

Corporate Parenting Committee

Wednesday 6 November 2019

2.00 pm

Ground floor meeting room GO1c, 160 Tooley Street, London SE1 2QH

Membership

Councillor Jasmine Ali (Chair)
Councillor Evelyn Akoto
Councillor Sunny Lambe
Councillor Maggie Browning
Councillor Eliza Mann
Councillor Charlie Smith
Councillor Bill Williams (Vice-chair)
Florence Emakpose (Non-voting co-opted)

Reserves

Councillor Anood Al-Samerai

INFORMATION FOR MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

Access to information

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Contact

Paula Thornton 020 7525 4395 or email: paula.thornton@southwark.gov.uk

Members of the committee are summoned to attend this meeting

Eleanor Kelly

Chief Executive

Date: 28 October 2019



Corporate Parenting Committee

Wednesday 6 November 2019
2.00 pm

Ground floor meeting room GO1c, 160 Tooley Street, London SE1 2QH

Order of Business

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MOBILE PHONES

Mobile phones should be turned off or put on silent during the course of the meeting.

PART A - OPEN BUSINESS

1. APOLOGIES

To receive any apologies for absence.

2. CONFIRMATION OF VOTING MEMBERS

A representative of each political group will confirm the voting members of the committee.

3. APPOINTMENT OF NON-VOTING CO-OPTED MEMBERS

To receive nominations of non-voting co-opted members to serve on the corporate parenting committee. The council's constitution part 3J: committee sets out the function for the committee "to appoint non-voting co-opted members."

4. NOTIFICATION OF ANY ITEMS OF BUSINESS WHICH THE CHAIR DEEMS URGENT

In special circumstances, an item of business may be added to an agenda within five clear days of the meeting.

5. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS

Members to declare any interests and dispensation in respect of any item of business to be considered at this meeting.

6. MINUTES 1 - 11

To approve as a correct record the minutes of the open section of the meeting held on 8 July 2019.

FIRST PART OF THE MEETING - CHILDREN IN CARE (2.05PM)

7. EXCLUSION OF LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN (2.10PM) 12 - 22

8. ADOPTION SERVICE ANNUAL REPORT 2018-19 (2.25PM) 23 - 45

9. FOSTERING SERVICE ANNUAL REPORT 2018-19 (2.40PM) 46 - 71

10. CORPORATE PARENTING COMMITTEE - WORK PLAN 2019-20 (2.50PM) 72 - 75

SECOND PART OF THE MEETING - CARE LEAVERS (3.00PM)

11. WORKSHOP THEME: HOUSING

ANY OTHER OPEN BUSINESS AS NOTIFIED AT THE START OF THE MEETING AND ACCEPTED BY THE CHAIR AS URGENT.

EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

The following motion should be moved, seconded and approved if the sub-committee wishes to exclude the press and public to deal with reports revealing exempt information:

“That the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 1-7, Access to Information Procedure rules of the Constitution.”

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PART B - CLOSED BUSINESS

**ANY OTHER CLOSED BUSINESS AS NOTIFIED AT THE START OF
THE MEETING AND ACCEPTED BY THE CHAIR AS URGENT.**

Date: 28 October 2019



Corporate Parenting Committee

MINUTES of the OPEN section of the Corporate Parenting Committee held on Monday 8 July 2019 at 2.00 pm at Ground Floor Meeting Room GO2C, 160 Tooley Street, London SE1 2QH

PRESENT: Councillor Jasmine Ali (Chair)
Councillor Bill Williams (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Evelyn Akoto
Councillor Sunny Lambe
Councillor Eliza Mann
Councillor Charlie Smith

OFFICER SUPPORT: Alasdair Smith, Director of Children and Families
Andrew Fowler, Head of Service, Children in Care and Care Leavers
Dr Stacy John-Legere, Designated Dr for Looked After Children
Kate Mayes Quality Assurance Service Manager
Tom Stevenson, Assistant Director, Quality and Performance
Helen Corry Specialist LAC Nurse
Olivia Nation, Children's Rights and Participation Officer
Beverley Olamijulo, Constitutional Officer

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence was received from Angela Brown and apologies for lateness was received from Councillor Eliza Mann.

2. CONFIRMATION OF VOTING MEMBERS

Those members listed as present were confirmed as the voting members for the meeting.

3. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR

RESOLVED:

That Councillor Bill Williams be elected as vice-chair of the corporate parenting committee for 2019-20.

4. NOTIFICATION OF ANY ITEMS OF BUSINESS WHICH THE CHAIR DEEMS URGENT

The following information was tabled at the meeting:

- Southwark care leavers – performance and outcomes – handouts
- Children’s social care – care leavers – information handouts
- Care leavers data information aged 19 – 21: Reporting year 2018 -19 – handouts.

5. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS

None were disclosed.

6. CORPORATE PARENTING COMMITTEE - WORK PLAN 2019-2020

Alasdair Smith, director of children and families introduced the corporate workplan 2019-2020

Alasdair summarised the following:

- If members could submit their ideas and topics they would be considered for discussion at future corporate parent committee meetings
- What Members should consider and what to expect from the committee meetings
- Addressed issue regarding the non attendance of young people at corporate parent committee meetings. Representatives for the young people felt that the topics on the agenda were mainly data specific which they thought might not be relevant to young people wishing to attend the meeting.

The chair asked that the children’s and adult services should ensure the young people receive their invites for each meeting.

Summary

Alasdair drew members’ attention to the report which refers to the committee’s role and functions:

- Officers would like to strengthen the role of non voting members and look at providing extra support as well as arranging for them to attend the corporate parent committee
- Members agreed the person nominated or selected as a voting member should be a foster carer
- A critical friend from the local community and a critical friend from an area of the council outside the children and adults service
- Invite a representative from Southwark’s frontline service workforce, possibly a

social worker or a senior council officer from the housing or environment departments. This would not include statutory linked officers. The named representatives would be identified by the committee

- Alasdair proposed the housing and support for care leavers would attend a meeting with a presentation
- Provide advanced notice on themes for the committee
- Noted that the workplan would be reviewed at every committee meeting.

Alasdair also responded to questions from members on performance and outcomes particularly the numbers that were in care and those in independent living.

ACTION:

1. That an annual report on regional adoption should be provided at the next meeting.
2. The workplan must be reviewed at the end of scheduled meetings 2019/20.
3. Keep track of ongoing issues with the corporate parent committee. Alasdair said they would be revisited at future meetings and what progress had been made on past topics and discussions.
4. This would include what had been achieved as a result of discussion at the corporate parent committee meeting.
5. Teenage pregnancy and teenage mental health: Look at service providers to ensure they get the right level of support and assistance.
6. A report on the achievements of the corporate parent committee be made available to the committee.
7. Members requested information concerning those A level students under care that went on to university – chair agreed this was an important point which was addressed under the topic care leavers.

RESOLVED:

1. That the committee's approach to the workplan be agreed.
2. That any further items for consideration be reviewed and identified.
3. That the additional reports as set out above be received by the committee.

7. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HEALTH AND SCHOOL EXCLUSIONS - A DEEP DIVE

Dr Stacy John-Legere, designated doctor for Looked After Children introduced the report.

The following was highlighted at the meeting:

- School exclusion for those in care – look at ways to ensure young people stay in school especially those with special needs and disabilities. The focus was to keep the children in education.
- Identify any health needs and provide an educational plan or overall health plan and liaise with school commission and educational psychologists.
- Exclusions: Most of the exclusions were boys that had health problems such as asthma, obesity and learning needs.
- Referred to communication with schools – and develop a plan for those children that might be excluded.
- Referred to girl with complex PSD (post stress disorder), mental health issues, who had experienced physical abuse within the family. The girl had previously been excluded but has now been assessed. Steps are now in place to improve her health and wellbeing which includes working closely with her foster mother.
- Continue the working relationship with child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS).
- Southwark Virtual School for looked after children: Continue work with children that have challenging behavioural problems and provide a structural plan for those children through the Southwark LAC health team.

Dr Stacy John-Legere responded to questions from members on the following:

- Widen access to services for young people especially those with challenging behaviour
- The behaviour of children improved when they had breakfast in the morning
- School nurses: Review of schools that do not have access to a school nurse
- Better self care skills – train children life skills
- Mental health strategies – providing additional support and signposting Health assessments for referrals on autisms and dyslexia
- Dyslexia in adults report that 40% are not identified in early childhood
- Virtual School – a review on the number of exclusions and evaluating self assessment forms relating to the number of young people in care.

ACTION:

The committee receive a report back on Virtual school's number of exclusions and evaluating self assessment forms that involved the number of young people in care.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

8. CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE

Tom Stevenson, interim assistant director, quality and performance presented the report.

Tom referred to the self evaluation of social work practice in children's social care assessment and confirmed they were all up to date even though there was a delay with its completion.

Summary of the presentation

- Assessments: Child protection services; assessments had increased by 12% more than last year.
- Review assessments for those that do not have children protection plans.
- Number of children with child protection plans had increased by 300.
- 5% reduction of children in care from communities established in Southwark compared to neighbouring boroughs.
- There were more children in care in Southwark compared to other boroughs and more children placed in care within or around the borough as opposed to placing them outside Southwark.

The committee noted the above. The chair asked members to digest information and discuss issues at a later date.

9. ANNUAL REPORT - INDEPENDENT REVIEWING SERVICE 2018-19

Tom Stevenson, interim assistant director, quality and performance presented the IRO statutory report 2018-19. He outlined that the independent reviewing officers are dedicated to improving outcomes for children and young people in care through the review and challenge aspect of their role.

The report addresses the Ofsted focused visit in January 2019 particularly around care and increased impact of IROs. Reference was made about the two reviews that take place each year and the two visits which also take place each year.

- The report referred to the robustness on the escalation process
- Beneficial effect of recording and tracking information
- Further improvement on the review and obtaining the necessary paperwork.

