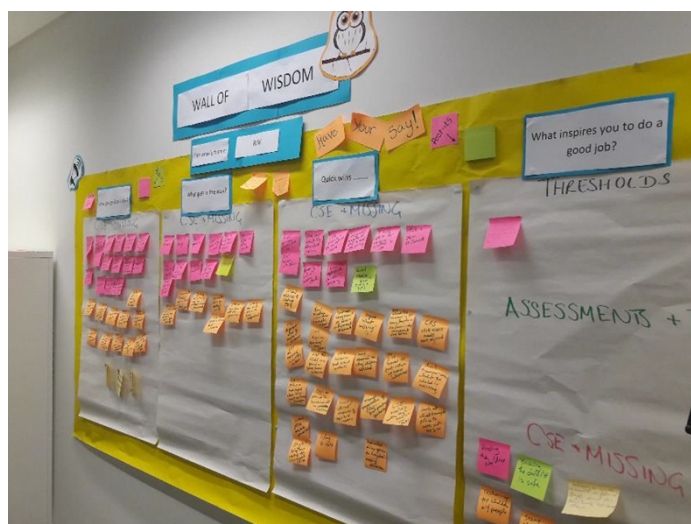
- vii. The Missing Coordinator will hold daily co-ordination and monitoring meetings between the RHI interviewers and administrative staff and the NSPCC to track outstanding RHIs (in offer, in completion, in recording), if risk assessments have been completed (missing and CSE) and to plan the work for the day. The Missing coordinator will escalate delays in services to children (procedural compliance) to Service Leaders in line with the escalation protocol. The RHI officers will ensure that the RHI is uploaded into the child's file and that the findings of the RHI are fed-back to the social worker and other relevant professionals as it is the social workers' responsibility to ensure the risk assessments and safety plans are completed and learning from RHIs are integrated into children's care plan.
- viii. The Missing Coordinator will also follow up on RHIs to ensure actions have been completed especially where there are repeat missing episodes.
- ix. The Missing Coordinator will also allocate RHIs to the NSPCC for the life of that commissioned contract (March 18). An interim arrangement has been agreed (20.9.17) to better manage allocation and monitor progress. Over the course of the next 12 weeks we will develop an options appraisal with commissioning and improvement team, with consideration to re-commissioning the RHI contract.
- x. As part of service improvement the functioning of Croydon's Missing Panel has been reviewed and changed. Fortnightly multi-agency Missing meetings will now be held and chaired by the Missing Coordinator. The function of this meeting; to review every child that has been reported missing in that two week period. This review will include identification of risk issues, patterns, impact of interventions and outcomes for children as well as review all RHIs. Data from this meeting will be added to Multi-Agency Sexual Exploitation (MASE) intelligence. All actions will be tracked by the administrators to enable the service to escalate concerns as well as identify outcomes for children.
- xi. For children who go missing in Croydon but are the responsibility of Other Local Authorities (OLA) the Missing Coordinator will contact all 'OLAs' (Other Local Authorities LAC) to request that RHIs be completed for their children to enable Croydon to better understand need and risk as well as reduce repeat missing episodes of the OLA population thereby increasing local capability.
- xii. A mandatory half day training has been devised and is being deployed across Children Social Care commencing on the 2nd October. The Learning and Development team will coordinate this ensuring all social workers and managers attend. This includes procedure, best practice as well as recording in CRS and the importance of integrating the findings of RHIs into updated planning for children. A wider CSCB training plan needs to be confirmed. The CSCB have commissioned Missing People to deliver

Missing Children training to the wider partnership. CSC will contribute to ensure congruence with local protocols and the Croydon context. There are five sessions planned, first starts late October.

- xiii. Croydon's Missing Protocol has been revised and will be relaunched in October 2017.
- xiv. The CRS Pathway for Missing and RHI has been tested and refined to ensure it is in line with the new Missing Procedure.
- xv. Copies of RHIs will continue to be provided to the public protection desk but we need to develop a system to circulate to other partners.
- xvi. As identified, co-location of police with Children Social Care is under consideration and a decision is due.
- xvii. In relation to quality assurance of RHIs the lead for Missing and CSE will undertake a dip sample of RHIs every month. All RHIs for each quarter will be read and a report written for staff and partners to inform them of the key reasons why children go missing. This will inform strategic and operational planning and further resource allocation. The CSCB are due to complete a multi-agency audit of missing children in March 2018.
- xviii. Performance reports and findings from audits will be presented to the newly formed Vulnerable Adolescent sub-group of the CSCB for analysis and challenge.

