

# LONDON BOROUGH OF CROYDON

<b>REPORT:</b>	<b>Corporate Parenting Board</b>
<b>DATE OF DECISION</b>	<b>21<sup>st</sup> June 2023</b>
<b>REPORT TITLE:</b>	<b>National Safeguarding Practice Review Croydon Working Group update.</b>
<b>DIRECTOR:</b>	<b>Róisín Madden, Director Children’s Social Care</b>
<b>LEAD OFFICER:</b>	<b>Adam Fearon-Stanley, Children Looked After Quality Assurance Lead</b>
<b>LEAD MEMBER:</b>	<b>Cllr Maria Gatland, Cabinet Member for Children &amp; Young People</b>

## 1 SUMMARY OF REPORT

### 1.1

This report provides an update from the working group established in Croydon to implement the recommendations of the National Safeguarding Practice Review into safeguarding children with disabilities and complex needs in residential settings.

## 2 RECOMMENDATIONS

For the reasons set out in the report [and its appendices], the Corporate Parenting Panel is recommended:

### 2.1

To note the contents and next steps set out in the report.

## 3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

### 3.1

To support the continuance of the working group in the interests of Croydon children.

## 4 REPORT

### **Update re National Safeguarding Review working group 01/06/2023.**

The first working group established in January 2023 has now separated into distinct working groups as each strand requires detailed planning and follow up.

Adam Fearon-Stanley, Children Looked After Quality Assurance Service Manager will continue to report on all 4 strands to Corporate Parenting Panel.

#### **1) Children's Wishes and Feelings:**

Awareness raising about the Independent Visitor Scheme and Advocacy service.  
Recruitment and training of specific Independent Visitors.

**Lead officer:** Children Looked After Quality Assurance Manager

#### **Working group members:**

Independent Visitor Service, Croydon MENCAP, Children with Disabilities Team, Independent Reviewing Officer Service, Barnardo's Advocacy provider, Children's Commissioning.

**Meeting frequency:** Bimonthly

#### **Synopsis of progress maximising Independent Visitors:**

To recruit, train and match independent visitors to the 13 children with disabilities living in residential arrangements by December 2023.

#### **Actions:**

Targeted advertising with tailored advertising for volunteers

Social Workers writing vignettes of the children to be matched with volunteers.

Volunteers to receive Independent Visitor Service training and offer of bespoke training.

#### **Synopsis of progress maximising Advocacy**

Voice based advocacy for all children looked after at residential homes with complex needs is being explored by Children's Commissioning. This is being influenced by significant potential changes in policy and procedure locally and nationally.

- Government's response to Care Review "182. We are working with the sector to implement **an opt-out model of independent advocacy**.... We will develop the policy to ensure that a future advocacy service will empower and listen to children and young people, including children with different communication needs.

- Local consideration in Croydon of joint commissioning an All-Age Advocacy Service between Children and Adult Commissioners to improve quality of service and cost efficiencies.

Next meeting led by the Director of QCPI on 1 June.

## **2) Our use of Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaires (SDQ):**

To consider alternate approaches to evaluating children and young people's emotional and mental wellbeing.

**Lead officers:** Principal Social Worker and Children Looked After Quality Assurance Service Manager

### **Working group members:**

Children with Disabilities Team, Independent Reviewing Officer Service, Barnardo's Advocacy provider, Principal Social Worker and Systemic Practice Service

**Meeting frequency:** Bimonthly

### **Synopsis of progress:**

Approaches are being developed to enhance of the understanding of social workers and colleagues of children's emotional and mental wellbeing which will be piloted and reviewed over 6-month period to December 2023.

For children with different communication skills, we would want to develop participation through the practitioner gathering views of family members, professionals, and observing children at home and in education and short breaks settings.

A core principle being that practitioners come to understand the meanings of behaviour and behaviour as communication. That this enables the recognition of behaviours that are communication which are not known and are new in the life of a child which may indicate the need to review and assess what help and support that child may require.

Access to Monthly systemic consultation to Children with Disabilities Team has begun for 2 children per month, for an hour consultation for each child to include social worker, team manager and Independent Reviewing Officer.

We would anticipate more effective care planning, an improvement in relationships with children, parents and professionals. Dip sample of children who have been discussed in this space will be undertaken in September 2023 to feedback to working group.

This will be strengthened by the pilot of an alternative approach to the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire.

A structured reflective discussion between supervisor and social worker is proposed. This will use a revised pro forma that emphasises interaction and observation of the child in different settings, by the social worker, different professionals and family members to understand a young person's emotional wellbeing.

**Actions:**

CWD Service Managers to identify a small group of social workers to pilot alternate approach. On 5<sup>th</sup> June brief and gather feedback on pro forma and establish additional training needs for social workers in different communication methods.

Training will be delivered in June to July 2023 in parallel with the development of a pro forma for structured reflective discussion which will act as alternate SDQ.