RESOLVED:

That the Independent Review Officers (IRO) Annual Report be noted.

10. WORKSHOP: PERFORMANCE AND OUTCOMES

The committee were provided handouts of the Southwark care leaver's performance and outcomes.

Tom Stevenson introduced the item and addressed the point concerning quantitative and qualitative data.

The chair suggested the committee consider this item as a group discussion.

- *What does the data tell us?*

- *What are our goals and how will we achieve them?*
- *Questions, discussion and next steps*

Discussion points:

- Cohort of children – triangulate data to give a better understanding
- Pathway planning – how much work is involved in that
- Looking at best practice across the country
- Goals – have to be shared priority, goals for young people
- Key aspirations for young people that are meaningful to them
- Feedback given is the trust support worker – how do they provide a service and access services for young people in care and the care worker receiving a level of support as well
- Working with colleagues in Speaker box.

Alasdair referred to:

- Team of young inspectors and young advisors - make sure it is a proper scheme and ensure those relationships work.
- Care leavers – through housing, accommodation issues provide key workers and focused on care leavers officers said a newly appointed young people housing practioners to help with care leavers.
- Corporate parenting committee – monitor progress on the above.
- Looking to recruit personal advisors (4) so the new workers appointed – to look after more complex children.
- Specialist housing employment services.

Next part of the group discussion

- *What is going well?*
- *What do we want to do better?*

Noted that some of the children are doing well and have gone on to university and were doing well academically.

ACTION:

Officers agreed to provide more data to the corporate parent committee.

- Data performance – need to be consistent on performance.
- More varied form of housing accommodation (to address total isolation).
- Significant number of care leavers returned to their birth families.
- Develop children's' networks so they reconnect with their families.

Alasdair stated reviews are not addressed in time so the timeframe needs to be improved - need to have aspiration for our young children.

The chair thanked everyone for their input and asked members to focus on what their contribution would be for the committee and what they want to scrutinise.

11. MINUTES

Members considered the minutes after Item 2.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes held on 25 March 2019 be agreed as a correct record of the meeting and signed by the chair.

Bright Spots

Following the Bright spots report which was noted at the previous meeting, the chair stated that if there was a role for elected councillors then officers should let them know.

Number of exclusions of children in care at Virtual School

It was noted that the above report on exclusions in care at Virtual school was not on the agenda. The committee asked for the data information concerning the exclusions in care on the Virtual school be considered at the next meeting in November 2019.

Greeting cards

Alastair explained a special mail box has been set up for this which he agreed to circulate to Councillor Jasmine Ali. Councillor Ali agreed to circulate it to members of the committee.

12. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There were none.

The meeting ended at 4.10pm

CHAIR:

DATED:

**Corporate Parenting Committee
Meeting on 8 July 2019
Workshop session**

APPENDIX 1

What I expect from the next series of Corporate Parenting meetings				
<p><i>Progress on workplan:</i></p> <p>Review monitoring systems & performance data and outcomes for LAC (looked after children)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Progress report on Look After children across the borough • Updates on key action points. Milestones agreed at each meeting • More informative but succinct minutes • Active participation and involvement of representatives from Look After Children/young people • Adoption report /evaluation 	<p><i>Internal Governance:</i></p> <p>Monitor the journey of reports and the outcomes</p>	<p>To look at the children in our care, the way we would look and care about own children</p>	
<p>Hearing directly from young people</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young people become aware of the committee and to see impact of its worth • Corporate Parenting to be embedded across the council 	<p>Scrutiny of services for young people and what outcomes are achieved (with young people)</p>	<p>Young people input focused enquiry on local themes pertinent to children in care</p>	
<p>Batter accountability and visibility</p>	<p>To listen to our young people's voice and communicate</p>	<p>Public managements Reports to cabinet Role and function of the corporate parenting committee</p>	<p>Oversight of issues related to CAC and care leavers</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A representative from foster parents 	<p align="center"><i>Outcomes</i></p> <p>To see tangible outcomes from discussions/</p>	<p>Corporate Parenting Committee – once per year</p>	<p>Improve life for the children and young</p>	

What I expect from the next series of Corporate Parenting meetings

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of teenage pregnancy • Education degree level • Review CAMHS 	<p>report and feedback from young people.</p> <p>Understanding fully how we look after 'our children' and how we respond to various needs.</p>	<p>Joint Board /committee and the CCG safeguarding / or IG&P (integrated governance & performance) bodies. (Issues for CAC and careleavers in a joint health and social care space)</p>	<p>people in our care</p>	
<p>Other directorates present and a greater sense of corporate parenting ownership cross council visible through committee attendance and contributions.</p>	<p>Drug, alcohol and tobacco addiction amongst children in care</p> <p>Health of children in care. Comparisons with mainstream children</p> <p>Report on careleavers into training and further education</p>	<p align="center"><i>Exclusions</i></p> <p>Reasons for exclusions and hopefully provide a larger sample (re. survey)</p> <p>Days missing from school of children in care compared with mainstream children</p>		

**Corporate Parenting Committee
Meeting on 8 July 2019**

Workshop session

Performance and Outcomes

1.	Know more about triangulation of data <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rerun with same cohort (where possible) • Is there a particular cohort affected
2.	Pathway planning (at 16 years) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How much co-production • Impact = goals shared with young people • Owned plan more likely to succeed
3.	How do you assess relationship between children and young people, practitioners and social workers? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mitigation and quality assurance • External support workers; holding to account and measureable outcomes
4.	Young inspectors and young advisors
5.	Emotional and wellbeing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to strengthen relationships
6.	Housing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Risk of eviction • Issues with budgeting • Housing officer embedded in social work team
7.	Relationships
8.	Use Bright Spots questions in consultation /documents to allow longitudinal view <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis of life skills in different groups
9.	Top quarter data to be included as well as averages

What are we getting right

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education outcomes for some • Careleavers return to offer help • Broader council view of needs • Session at Corporate Parenting • Ambition and aspiration • Investment in careleavers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – time – thought – resource service re-design – outcomes that matter
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What can we do better

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consistent reporting• Varied housing opportunities /social isolation• Change in families and how we use their family networks to build support “Keep families strong”• Financial knowledge, EET – independent skills• Pathway Plan review completion and timeliness

Item No: 7.	Classification: Open	Date: 6 November 2019	Meeting name: Corporate Parenting Committee
Report title		Exclusions of Looked after Children	
Ward(s) or groups affected		Children in Care of Southwark Council	
From		Usha Singh, Virtual School Headteacher	

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That corporate parenting committee consider this report from Southwark Virtual School in response to the request for an overview of the work of Southwark Virtual School, including data in relation to fixed term and permanent exclusions of Children in Care of London Borough of Southwark.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

2. Legislation covering the exclusion process is comprehensively explained in guidance produced by the Department for Education:
[Exclusion from maintained school, academies and pupil referral units in England, Statutory guidance for those with legal responsibilities in relation to exclusion, September 2017](#)
3. The role of the Virtual School Headteacher in relation to exclusion of looked after and previously looked after children is further outlined in the guidance:
[Promoting the education of looked-after children and previously looked-after children](#)
4. Looked after children as a collective have disproportionately high rates of exclusion. They are particularly vulnerable to the adverse impacts of an exclusion. The head teacher should, as far as possible, avoid permanently excluding a looked after child. Schools should proactively cooperate with the child's carers, social worker and the local authority that looks after the child. If a school has concerns that a looked after child is at risk of exclusion, they should consider whether the provision of additional support would help or if an alternative educational placement is required.
5. The [DfE's National statistics](#) released in March 2018 revealed that:
 - The rate of permanent exclusions for looked after children is the same as the rate for all children, but continues to be much less than the rate for children in need.
 - Looked after children are more than five times more likely to have a fixed period exclusion than all children, and nearly one and a half times more likely than children in need.
6. *The most vulnerable children in our schools are those who are most likely to be excluded* – Findings from the [Timpson Review of School Exclusion](#) also revealed that:

- Children who are looked after are around 2.3 times more likely to be permanently excluded than children who have never been supported by social care.
- 78 percent of pupils who are permanently excluded have special educational needs, are categorised as in need, or are eligible for free school meals.
- Children with social, emotional and mental health needs are more likely to be permanently excluded.
- Boys, children who are looked-after, living in poverty, have special educational needs, or from certain ethnic minorities, are disproportionately excluded from school.
- Exclusion from school is associated with child, family and school-related factors identifiable at, or prior to, primary school age .
- There is high and disproportionate exclusion of children who have Special educational needs and disability (SEND). Official statistics show that children with SEN represent 14% of the state-funded school population but account for almost half of permanent exclusions. The same data show that pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support are almost six times more likely to receive a permanent exclusion than pupils with no SEN. Pupils with any type of SEN are around five times more likely to receive a fixed period exclusion.
- The prevalence of social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) among excluded pupils is high. Pupils who have emotional and/or mental health problems are at higher risk of exclusion: This increases inversely with age: the younger the child was when psychological distress first developed, the higher the likelihood of exclusion. At the same time, the exclusion in itself has been found to trigger or exacerbate emotional and mental health problems among those excluded. A literature review by Cole (2015) concluded that it seems feasible that in England, there could be up to half a million children with mental health difficulties at risk of exclusion.
- A child's likelihood of being excluded varies depending on which school they attend. The report revealed that 85 percent of all mainstream schools in England did not permanently exclude a single child in 2016/17, but 47 schools permanently excluded more than ten pupils in that same year. Similarly, while 43 percent of mainstream schools did not use any fixed period exclusions, 38 schools issued more than 500 each in a single year.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

Southwark Looked After Children Exclusion Data

7. Southwark Virtual School has robust systems in place for keeping track of both permanent and fixed term exclusions of children looked after. This includes commissioning an external attendance monitoring service that provides daily attendance and exclusion information gathered directly from schools. For comparison with other Local Authorities we also make use of exclusions data published by the Department for Education. However exclusions data are collected by the DfE two terms in arrears, and so the latest published exclusions data on [DfE's National statistics](#): looked-after children is from the academic year 2016-17, Please note that in the data provided below, exclusions of children who ceased to be looked after at some point of the year have been included. Years refer to academic year.
8. **Southwark data indicates that last year (2018-2019):**
 - a. Two Southwark looked after children were permanently excluded
 - b. 51 Southwark children looked after (CLA) were subject to a fixed term exclusion, one in six (16%) of all Southwark CLA of school age
 - c. There were 108 fixed term exclusions in total, compared to 145 the previous year

- d. The most common reasons for exclusions were verbal abuse/threatening behaviour to an adult (17%); physical assault on another pupil (14%) and persistent disruptive behaviour (12%)
- e. Nearly three times as many boys had a fixed term exclusion than girls (73%/27%)
- f. 90% of Southwark looked after children who received a fixed term exclusion were in secondary school, with the highest numbers in Years 8 and 9
- g. 47% of the children who received at least one fixed term exclusion were recorded as having special education needs
- h. 44 children with a fixed term exclusion (86% of total) were known to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), including 25 children currently open to CAMHS
- i. Four of the excluded children were known to Southwark Youth Offending Service.