## 6. RECENT STAFF ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITY ON MISSING CHILDREN

6.1 As part of our programme of 'sprint sessions' to engage staff in the design and development of the improvement plan we ran two sessions on CSE and missing which were the second most popular, attended 45 staff (see picture inset).



6.2 Staff said that CSE and Missing practice works well when all stakeholders are fully informed, involved and have a clear understanding of thresholds. Good means having a co-ordinated approach between the local authority, the police and schools in addition to intelligence on why children go missing would inform future actions, such as identifying hotspots.

6.3 Staff told us that a lack of time for RHIs, different priorities between agencies and a lack of monitoring and sharing of information get in the way of good practice to support young people who go missing.

6.4 Staff provided lots of suggestions for improvements and quick wins, including developing best practice guidance for all agencies and making more use of technology such as apps and Skype.

## **7. RISKS AND ISSUES (INCLUDING BARRIERS TO DELIVERY)**

7.1 In staff engagement exercises, social workers and managers have reported a number of barriers to good practice in Croydon in relation to responding to missing children. The most significant factor that has impeded previous progress has been the increasing level of need in the borough (i.e. numbers of missing episodes) and social work compliance with procedure.

7.2 Despite regular trainings and email communication and visits to team meetings some staff remain confused as to who completes the RHI. Staff turnover, the transfer of cases within teams, social workers lack capacity especially where children go missing from a distant placement which 'throws workers' dairies out of kilter' coupled with a lack of capacity in relation to the speed of turnaround in relation to RHIs. Social workers also reported not feeling competent and confident. Managers stated they lacked capacity to maintain oversight of so many missing children.

7.3 Whilst IROs stated it should not be their responsibility to chair strategy meetings in relation to missing children as this contributed to delay and contributed to a lack of managerial oversight from the responsibility team towards the missing child. Social workers have also reported not seeing the benefit of RHIs believing this to be a tick box exercise. Other risks and barriers to success include ensuring we have the resources required in the medium to long term to sustain improvement and the capacity of the social work force to improve and maintain that improvement with risk such as staff turnover of staff and so many areas of priority and improvement.

## **8. RECOMMENDATIONS MADE TO THE IMPROVEMENT BOARD**

8.1 The Improvement Board considered the following recommendations and actions:

- i. We now deliver a live Missing Dash Board which provides a wide range of performance data in relation to missing children and return home interviews. This data set will also be provided to the Croydon Safeguarding Children Board (CSCB).
- ii. We now produce a weekly Missing and RHI compliance report for Children's Senior Management Team. This includes a list of top 10 missing children.
- iii. Strategically this plan needs to align and be integrated with the wider CSCB's Vulnerable Adolescent Plan especially interventions in relation to CSE, Multi-Agency Sexual Exploitation (MASE) and the High Risk Panel.
- iv. A number of the points identified in this plan relate to wider challenges within Children Social Care and need to be related, cross-referenced and considered in the wider Improvement Plan e.g. recording, compliance, administrative support, staff turnover, learning and development, supervision, fostering and plans in relation to the CSCB.
- v. As a Multi-Agency partnership we need to agree a strategic and operational plan to support partners such as schools, complete RHIs.

- vi. The Missing Procedure will be reviewed and re-launched by the end of October 2017. This procedure clarifies definition, (e.g. missing versus absent and repeat missing), the role and function of the missing panel and process about distance placements and RHIs and aligns with Multi-Agency Sexual Exploitation (MASE) and the High Risk Panels.
- vii. The Children's Record System (CRS) Missing pathway will be reviewed and revised by the end of October 2017.
- viii. We will clarify and confirm our approach to the recording of Other Local Authority (OLA) missing notification and the arrangements for notifying those Local Authorities.
- ix. We will work with the Police to explore further co-location options in relation to working with missing.
- x. We will implement the Missing Team Model by the end of October 2017 to improve recording of missing episodes, tracking, monitoring missing and RHIs and challenging and escalating non-compliance with procedure as well as increasing the conversion of offered and accepted RHIs and supporting improved integration of the learning from RHIs into risk assessments and safety and care plans.
- xi. We will implement a training programme from the 9th October 2017.
- xii. In relation to Children Missing Education (CME), reduce average number of days a CME is open before being tracked to 25 days, improve liaison with schools where young people who have been identified return home and greater involvement from schools/education in missing strategy meetings.
- xiii. Agree lead officers for missing in permanence and care planning teams.
- xiv. Undertake audits of missing and RHIs every other month as part of the quality assurance framework and case file audit cycle to ensure change is embedded.