**3) Our oversight of aspects of medical care received by children and young people:**

There will be consideration with the CLA Health Team of how the evaluation of these elements can be incorporated into health assessments, which would support partners to improve recording standards, providing assurance to the child's family and the corporate parent. We will explore via our Commissioning Team and Southwest London Integrated Care Board area community pharmacists how expectations can be set with providers re PRN decisions and the extent to which families & we as the corporate parent are sighted on this.

**Lead officer:** Children Looked After Quality Assurance Manager and Designated Nurse for Children Looked after (Croydon)

**Working Group:**

CLA Health Nurses, Children's Commissioning, IRO Service

**Synopsis of progress:**

All CLA Health Assessments for children in this cohort are now undertaken face to face with CLA Health Nurses visiting children at their homes rather than written based on others reporting. This enables a greater degree of scrutiny over areas of concern identified in audits – storage of medicine, use of PRN and dispensing by pharmacy on site and possible impacts.

These assessments take place annually and hence evaluating impact requires ongoing monitoring both by Designated Nurse in terms of implementation and quality assurance, and the Health Operational Groups oversight in terms of impact on practice and outcomes.

It is proposed that feedback on this small group of children be incorporated as an agenda item for Health Operational Group, which will be discussed further.

**Action:**

In interim a meeting specific to this strand is to be confirmed in June 2023 with the working group members to confirm escalation re dispensing pharmacies, confirm oversight of Health Operational Group by 30 June 2023.

#### **4) Our oversight of aspects of contractual agreements around staffing:**

There is a requirement to strengthen monitoring of this aspect of contractual agreements either through existing contract monitoring and quality assurance mechanisms or as a specific focus. We will explore with our Commissioning team how we currently monitor this aspect of contractual agreements and where this can be strengthened.

**Lead officer:** Children's Commissioner and Head of Commissioning and Procurement.

#### **Working Group:**

Children's Commissioning, CLA Health, Placements, Children with Disabilities, SEND

#### **Synopsis of progress:**

The result of our auditing showed that while our children were safe, there was further scrutiny needed on staffing levels, which though at safe levels were not always at the level we had originally commissioned them. It was proposed to trial a regular, multiagency (Social Care, Health, Education, Commissioning and Placements) contract monitoring meeting.

The aim was to have this meeting onsite so that both staffing and medical records could be scrutinised, as well as robust, in the round challenge on certain aspects of delivery to assure senior members of staff on placements that were all a mixture of dual and tripartite funded.

The initial meetings have developed strategic commissioning conversations, and for resolving some operational issues, they have not become the combination of contract monitoring and Quality Assurance that was initially envisaged. Education have also not been present at discussions so far which needs to be remedied.

This strand of work needs to be considered in the context of **National** Review Recommendations from the Phase 2 Report published in April 2023. It provides a number of recommendations for Local Authorities and national government with regards to changes in practice. Particularly relevant for LA/ICB Commissioners at a placements level were the following:

- *Recommendation 3:* Local authorities and ICBs should be required in statutory guidance developed by the Department for Education and NHS England to jointly commission safe, sufficient and appropriate provision for children with disabilities and complex health needs aligned with local inclusion plans and planning for care through Regional Care Cooperatives

- *Recommendation 4:* The DfE, DHSC and NHS England should co-ordinate a support programme for commissioners in local authorities and ICBs, focusing on improvements in forecasting, procurement and market shaping.
- *Recommendation 8:* Systems for the early identification of safeguarding risks in residential settings should be strengthened through an enhanced role for host local authorities and ICBs in the oversight of residential settings in their area.

**Action:**

In light of the above, it is proposed that rather than seeing the contract monitoring meetings as the way we are managing risk, that we focus on an operational level, with social workers and CLA nurses being empowered to ask appropriate questions about staffing levels and medication. Commissioning and Placements in this model would then be an escalation point, rather than an information gatherer if there were issues found. Issues and concerns would then be dealt with according to the Provider Improvement Process. We would continue a programme of quarterly meetings for providers with significant spend, for strategic conversations. Equivalent approaches used for practice improvement in Kent have been shared which we can consider (an established pro -forma used by social workers on visits)

In interim a meeting specific to this strand is to be confirmed in June 2023 with the working group members identified including new head of specialist services to agree alternate approach by 30 June 2023.

## **7. CONTRIBUTION TO COUNCIL PRIORITIES**

- 7.1** This report supports the council priority of working with partners to enable our children and young people, including those with special educational needs and disabilities, to fulfil their potential. We also want to make Croydon safer for young people and keep vulnerable children and young people safe from harm.

## **8. IMPLICATIONS**

### **8.1 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1.1** There are no specific financial implications of this report.

### **8.2 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.2.1** There are no specific legal implications of this report.

### **8.3 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

**8.3.1** The work of this group supports addressing equalities challenges for children with disabilities in residential settings.

## **9. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

**9.1** The National Practice Review full document can be found here <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/safeguarding-children-with-disabilities-in-residential-settings>