Southwark CLA – Fixed Term and Permanent Exclusion Data – 3 Year Trend

Table 1: Southwark CLA – Exclusion Data – 3 Year Trend			
	2016 -2017	2017- 2018	2018 -2019
Virtual School Roll - School Age	355	341	328
Children subject to Fixed Term Exclusions Fixed Term Exclusions	45 (13%)	63 (18%)	51 (16%)
Number of fixed term exclusions	108	145	108
Number of Permanent Exclusion	4	1	2

9. The rates of fixed term and permanent exclusions of Southwark looked after children has been variable over the last 3 years. 16% of the Virtual School cohort received a fixed term exclusion in the last academic year. and 2 children were permanently excluded.

Southwark CLA Fixed Term Exclusions by Gender

Table 2: Southwark CLA Fixed Term Exclusions by Gender			
	2016 -2017	2017- 2018	2018 -2019
Boys	31 (69%)	45 (71%)	37 (73%)
Girls	14 (31%)	18 (29%)	14 (27%)
Total	45	63	51

10. The total number of Southwark looked after children who received at least one fixed term exclusion in the 2018-2019 academic year decreased by 12 when compared to the previous academic year.
 - Boys fixed term exclusions decreased by 8
 - Girls fixed term exclusions decreased by 4.
11. There are consistently higher proportions of male pupils receiving a fixed term exclusion. While there was a slight decrease in the number of fixed term exclusions recorded, the gender gap has continued to widen and the percentage of fixed term exclusions of boys has increased by 2% in the last academic year.

Southwark CLA Fixed Term Exclusions with SEN

Table 3: Fixed Term Exclusions of Southwark CLA with SEN						
	2016 -2017		2017- 2018		2018 -2019	
All children with FTE	45		63		51	
with SEN EHCP	13	29%	12	19%	12	24%
with SEN Support	11	24%	12	19%	12	24%
Total with SEN	24	53%	24	38%	24	47%

12. 47% of the children who received at least one fixed term exclusion were recorded as having Special Education Needs. This increase from previous year's figures was seen in both the EHCP and SEN Support cohorts in equal measure.

Southwark CLA Fixed Term Exclusions by Ethnicity

Table 4: Southwark CLA Fixed Term Exclusions - Ethnicity						
	2016-2017		2017-2018		2018-2019	
Asian/Asian British/Bangladeshi	1	2%	0	0%	1	2%
Black/Black British/African	7	16%	16	25%	12	24%
Black/Black British/Any other Black background	6	13%	7	11%	3	6%
Black/Black British/Caribbean	8	18%	6	10%	8	16%
British African	0	0%	1	2%	0	0%
Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups/Any other Mixed background	2	4%	0	0%	1	2%
Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups/White and Black African	2	4%	6	10%	3	6%
Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups/White and Black Caribbean	4	9%	10	16%	6	12%
Not disclosed	0	0%	0	0%	1	2%
Other Ethnic Groups/Any other ethnic group	1	2%	0	0%	1	2%
White/Any other White Background	2	4%	1	2%	2	4%
White/British	12	27%	16	25%	13	25%
Total	45		63		51	

13. White/British and Black/Black British/African accounted for half of the 2018-2019 excluded cohort and were received fixed term exclusions at a rate of 25% and 24% respectively. Black/Black British/Caribbean and Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups/White and Black Caribbean also had a high proportion of exclusions at 16% and 12% respectively

Southwark CLA 2018 -2019 Fixed Term Exclusions by Year Group

Table 5: Southwark CLA 2018 -2019 Fixed Term Exclusions by Year Group									
Year Group	Year 1-3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Year 11
Pupils Excluded	0	1	0	4	5	11	12	8	10
Exclusions	0	1	0	6	17	23	28	17	16
Rate of exclusion	0	1	0	1.5	3.4	2.1	2.3	2.1	1.6

14. The table shows the number of Southwark looked after children who received a fixed term exclusion from each year group, in the academic year 2018-2019. In line with national and local trends for looked after and non looked after cohorts, exclusion rates of Southwark looked after children increase as children reach KS3 and KS4. 90% of Southwark looked after children who received a fixed term exclusion were in secondary school. The table shows that the Year 7 cohort repeated behaviours that lead to exclusions at a higher rate than the other year groups. Southwark's Year 11 cohort recorded the lowest rate of exclusion indicative of reduced repeated incidence of challenging behaviour leading to a fixed term exclusion.

Southwark CLA Average Rate of Fixed Term Exclusions per excluded child - 3 Year Trend

Table 6: Southwark CLA Average Rate of Fixed Term Exclusions - 3 Year Trend			
	2016 -2017	2017- 2018	2018 -2019
Number of Children FTE	45	63	51
No of FTE	108	145	108
Average number of FTE per child	2.4	2.3	2.1

15. In the 2018-2019 academic year the number of students decreased as did the average number of fixed term exclusion episodes per child.. The average number of fixed term exclusions has reduced marginally year on year. This reflects a slight reduction in students repeating behaviours that result in multiple fixed term exclusions.

Southwark CLA Fixed Term Exclusions –Reasons

Table 7: Southwark CLA Fixed Term Exclusions – Reasons						
Year	2016-2017		2017-2018		2018-2019	
Drug/Alcohol Related	7	6%	4	3%	2	2%
Aggressive Behaviour	3	3%	0	0%	0	0%
Bullying	0	0%	0	0%	2	2%
Damage	1	1%	3	2%	1	1%
Disruptive Behaviour	8	7%	0	0%	0	0%
Persistent Disruptive Behaviour	10	9%	17	12%	13	12%
Drug and Alcohol Related	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Non - Cooperation with staff	1	1%	7	5%	4	4%
Physical aggression towards staff & pupils	5	5%	0	0%	1	1%
Physical Assault - Pupil	13	12%	9	6%	15	14%
Physical Assault Against an Adult (Staff)	9	8%	13	9%	6	6%
Racist Abuse	0	0%	3	2%	1	1%
Theft	1	1%	1	1%	0	0%
Truancy	0	0%	1	1%	1	1%
Unacceptable Behaviour	9	8%	0	0%	0	0%
Verbal Abuse/Threatening Behaviour Adult	8	7%	0	0%	18	17%
Verbal Abuse/Threatening Behaviour Pupil	0	0%	30	21%	3	3%
Other	33	3%	57	12%	41	11%
Total	108	100%	145	100%	108	100%

16. The table relates to the reasons for exclusions of Southwark looked after children. In some instances, fixed term exclusion was requested by Southwark Virtual School, as the Virtual School was challenging the practice of some secondary schools 'informally' excluding young people. Where there were instances of threat of permanent exclusion, fixed term exclusions were suggested as other possible sanctions or options for education were considered.

Southwark CLA Fixed Term Exclusions – In Borough and Out Borough

Table 8: Southwark CLA Fixed Term Exclusions – In Borough and Out Borough						
	2016 -2017		2017 -2018		2018 -2019	
In Borough	4	9%	14	22%	10	20%
Out Borough	41	91%	49	78%	41	80%

17. In the 2018-2019 academic year, 20% of Southwark children in Care who received a fixed term exclusion were in borough while 80% were in an out of borough school. This was marginally in line with the fixed term exclusion data from the previous year. This figure closely mirrors the percentage of the Virtual School cohort who are in out of borough placements.

Southwark CLA Fixed Term Exclusions - Ofsted ratings of schools

Table 9: Southwark CLA Fixed Term Exclusions - Ofsted ratings of schools			
Year	2016 -2017	2017-2018	2018-2019
No Grade	11	12	6
1 - Outstanding	9	17	13
2 - Good	23	32	30
3 - Required Improvement	1	1	2
4 - Inadequate	1	1	0
Total	45	63	51

18. Southwark is committed to ensuring that looked after children are not placed in schools that have an Ofsted rating that is below good and consequently, 95% of our current cohort are in schools that are good or outstanding. This is a contributing factor to the higher percentage of fixed term exclusions that are recorded in the schools graded good or outstanding by Ofsted.

Southwark CLA Permanent Exclusions by Gender

Table 10: Southwark CLA Permanent Exclusions by Gender			
PEX	2016 -2017	2017- 2018	2018 -2019
Male	3	1	2
Female	1	0	0
Total	4	1	2

19. The total number of Southwark looked after children who received permanent exclusion, in line with national data, is significantly lower than those who received fixed term exclusions. Permanent exclusions have decreased in recent years, in comparison to the 2016-2017 academic year.
20. In the 2018-2019 academic year there were 2 permanent exclusions, both were boys. Southwark girls have received no permanent exclusions in the last two academic years.