8.2 The Board also considered the following implications and considerations for partners:

- i. We will work with the Police to explore further opportunities for co-location.
- ii. In relation to other multi-agency initiatives and implications for partners;
- iii. We will agree to provide, as a partnership, a relevant multi-agency dataset to the CSCB in relation to missing children.
- iv. In terms of other partners' involvement, more work needs to be undertaken to clarify partners' positions and commitment. For example, we need to clarify how health assessments for looked after children can better consider issues and impact of missing episodes.
- v. As a partnership we will improve our joint working in relation to missing children. So far we have identified the following opportunities:
  - a. Confirm joint working arrangements with substance misuse services, Child and Adolescent Mental Health services and other health service (e.g. sexual health services) to ensure RHI data is better fed into partners' individual planning.
  - b. Joint working with education colleagues in relation to CME is strong however we will improve liaison with schools and work harder to return children who go missing to mainstream full time education when they are in alternative provision. We will secure the commitment of schools to complete RHIs where appropriate.
  - c. We will clarify with partners, especially those committed to the Early Help approach, whether we can develop a system that supports RHIs completed by partners.

- d. We will consider how CPIS (Child Protection Information System) could be used to better protect missing children especially when they presents at A&E. Technological barriers current impede progress here.

## **Appendices**

*None*

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**CONTACT OFFICER:** Philip Segurola, Interim Director, Early Help and Children's Social Care

**BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:** This report relies on no previously unpublished documents.



**For general release**

<b>REPORT TO:</b>	<b>Scrutiny Children &amp; Young People Sub-Committee 17<sup>th</sup> October 2017</b>
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>WORK PROGRAMME</b>
<b>LEAD OFFICER:</b>	<b>Stephen Rowan, Head of Democratic Services &amp; Scrutiny</b>
<b>PERSON LEADING AT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING:</b>	<b>Councillor Jan Buttinger, Chair of the Sub-Committee</b>

<b>ORIGIN OF ITEM:</b>	The Sub-Committee agreed at its previous meeting to amend its work programme in light of the recent Ofsted Inspection findings.
<b>BRIEF FOR THE COMMITTEE:</b>	To consider a revised work programme for the Sub-Committee and agree any amendments considered necessary.

## 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 At its meeting on 5 September 2017, the Scrutiny and Overview Committee resolved that each Children and Young People’s Scrutiny Meeting would have a standing item to focus on a key theme in the Improvement Plan following the recent Ofsted inspection of Children’s Social Care in Croydon.
- 1.2 This was further considered at the meeting of this Sub-Committee, held on 19 September 2017, where it was agreed that the work programme be amended to reflect the programme of ‘deep dive’ reviews planned as part of the improvement journey being managed by the Children’s Service Improvement Board.

## 2. PLANNED DEEP DIVES & PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE WORK PROGRAMME

- 2.1 The Improvement Board is continuing to identify and prioritise the areas that it considers most suitable for deep dive reviews. At its most recent meeting on 3 October, it agreed that the following deep dives be undertaken:
  - 7 November 2017 - Early Permanence, parallel planning, Pre-birth assessments & Public Law Outline
  - 5 December 2017 - Supervision
- 2.2 The current planned work programme for the Sub-Committee for the remainder of this municipal year is as follows:

28 November 17	6 February 18	13 March 18
Young People's Congress Young People's Employability Children's Safeguarding Board Annual Report	<b>Children, Young People &amp; Learning Q &amp; A</b> Education Budget Education Standards	Children's Social Care Annual Report

- 2.3 Members of the Sub-Committee are asked to agree that:
- i) The Early Permanence, parallel planning, Pre-birth assessments & Public Law Outline deep dive be added to the agenda for 28 November 2017; and
  - ii) The supervision deep dive be added to the agenda for 6 February 2018.
- 2.4 As the Improvement Board continues to develop its deep dive programme, this will continue to be reported to this Sub-Committee to allow further consideration of any further potential changes to the work programme.

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**CONTACT OFFICER:** Stephen Rowan, Head of Democratic Services & Scrutiny

**BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:** None