Southwark CLA Permanent Exclusions with SEND

Table 11: Southwark CLA Permanent Exclusions with SEN			
	2016 - 2017	2017 -2018	2018 -2019
EHCP	2	0	1
SEN Support	1	0	0
Total Excluded	4	1	2

21. In the 2016-2017 academic year, 3 of the 4 children who were permanently excluded were children with SEN and in the 2017-2018 academic year, no Southwark looked after child with SEN was permanently excluded
22. In the 2017-2018 academic year:
- 1 out of the 2 children was recorded as having an EHCP
 - Both children were boys and were both in secondary education (Yr8 and Yr11)
 - Both were excluded from out of borough schools
 - The 2 boys were from Black/Black British/Caribbean and Black/Black British/Any other Black backgrounds.

Southwark CLA Permanent Exclusions –Reasons

23. The permanent exclusions of Southwark looked after children in the 2018-2019 academic year related to an incidence of violence and possession of a weapon. Permanent exclusion from previous years also related to episodes of behaviour that contravened the schools code of conduct to an extent warranting the sanction.

Southwark CLA known to Carelink (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services)

24. Carelink is the CAMHS provision for looked after and adopted children delivered by South London & Maudsely NHS Trust. Carelink Heads of Service examined the list of the 51 Southwark looked after children who received a fixed term exclusion in the 2018-2019 academic year to determine if they were known to Carelink or other CAMHS teams.

Table 12: Status of current involvement with Carelink		
Currently open to Carelink	17	33%
Opened previously	19	37%
Open to other CAMHS teams	8	16%
Not Known	7	14%

25. Of the 51 children:
- 44 were known to Carelink or other CAHMS teams – 86% in total.
 - 17 cases are currently open to Carelink and 8 are open to other teams.
 - A total of 49% of 2018-2019 excluded cases are currently open to Carelink.
 - The 44 children known to CAMHS have long standing complex needs and presentations
26. This is consistent with information reported to corporate parenting committee in July 2019 in report presented by the Designated Doctor for Looked After Children, on 'The Relationship between Health and School Exclusions – A Deep Dive. Out of a sample of 6 children who had had more than 3 fixed terms exclusions in 2018-19:

- 5 had either current or past emotional and behavioural needs.
- 2 had received assessment by Carelink CAMHS and 3 received assessment, therapy (including medication as required) by other CAMHS services.

Southwark CLA Fixed Term Exclusions and Youth Offending

27. The Southwark Youth Offending Service Manager examined the list of the 51 Southwark looked after children who received an exclusion in the 2018-2019 academic year to determine if they were known to YOS.
- 4 of the list were currently known to the YOS – of these, 3 were offending before (and after) they were excluded
 - Of the 4, 1 child is female.
28. Where young people are placed out of borough and then offend there, they will be known to the local YOS in borough of residence rather than Southwark YOS, so it is possible that other young people with school exclusions may be known to other YOS teams.

Challenges for Children with Emotional and Mental Health Difficulties

29. It is clear that there is a very strong correlation between children with emotional, social and mental health difficulties and school exclusion, as evidenced by the very high proportion of excluded children known to child and adolescent mental health services. Carelink service managers have identified the following issues and challenges in relation to this cohort of young people,
- The primary school provision varies with some being excellent and some schools needing more work to help understand children and young people with childhood adversity, trauma and complex attachment issues as well as possible disorders
 - A more flexible education provision will better meet the needs of children with such a range of emotional, social, cognitive, developmental and mental health difficulties. This applies particularly but not exclusively to secondary school provision
 - There can be difficulties in accessing Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP). There is a need to understand early childhood social emotional and psychological difficulties/challenges so that EHCPs can be considered in a timely way in a significant number of cases, the need for an EHCP was flagged for several years before the process of even requesting an EHCP began
 - Both schools and CAMHS staff have identified that some of our children are three years behind their peers in reaching educational targets. Where the EHCP process is significantly delayed it the result can be that children have not felt supported all the way through their schooling. Consequently they may become disenchanted, feel they do not fit in the system and become vulnerable to exclusion
 - Adopted children may need particular advocacy in the education system to better understand their early adversity and to offer support to adoptive parents who have to deal with not only their child's current presentation but also the impact of their child's early history
 - There may be a need for additional support with transition to college and within the college system for care leavers with emotional and mental health difficulties

The Role Of The Virtual School in minimising exclusions

30. Minimising exclusions is a major priority for the Virtual School. Exclusions impacts negatively on placement stability, on emotional wellbeing, and on educational attainment and widens the gap in education.

For every additional day of school missed due to fixed term exclusions, young people in care scored one-sixth of a grade less at GCSE
(Rees Report)

31. Recognising the correlation between children with emotional, social and mental health difficulties and school exclusion, Southwark Virtual School has aimed to address the need for Early Identification of Special Educational Needs through commissioning Southwark Educational Psychology Team and Southwark Speech and language Services to secure rapid assessment of pupils' educational needs and support schools to find more appropriate ways of supporting pupils.

32. To reduce exclusions Southwark Virtual School:

- Ensures that each child on the Virtual School role has their personal Education Advisor who support Southwark Children in Care in education
- Works with Head teachers, schools and local authorities to avoid excluding a looked after child
- The Virtual School makes efforts to address all known cases of exclusions and advocates for children in care when this is required
- Responds quickly to exclusion or threat of exclusions so that a joint plan for the child can be implemented which identifies any key triggers and also instances when the inappropriate behaviour does not occur and these strengths can be built on
- Convenes a monthly multi-agency Attendance Panel where every episode of absence from school is discussed and support strategies/ interventions are put in place to support engagement
- Closely monitors those with exclusions, and ensures appropriate and timely interventions will be put in place during the school year
- Provides support to looked after children, schools and network of professionals around the child
- Advocates for Southwark Children in Care
- Raises Designated Teachers' understanding of the in-school challenges faced by children looked after.

33. While reducing fixed term exclusions is the main focus, there are cases where Southwark Virtual School advocates that fixed term exclusions should be considered – such as when challenging the practice of some secondary schools 'informally' excluding young people or as an alternative to a threatened permanent exclusion.

Community impact statement

34. The Public Sector Equality Duty under the Equality Act 2010 will apply. This requires that the Council has due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between different people when carrying out its activities. In this regard the relevant issues pertaining to the exclusion of looked after children are addressed throughout the report.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
Graham, B., White, C., Edwards, A., Sylvia, P., & Street, C. (2019). School exclusion: a literature review on the continued disproportionate exclusion of certain children. <i>London: Department for Education.</i>		
Link (please copy and paste into your browser): https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/800028/Timpson_review_of_school_exclusion_literature_review.pdf		
Department for Education and University of Oxford 2013. <i>Linking care and educational data: the educational progress of looked after children in England.</i>		
Link (please copy and paste into your browser): http://www.education.ox.ac.uk/research/linking-care-and-educational-data-the-educational-progress-of-looked-after-children-in-england/		
Department for Education. (2017). <i>Exclusion from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units in England.</i> London: Department for Education.		
Link (please copy and paste into your browser): https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/641418/20170831_Exclusion_Stat_guidance_Web_version.pdf		
Department for Education. (2018). <i>Promoting the education of looked-after children and previously looked-after children.</i> London: Department for Education.		
Link (please copy and paste into your browser): https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/683556/Promoting_the_education_of_looked-after_children_and_previously_looked-after_children.pdf		
Department for Education. (2019). <i>Outcomes for children looked after by local authorities in England, 31 March 2018.</i> London: Department for Education.		

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/794535/Main_Text_Outcomes_for_CLA_by_LAs_2018.pdf		
Cole, T. (2015). <i>Mental health difficulties and children at risk of exclusion from schools in England: A review from an educational perspective of policy, practice and research, 1997 to 2015</i> . Oxford: University of Oxford.		
Web link: http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.722.2930&rep=rep1&type=pdf		

APPENDICES

No.	Title
None	

AUDIT TRAIL

Lead Officer	Nina Dohel, Director of Education	
Report Author	Usha Singh, Virtual School Headteacher (with input on CAMHS from Elizabeth Murphy and Linda Ryan, SLAM and on YOS from Andrew Hillas)	
Version	Final	
Dated	24 October 2019	
Key Decision?	No	
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER		
Officer Title	Comments Sought	Comments Included
Director of Law and Democracy	No	No
Strategic Director of Finance and Governance	No	No
Cabinet Member	No	No
Date final report sent to Constitutional Team		23 October 2019

Item No. 8.	Classification: Open	Date: 6 November 2019	Meeting Name: Corporate Parenting Committee
Report title:		Adoption Service Annual Report 2018-19	
Ward(s) or groups affected:		All	
From:		Director, Children & Families	

RECOMMENDATION

1. That the corporate parenting committee accepts the Annual Report of Southwark Adoption Service 2018-19.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

2. The purpose of the annual report document is to report on the activity of the Adoption Service fulfilling obligations in the Adoption National Minimum Standards (2011) and Adoption Service Statutory Guidance (2011) to report to the executive side of the local authority.
3. The report covers: performance and developments in Southwark's delivery of adoption services; how the Council is compliant with key national minimum standards; and the service offered to those seeking to adopt and those affected by adoption through the provision of adoption support. It will also identify any significant trends within adoption and how Southwark can continue to meet the changing demands within the Adoption Service.
4. The report details the work of Southwark council Adoption Service from 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2019.
5. The Adoption Service Annual Report 2018-19 in Appendix 1 sets out all the key areas for consideration.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

6. Southwark Children's Services were inspected in March 2017 and rated good overall with an outstanding sub-judgement for adoption performance.

Community impact statement

7. Southwark is committed to ensuring children with an adoption plan, from all parts of the community, are enabled to live with families able to meet most of their needs as soon as possible.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
None		

APPENDICES

No.	Title
Appendix 1	Annual Report – Southwark Adoption Service 2018-19

AUDIT TRAIL

Lead Officer	Alasdair Smith, Director, Children & Families	
Report Author	Helen Woolgar, Head of Service, Permanence, Children's and Adults' Service	
Version	Final	
Dated	24 October 2019	
Key Decision?	No	
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER		
	Officer Title	Comments sought
	Director of Law and Democracy	No
	Strategic Director of Finance and Governance	No
	Cabinet Member	No
	Date final report sent to Constitutional Team	24 October 2019

2018/2019

Annual Report

Southwark Adoption Service



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KEY MESSAGES

This will be the final annual report for the Southwark Adoption Service as Southwark will host Adopt London South (ALS) a collaboration of 9 south London local authorities. ALS is ambitious to take elements of best practice from all of the 9 local authorities involved as well as embracing learning from elsewhere in the country where these arrangements have already been established. It is anticipated that ALS will go live on the 1st October 2019 and will be the largest Regional Adoption Agency in terms of number of partner local authorities.

The number of adoptions in 2018/19 was 12. This was a reduction from 14 in the previous year. In 2018/19 only five Placement Orders were granted and this means that in 2019/20 the number of adoptions would be likely to be in the region of 5 – 7 children which is a significant reduction.

The number of adoptive households approved in 2018/19 was 12. This was an increase from 9 in 2017/18.

In 2018/19 Southwark developed a mentoring and leadership programme for leads from other local authorities to develop an action plan to develop early permanence within their Local Authority. So far this has included five social workers from Greenwich, Lambeth, Wandsworth and Merton adoption teams. The aim is to increase the leadership skill set of Early permanence across South London.

PURPOSE OF ANNUAL REPORT

The purpose of the document is to report on the activity of the adoption service, fulfilling obligations in the Adoption National Minimum Standards (2011) and Adoption Service Statutory Guidance (2011) to report to the executive side of the local authority. It will cover: performance and developments in Southwark's delivery of adoption services; how the Council is compliant with key national minimum standards and the service offered to those seeking to adopt and those affected by adoption through the provision of adoption support. It will also identify any significant trends within adoption and how Southwark can continue to meet changing demands within the adoption service. This report details the work of Southwark Council Adoption Service from 1st April 2018 to end of March 2019.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Adoption is one of the most important and significant decisions that can be made for a child. As part of its wider agenda to create a fairer future for the most vulnerable children and families, Southwark Council wants every child to grow up in a safe, stable and loving home. For those young children who cannot remain or return safely to their birth families, adoption offers them the best opportunity to experience a warm and loving family environment throughout life. Southwark Adoption Service is part of the Permanence & Resources Service within the council and there is a strong focus on working closely with all the children's social work teams, in particular the Safeguarding Service, to ensure permanence is thought about as early as possible for children and for most children the best possible permanence option is remaining with their birth parents or extended family but for those for whom this cannot be safely achieved then considering adoption as early as possible increases the chances of finding a matched adoptive family in the child's timescales.

Southwark have invested in having a high-quality Adoption Service and this has led to on-going improvements in the quality and pace of the adopter assessments undertaken and with the pace at which children are matched with prospective adoptive families. The service invested in having a team dedicated team tracking child as early as possible to ensure that where appropriate the parallel plan of adoption is considered as early as possible enabling consideration of early permanence. This team working closely and successfully with colleagues in the Safeguarding & Family Support Service, as well as Assessment and Intervention Service, have enabled several children to be placed in Early Permanence placements rather than experiencing moves from foster care then to adoption.

Southwark continues to develop its practice and systems in order to deliver the extensive change agenda outlined in *Putting Children First: delivering our vision for excellent children's social care* (July 2016). This sets out the programme of reforms to children's social care over the next four years. *Adoption – A vision for Change* (March 2016) reiterates the government pledge to tackle delay for children in the adoption process. The government has reinforced their policy ambition through provisions in the Education and Adoption Act 2016. The Act also gives the Secretary of State a new power to direct one or more named local authorities to make arrangements for any, or all, of their adoption functions to be carried out on their behalf by of the local authorities named, or by another agency.

Southwark are hosting the South London Regional Adoption Agency- Adopt London South (ALS) (hosting the adoption functions of eight other local authorities), and during 2018/2019 with an appointment of a Project Manager there has been increased momentum and engagement in developing a clear business case and model. The ALS consultation process has been extensive and inclusive, drawing on the views and close work with Local Authorities, the London Executive Board, families affected by adoption, VAA, Regional and London wide RAA's , Steering Group consultations with practitioners and other interested parties. We are unique in that ALS will continue to, shape and deliver practice with lived input from adopters, birth parents and children. We are about to embark on the induction and transition stage, it is anticipated that Adopt London South will go live on the 1 October 2019.

At heart of the proposition for Adopt London is that a pooled and dedicated service will deliver better outcomes through stronger leadership, more resilient services, pooled resources and a dedicated focus upon implementing the learning of what works best for every adopted child and every adopter across the capital.

WHAT WE DID - CHILDREN

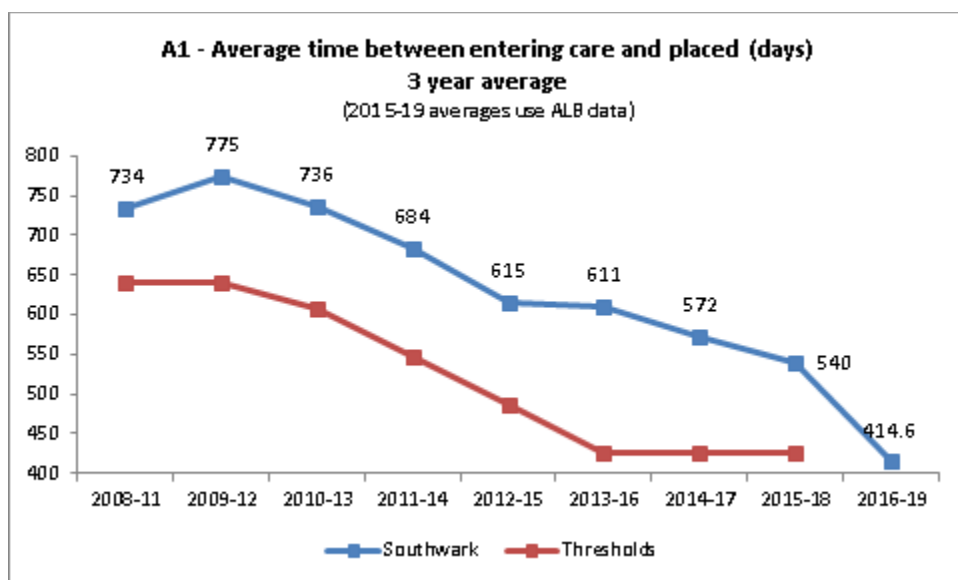
Activity Overview - children	18-19	17-18	16-17	15-16	14-15	13-14
Children with a Placement Order made (<i>plan for adoption agreed by Court</i>)	5	11	17	13	21	40
Children matched with adopters	4	12	14	21	32	29
Children with an Adoption Order granted	12	14	20	32	39	33

In 2018/19 12 children were adopted. The age range of children adopted was from 10 months to aged 17 years. 6 out of the 12 children adopted were from a BME background. The number of children adopted is reflective of the levels of Placement Orders in the previous two years. It is however stark that in 2018/19 there was an extremely low level of Placement Orders made with only 5 orders which is the lowest level within the last 6 years. There absolutely never should be targets for numbers of children for whom a Placement Order and plan of adoption should be sought as it is about the right permanence for each child being carefully considered within a fair legal process. The principals in the Children Act are very clear to promote children being cared for by their parents where this cannot be achieved looking to place with their friends and family.

In Southwark there has been an increase in the number of Friends and Family Placements and some increase in the use of Family Group Conferences and this could in part account for the reduction in children being adopted as positively more children are remaining with their families. The proportions of children aged 0-5 coming into care has decreased, 29% of children in care were aged 0 -9 in 2016/17 but in 2017/2018 this fell 5% to 24% and in 2018/19 remained at 24%. This has reduced the number of younger children requiring placements and therefore reduced the number of children for whom adoption would be likely to be considered however it does not account for the variation between 2017/18 and 2018/19. While our hypothesis is the reduction relates to more children being placed with family and friends and achieving permanence via a Special Guardian Order (SGO) we need to scrutinise this hypothesis. In the first quarter of 2019/20 a focussed audit is being undertaken on children aged under 5 subject to a Child Protection plan for over 12 months to consider is permanence being considered early enough and are we ensuring for young children we are always robustly pursuing permanence.

Adoption Timeliness for Children

The chart below shows continuing improvement since 2009 in the A1 figure which measures how many days it is from when a child becomes looked after to the date they move in with their prospective adoptive family. The average is now down to now 414, for the rolling period 2016-2019 is which is an improvement from 2017/2018 when the average for the period 2015-2018 was 472.

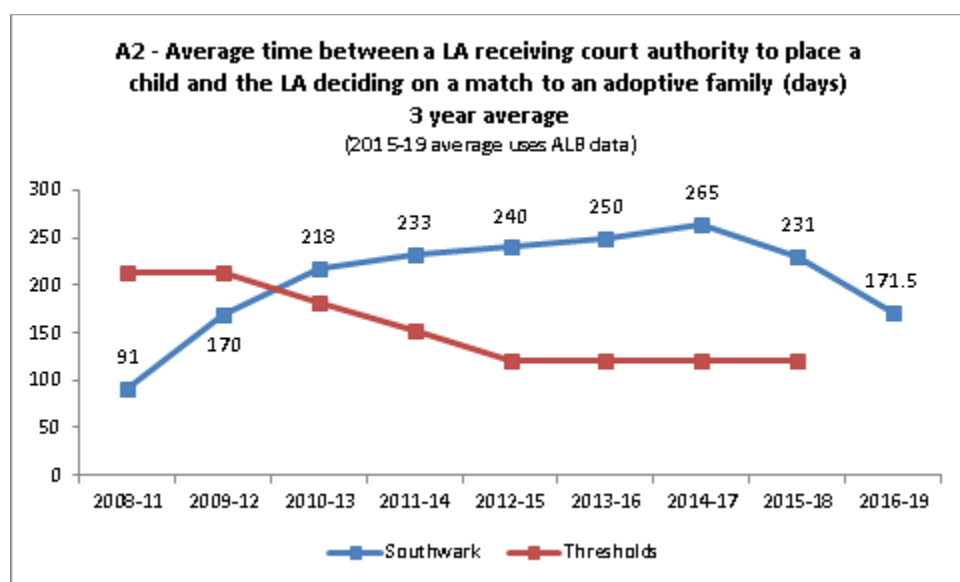


Southwark are successful in concluding care proceedings within 26 weeks. This year 2018/2019 for the first time this high profile Government target of 26 weeks has been met:

2018-19	Number of weeks
National	29
London	29
Southwark	26

Matching children with adopters

This performance area -A2 - measures the number of days between a Placement Order being made for a child to when they are matched with their prospective adoptive parents. The figure for the rolling period 2016-2019 is 171.5 which is a decrease from the last rolling period 2015-2018 when the figure was 231. Although the performance in this area does not meet the Government threshold of 91 days, this is indicative of the complexities of matching children where there is uncertainty around their health and developmental needs, and their age.



In 2018/19 there were 4 children matched with their prospective adoptive family at panel. This is a considerable decrease from 2017/18 when the number was 12. Of the 4 children matched, 2 were below the Government threshold of 91 days from Placement Order to match (A2). Of the two children that were above the threshold explanations for this were recorded in the monthly adoption activity report that is presented to the Permanence Taskforce, chaired by the Director of Children and Families. This report enables the service to be scrutinised and challenged through this group, and ensures a focus on continuing improvement and learning.

Children who are considered to be harder to place (those 3 and over, with additional needs and in sibling groups) will continue to comprise a significant proportion of those that the Adoption Service in Southwark needs to find families for. This remains an area that needs continuing focus and challenge to ensure we are not limiting the children for whom adoption may be the right Care Plan. The Service are committed to give all children the best possible opportunity of finding an adoptive family if that is the right care plan for them. It is critical to our service that we understand individual children's journeys and that our focus is on these not on the 'averages' in timescales. Southwark has during 2018/2019 sought to utilise their own adoptive placements, and in parallel consider and use a range of other placements from Voluntary Adoption Agencies and other Local Authorities to ensure choice and that children do not wait longer than necessary for an appropriate match.

Early Permanence

The Early Permanency scheme in Southwark began in October 2014 and gave it this name to cover both 'Concurrency' and 'Foster to Adopt' placements. The service continues to be delivered on the expertise from Coram as well as multi-disciplinary support from Southwark CARELINK who are a key part of the ongoing steering group for the scheme.

We have now made 18 placements since 2014, these are not all Southwark children and some are with Southwark children with EP carers from other agencies. We have continued to support our Early Permanence placements and at end of March 2018 have four babies placed who we hope to have Adoption Orders in the next few months. These placements have been increasingly Inter-Agency with other boroughs placing children with our Early Permanence carers. We have also placed our children with Coram and Lewisham Early Permanence carers. We are using our Early Permanence Contract in these cases to ensure we are being paid as a Fostering Agency for the support we provide to these placements.

Southwark were awarded funding from the Practice Innovation Fund with Coram in 2017/2018 to develop early permanence across the South London Adoption and Permanence Consortium (SLAPC) and then wider to the rest of London. Southwark provide a monthly support group for Early Permanence carers across SLAPC – including those in Stage 2, approved and with a child in placement. Early Permanence carers have fed back that they appreciate the opportunity to meet with others in similar situations as they feel different from other adopters and foster carers. They also appreciate the therapeutic input from Carelink (Southwark CAMHS) who is funded to attend from the Practice Improvement Fund from 2018 until end of March 2019.

This year saw a decline in the numbers of approved Early Permanence carers in Southwark, from 5 in 2017-2018 to 3 in 2018-2019.

Southwark run a bi-monthly steering group for Early Permanence leads across the South London Consortium to share good practice and develop strong links including considering matches. Southwark and Coram ran staff training for East London in Jan 2019, North London in Feb 2019 and for South London in May 2019. This one day training is for social workers and managers on "Assessing and Supporting Dually Approved carers" – these training days have been well attended and we plan to run this again in November 2019 for staff across London as most of the South London Adoption and Permanence Consortium have now attended.

Southwark led an Early Permanence Conference across the South London Permanence Consortium at Goldsmiths University in March 2018. This was very successful and involved professionals across 8 Local Authorities as well as Voluntary Adoption Agencies. We ran a second training day in December 2018 in Southwark (including contact workers, social workers, managers and lawyers) to attend to raise awareness of the challenges and positives of these placements for children, adopters and staff involved. Also to help raise awareness about these placements and for professionals across the service to develop their understanding of what children Early Permanence may be suitable for and how to plan and support these placements as well as sharing a film featuring the experiences of Southwark early permanence carers.

With funding from the Regional Adoption Agency Quick Wins Project Southwark were able to develop a mentoring and leadership programme for leads from other Local Authorities to develop an action plan to develop early permanence within their Local Authority. So far this has included five social workers from Greenwich, Lambeth, Wandsworth and Merton adoption teams. The aim is to increase the leadership skill set of Early Permanence across South London.

Relinquished babies

The Southwark Adoption Service provides a service for birth parents that wish to voluntarily relinquish their babies for adoption and this includes Southwark offering funding for these parents to access a session of independent legal advice as well as counselling. These assessments require intensive support by social workers including highly skilled counselling. The Adoption Service supported 3 relinquished babies during 2018/19 who were placed with Southwark approved adopters; all three cases were interagency from other local authorities. There were no Southwark children relinquished in 2018/19.

Children waiting for adoption

2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
44	48	45	18	7	9	9	7

The Adoption Service and in particular the Achieving Permanence Practice Group (APPG) carefully track children now working closely with colleagues in both Assessment and Intervention, as well as Safeguarding and Family Support Services, using an established permanence consultation approach. The aim is working together and achieving the right permanence for every child. The numbers for individual children can have a very statistically high impact for both A1 and A2 figures. As a service as well as looking at averages we have detailed management oversight of the journey for individual children and we want to be ambitious to find permanent stable families for more children who cannot return to their lives in their birth families. Proactively exploring adoption for a greater number of older children and those with complex needs is a desired outcome to reduce the numbers of children in care and to open up this possibility for more children. It is however very likely to achieve adoption for more children then the impact could be skewing timescales so that averages increase and this will reflect on the Adoption Scorecard.

At the end of 2018/19 there were 7 children waiting for adoption with Placement Orders who had not been matched with an adoptive family. This continues to be a historically low number but it still represents a great challenge to our services to ensure children suitable for adoption get that opportunity as soon as possible.

The Adoption Service continues to extensively use all means possible to find adopters for children including Link Maker, national and local exchange days and activity days. All resources possible are used including DVDs and iPads to be able to show prospective adopters the most recent picture of children. Creative support packages that have been designed around the needs of the child in the adoptive family have enabled children with a higher level of needs to be adopted.

Siblings

The Adoption Service is highly committed that whenever possible siblings should be placed together and where this is not possible it is crucial that placements are found that enable brothers and sisters to stay in touch. Sometimes the needs of each sibling are too great for one carer to be able to meet them all. Siblings are considered harder to place because of their greater needs and the smaller pool of adopters who wish to care for them. All sibling groups for whom there is a plan of adoption are assessed using the Together or Apart Assessment Model (BAAF 2008) and work is often jointly undertaken with Carelink the CAMHS service for children looked after. In 2018/19 several staff in the adoption service undertook the new training Beyond together or apart - Planning for, assessing and placing sibling groups and these staff are looking at developing a training and support programme for social workers in the Safeguarding and Family Support Service to ensure we are undertaking the best possible assessment on sibling relationships to inform all placement planning.

In 2018/2019 there have been 12 children adopted, all of them single children, however one child was placed with an adoptive family who had already adopted her older brother so will grow up with a full sibling.

WHAT WE DID – ADOPTERS**Recruitment of adopters**

Activity Overview - adopters	2018/19	2017/18	2016/17	2015/26	2014/15	2013/14
Adopters approved	12	9	10	21	25	29
Percentage approved within Government Minimum Timescales	100	100	100	21	16	n/k
Adoption inquiries	116	233	319	264	262	341
Adoption breakdowns prior to Adoption Order	0	1	0	0	2	0

The number of adopter households approved in 2018/19 was 12 which was an increase from 9 in the previous year. There were 13 full assessments completed but one household withdrew following the assessment being completed due to family reasons. Recruitment continued to be focussed on assessing adopters who are able to meet the needs of Southwark children waiting for adoption, and in particular to meet the needs of older children, children in sibling groups and children who need early permanence placements. However despite this focus with tools such as Linkmaker adopters approved by Southwark were increasingly searching widely for the best possible match and the majority of placements were Inter-Agency and not with Southwark children waiting.

11 households were couples and there was one single applicant in this year. The adopters were from a range of backgrounds. There were 4 black families: 2 were Black African, 1 was Black British / Black Other, 1 family was a mixed household of Black African and White Irish. 7 families were from White British, Irish, European or White Other with backgrounds. There were 3 same sex couples and 1 single Gay male. There were no single female applicants and no same sex Lesbian families. There were no families with disabilities or from a Transgender origin. 3 out of 12 households were approved under the Early Permanence Scheme as both foster carers and adopters.

There has been a huge decline in the numbers of enquires, to 116 the previous year there were 233. October 2018 [National Adoption week] saw the lowest with 3 enquires and November 2018 to March showing signs of minimal increase. Direct conversations were undertaken with adoptive families during July – Aug 2018, most informed that they were unaware of the shortage of adopters. There has however been an increase in interest in Adoption from white european same sex couple and heterosexual couples.

The adopter assessment team have developed tailored Early Permanence training for practitioners in the south of London, they are pioneering specific training for adopters who wish to consider transracial placements and siblings, and Southwark continue to work in partnership with Coram and Southwark CAMHS delivering and developing crucial, expertise planning, and clinical support and advice to Early Permanence families.

Adopter assessment timeliness

In 2018/2019 100% of adoptive households were assessed within the National Minimum Standards of six months. This performance has now been maintained for three years and is embedded through the Service ensuring:

- Efficient allocation of cases to Social Workers
- Contingency arrangements to cover periods of staff absence to ensure assessment continuity
- Efficient panel processes and referee visits
- More in-depth analysis of couple complexities
- DBS completed at earlier stage

The aim over the next 12 months will be to continue to maintain all assessments being completed to an excellent standard within the required timescale whilst developing pace within the collective structure of Adopt London South. This will be practically challenging but highly desirable during the process of the merging of the 9 local authority's adoption services within Adopt London South. The aim target for 2018/2019 was 15 adopter assessments; this was not achieved and one family needed to pull out at the very last stages of the assessment.

Approval to matched performance

The pace of matching adopters approved in 2018/19 to children has dipped with only one family being matched within a month and this match was internal. Eight of the families were matched in 8 months. The reasons for those not matched within 3 months is the length of time taken for local authorities to prepare their children for panel, all 8 were interagency matches. 3 households are still waiting, one is a single male and another is an Early Permanence family who have waiting since February 2019.

In addition to work with families approved in 2018/19 the Adoption Assessment team worked with some approved adopters approved in previous years including some who were waiting a long time for a match. Adopters who tend to wait longer are those with children (birth or adopted) already in their family where the matching is critical not just with the parents but to the whole family. In 2018/2019 Southwark supported 12 adoptive families to be matched with children outside of Southwark with other Local Authorities. Out of these 12 matches 3 of these 4 of those were with local authorities in south London within the South London Adoption and Permanence Consortium. Two households were matched with sibling groups and in both cases these were sibling groups of two. Three adoptive families approved by Southwark were matched with Southwark children. In total prior to the children being adopted over the course of 2018/2019 Southwark Adoption Service provided 31 families with ongoing support and supervision.

Adoption Support (Private applications and International Applications)

The number of private applications supported by the adoption service in 2018/2019 was 9.

Adoption disruptions

There were no adoption disruptions during 2018-19 for Southwark children.

This stability of placements is likely to be due to a number of factors. The Achieving Permanence Team is tracking children during proceedings so have a greater depth of knowledge about the child's needs which positively informs careful matching. Introductions planning, informed by the University of East Anglia Moving to Adoption Project is now more child centred and paced allowing a more gradual transition for children into their adoptive families. Children and families have more time to learn about each other and feel secure about the transition before the final moving day. The Achieving Permanence Team has access to CARELINK CAMHS at group supervisions to discuss the therapeutic needs of children and families during the tracking process and transition. This better informs the therapeutic support within the adoption support plan and there is a real understanding of the need to fund early therapeutic support from social workers and senior managers. There have also been fewer adoptions this year which has a statistical impact.

There have been seven adoption placements which have disrupted prior to the Adoption Order being made since 2006 a period of 12 years. Four of these have been since 2014. Of the four, three were Southwark approved adopters and one was approved by a voluntary agency. There have been independent reviews done of each of these disruptions, and learning events with managers and panel members to triangulate the improvements needed in the service as a response.

Three were older children (aged 6 or over) the younger child (aged 2) was a family placement. Two of the Southwark approved adopters were single females, who had never been parents before. They both had girls placed with them for adoption; one aged five and one aged seven. Both girls had experienced a considerable amount of neglect and emotional abuse within their birth families before being taken into care. They had also been with their foster carers for over two years before being placed for adoption.

The other older child, a boy was the elder of two siblings placed together with a couple. He had unfortunately taken on a parental role with his younger sibling when they lived with their birth mother, and on placement with the prospective adopters was not able to accept the changed dynamic.

ADOPTION SUPPORT

The need for adoption support has continued to grow as more children have been placed for adoption and adopted. It is very much recognised that adoption now is not a one-off event, but something that evolves over a lifetime involving the child, birth parents and family and the adoptive family (the adoption triangle). It is a complicated and often a mix of joy and loss. Bespoke support is needed over time to support all involved in adoption and this will be required to varying degrees with some families never needing statutory support and others requiring an ongoing package of support and most requiring some time limited support at critical points.

Adoption support plans are bespoke and tailored to the individual needs of the child and their adoptive family, and are prepared prior to cases being presented to the Adoption and Fostering Panel for a match. There is a good range of effective pre and post adoption support provided by the in-house workers and commissioned services that are spot purchased as needed. The nature of support provided varies considerably, from advice on strategies for integrating children into families, telling difficult life story information, Theraplay support to promote attachment, in addition to specialist commissioned support with attachment difficulties.

A real strength in the Post Permanence team is that a Psychotherapist from the Carelink CAMHS Service attends fortnightly group supervision and provides expert guidance and support to social workers and sometimes directly to adoptive families and accessing the right types of therapeutic support.

On 31st March 2019 there were 150 financial support packages for adoptive families. The Adoption Service are creative in utilising support packages for adopters to enable more children to be adopted and to ensure the finances of prospective adopters is not a barrier to a child achieving permanence. It remains the case that the majority of adoptions are made without an ongoing package of financial support.

Support groups

The Adoption Service has worked closely with Southwark We Are Family (WAF) and New Family Social to support and promote a number of groups within the area to meet the needs of adoptive families. The service greatly values the relationship with WAF which is an adopter led support and advocacy charity, established by Southwark adopters.

WAF convenes a weekly support group which alternates between a morning play group one week and an evening adopter support group the next. These groups have both a support and social function and meet in Southwark. In addition, WAF holds monthly family meetings at the weekend to include working adoptive families. WAF also run a monthly support group for adopters who are waiting for children to be placed and have invited social workers from Southwark's post adoption service to share information at their group as well as speakers from the Virtual School and other interesting speakers. The Adoption Service run a group to provide help, advice and support to adopters waiting across the South London Consortium. The service has also started a bi-monthly group for single adopters across the South London Consortium and this is also reported by adopters to be helpful and was attended by a mix of adopters from across the consortium.

The Adoption Service has set up a support group for all early permanence carers in south London. This group runs on the last Friday of each month and has a varied programme which has included baby massage training and learning about Theraplay techniques. This group aims and outcomes will be affiliated in Adopt London South.

Training

A rolling programme of training and workshops is provided for adoptive parents directly by the Southwark Adoption Service as well as training available through the South London Adoption and Permanence Consortium and training events run by the adopter led group 'We are Family (WAF). As with the previous years the "Great behaviour breakdown parenting course" continues to be a huge favourite with adopters, together Saturday workshops. 2018- 2019 has increased its attendance at every Saturday workshop.

We have reviewed and revised our transracial placements workshop "Exploring Identity and Difference in Transracial Placements" and this is now co run by two transracially placed adult adoptees and a social work practitioner. The collaboration creates a reflective space for families wishing to consider a transracial placement, or those who are already a transracial family unit. The transracial workshops are open to adopters in the within the Adopt London South. Other the topics for the Saturday workshops have included:

- "An introduction to Adoption for Family and Friends"
- "Managing the challenges of Adolescence"
- "Building attachment"
- "Making sense of adoption"
- "Moving into placement"
- "Supporting your child's education"

The Adoption Service runs preparation training for adoption in partnership with Lambeth and Wandsworth and these groups run regularly at weekends and are facilitated by social worker and managers across the consortium.

The parenting course the 'Great Behaviour Breakdown' continues to receive fantastic feedback from adoptive parents and Special Guardians who have attended the course with some describing the impact of this course as 'life changing'. Based on feedback from adoptive families we have added a 4th day to the 'Great Behaviour Breakdown' course to enable the participants to meet with the facilitators and group members later to discuss how they are using the techniques used and further embed what they have learnt and how is working on a day to day basis. The Adoption Service has been able to recoup some of the costs of running this course and paying the facilitators via applications to the Adoption Support Fund.

Adoption Support Fund

The Adoption Support Fund has been in operation since 1st May 2015 with 19.3 million available for agencies to apply for on behalf of their adoptive families for the provision of therapeutic services. The fund has been set up to reduce the gap between adoptive families needing therapeutic services and receiving them. In October 2016 the government has made an additional £2m available for the fund with a fair access limit of £5k per child for the duration of 2016 and which has continued since it was implemented. In total since the fund came into existence Southwark have made claims for a total of £429,711.48.

On 31st March 2019 there were 58 financial support packages for adopters. The Adoption Service are creative in utilising support packages for adopters to enable more children to be adopted and to ensure the finances of prospective adopters is not a barrier to a child achieving permanence. It remains the case that the majority of adoptions are made without an ongoing package of financial support.

There has been an increase in the number of applications approved. The overall application for children subject to SGO's has also significantly increased over this period. We have been successful in obtaining funds for three group interventions and two Mindful Yoga & Strengthening Families Programme for Adults & Children and X1 Group Application for Therapeutic Dance Program.

Post adoption contact

The Adoption Service managed approximately 140 letterbox contacts during 2018/19 as well as in the region of 10 face to face contacts between adopted children and their birth families. The nature of this contact will vary from an annual meeting to very complex arrangements involving a number of birth family members (siblings, grandparents and parents).

The impact of social networking on adoption is far reaching and extremely difficult to support effectively. There can be safeguarding concerns as young people do not recognise the issues that necessitated the plan for adoption. It can also undermine the stability of the adoptive placement. The South London Adoption and Permanence Consortium held a training session on social media in 2016/17 and these have been refreshed and repeated in 2018/19. This is an area which is ever changing with new software enabling the use of social media using face recognition technology. It is identified as an area for ongoing updating training needed for social work staff and even more crucially for up to date information and training to be available to adoptive families when they need this on a continual ongoing basis. In July 2018 a workshop for staff and for adopters was hosted in Southwark facilitated by Julie Young at the University of East Anglia on Contact after Adoption - Planning and supporting contact for children in adoption: Implications of research for practice.

Work with birth families

The Adoption Service had a contract with South London Adoption Counselling and Consultation Service to provide independent counselling for birth parents. This service ceased operating in 2019. Currently we are engaging individual counselling packages whilst agreement is considered with another provider which will be taken forward by Adopt London South. The number of referrals to counselling altogether in 2018/2019 was 25.

Mums supportive

Southwark's birth mother's support group 'Mums Supportive' which launched in 2015 continued during 2017/18 to offer support and a safe space for women who have been separated from their children as a result of care proceedings. In 2019 the numbers declined to 2 or 3 making the group aspects of the service untenable. The group low numbers are seen in a positive light as many of the parents took up employment moving away from being able to come to the group. In discussion with other local authorities the drop in numbers has also been their experience. Southwark Pause and other parent groups were approached to provide feedback. The feedback was tremendously helpful and we will use this information to reform birth parents support service within the Regional Adoption Service

Birth records counselling

The council has a legal responsibility to provide a birth record counselling service to adult adoptees. Some of these requests are completed by the post permanence team social workers working directly with adult adoptees providing both counselling and a summary of the information on the file.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

The Adoption Service has a Quality Assurance Framework. This includes: effective adoption panel scrutiny; adopter feedback; management oversight and review including audit activity; as well as learning from complaints, learning from and sharing good practice and looking at learning on all cases where children are not matched within 91 days. In 2018/2019 an audit of life story work was undertaken for the last 15 children adopted. The results were that all of the life story work had been started, with 8 out of 15 life story books still being in draft form with adopters, and 7 having been finalised. This led to closer tracking to ensure Life Story Books were completed in a more timely fashion rather than remaining in draft.

Adoption Panel and Fostering Panel

The Panel has been fully integrated as an Adoption and Fostering Panel since January 2017. The rationale for the joint Panel has been to ensure excellent standards across Adoption and Fostering. The joining of the panel functions creates administrative efficiencies and some financial savings. The strengths of this new panel approach have become increasingly evident. The overall aim is to deliver an integrated service to children requiring permanence through adoption and fostering, ensuring the care provided is of the highest quality and meets the needs of the children looked after in Southwark. There are quarterly reviews of the function of the joint panel to ensure it maintains a high standard in its service delivery and these are chaired by the Head of Permanence and the Director for Children and Families is invited to attend twice annually.

Adoption Panels recommend prospective adopters for approval as adopters; matches of approved adopters with specific Southwark children; and the suitability of relinquished children for adoption. The final decision, in all of these cases, based on the panel's recommendation is made by the Agency Decision Maker, the Assistant Director for Safeguarding and Care or Director for Children and Families. The panel is able to approve early permanence carers as both foster carers and adopters under both Adoption and Fostering Regulations.

Southwark's Adoption and Fostering Panel meets twice a month. There is also flexibility to organise additional Panels to ensure that panel dates do not ever delay permanence for children. In the lives of children days and weeks matter and there would be no hesitation to hold an extra panel if this made a difference for an individual child being able to move to their adoptive family in the timescale that is right for them.

There have been changes in panel membership since the last annual report. The Panel Chair and two independent panel members have resigned. The Panel chair and a panel member to take up new permanent roles that prevented their continued Panel membership, and the third panel member to take up a panel position closer to home. This led to the appointment of a new panel chair in June 2018 and the opportunity to recruit three independent and one agency panel members. Further recruitment has recently taken place that has seen the appointment of 3 male Panel members, yet to take up their positions. New Panel Members have been welcomed by longstanding Members and the changes have served to further strengthen the Panel by creating a diverse central list of suitably qualified and experienced members that reflect the communities in Southwark.

Once the new Regional Adoption Agency – Adopt London South is established in October 2019 the Southwark panel will no longer hear adopter approvals or adoption matches of looked after children with their prospective adoptive panels. These functions will pass to a centralised panel for the region.

Adopter feedback

Adopter's views on the Adoption Service are gained as part of the assessment process but also routinely by questionnaire following approval, and when they have adopted their child or children.

Adopters work collaboratively with assessing Social Workers and they have an opportunity to write in and contribute their comments on the final PAR written by the assessing Social Worker to be presented to the Adoption Panel. In addition, at Panel adopters are asked by the Panel chair about their experience of being assessed and also post Panel have an opportunity to feedback on their experience of the Adoption and Fostering Panel.

In 2018/9 feedback was received from 6 out of 12 adopters after they had been approved. Of these 3 out of six rated the service from first contact to approval as 5 out of 5 and 3 rated it as 4 out of 5.

One adopter commented that he was particularly happy with his assessing social worker and the adopter recruitment manager.

Complaints

Learning from complaints is a crucial aspect of our Quality Assurance Framework, which ensures continuous improvement in the Adoption Service. During 2018/19 the service received two complaints about the Adoption Service. One complaint related to a perceived lack of support from the service after an interagency placement, lack of counselling for the adoptive family and lack of contact with the team when a SW was on leave. Learning in this case involved the team reviewing the case in their group supervision, reviewing the counselling available and the service provided to families. The other complaint was regarding the cessation of an adoption assessment with a couple, which was not upheld.

REVIEW OF DEVELOPMENT PLANS 2018 /2019

We will continue to ensure that children move to their adoptive families quicker and without delay. We will always strive to achieve the right timescale for each child understanding their needs and individual journeys and remaining ambitious to achieve permanence via adoption for all children where this is the most appropriate care plan. We will carefully measure Southwark Performance using the Adoption Scorecard.

The timescales for the Adoption scorecard measures have continued to decrease, with A1 – the number of days from when a child enters care to when they are placed with their adoptive family - reducing from 472 to 414 and A2 - the number of days from when a placement order is made in respect of a child to them being matched with their prospective adopters reducing to 171 from 231

We will maintain high quality adopter assessments being all undertaken within the national minimum standards and increase our pool of adopters available for children. We will increase the pace of assessments being undertaken while maintaining the quality with the aim that in 2018 – 2019 we increase the number of adoptive households that are approved which will contribute to increasing the Sufficiency of families available for children.

Southwark have been successful in this area, with 12 adopter households being assessed and approved, an increase of 3 from the previous year but not reaching the target of 15 due to less adopter enquiries and one full assessment being completed but the couple withdrawing prior to panel.

We will further develop and embed theLife Story Work Works approach that co-ordinates Life Story Work across Children's Services that works with social workers, birth family members and all carers in an ongoing and dynamic way. In 2018 -2019 a key area of learning and audit will be practitioners and managers looking together at current life story work for children and using this as a learning space on what we are doing well currently and what needs further development.

Audits were undertaken of Life Story work completed for children adopted and those in long term foster placements. Social Workers in the Achieving Permanence Team worked with a designer and colleagues in the Care Service to design a template that can be made bespoke for children who are looked after or adopted. The Clinical Service, Fostering Service and Adoption Service all run training to embed the importance of Life Story work which can be accessed by Social Workers, Foster Carers and by Adopters.

We will have a focus on Contact Plans after Adoption holding a Conference in Southwark in July 2018 presenting the outcomes of academic research from the University of East Anglia in discussion with the lived experiences of adoptive families and of practitioners. This conference will launch a look at how we are making decisions about post adoption contact arrangements and an opportunity to think about future developments and what we can do differently.

The Conference took place in July 2018 and was well attended by staff and adoptive families who welcomed the research information to inform their own decision making and the support that they and their children need in respect of contact. The clear message was that contact is not a one size fits all formulaic decision but for each child needs to be thought about carefully in light of their needs and relationships. It also showed how crucial Life Story work and the involvement of birth families in writing letters was for children who are adopted.

We will work proactively with regionalisation to ensure any proposed changes to our services positively impact outcomes for our children, adopters and birth families. We are committed to working to continually improving the offer for children, adopters and birth families. Southwark managers and practitioners want to be at the centre of discussions about regionalisation ensuring changes have a positive impact and that we are able to promote and expand the areas of good practice where Southwark have lead service development for SLAPC and learn from best practice in other areas to achieve the best possible outcomes for children.

The RAA consultation process during 2018/2019 has been extensive drawing on the views of Local Authorities, the London Executive Board, families affected by adoption, VAA, Regional and London wide RAA's , Steering Group Consultations with practitioners and other interested parties. We are unique in that the RAA will continue to, shape, bed and deliver practice with lived input from adopter, birth parents and children

Development Plans for 2019/2020

Southwark is entering an exciting new phase of hosting and being a part of Adopt London South. In the period to 1st October 2019 the focus will be retaining the work of robust family finding and undertaking high quality adopter assessments to timescale. Future development will be set out in the Business Plan for Adopt London South which will be robustly reviewed by the Board of 8 Directors and Assistant Directors that have oversight and governance of the Regional Adoption Agency.

Item No. 9.	Classification: Open	Date: 6 November 2019	Meeting Name: Corporate Parenting Committee
Report title:		Fostering Service Annual Report 2018-19	
Ward(s) or groups affected:		All	
From:		Director, Children and Families	

RECOMMENDATION

1. That the corporate parenting committee notes the annual report of Southwark Fostering Service 2018-19.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

2. The purpose of the annual report document is to report on the activity of the Fostering Service fulfilling obligations in the Fostering Services Regulations (2011) to review and improve the quality of care, and National Minimum Standards (2011) to report to the executive side of the local authority. It will cover: performance and developments in Southwark's delivery of fostering services; how the council is compliant with key national minimum standards; and the service offered to those seeking to foster and those children in care who are fostered.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

3. Southwark Fostering Service continues to provide good quality care for a significant proportion of children and young people in care to the council.
4. The Fostering Service Annual Report 2018-19 in Appendix 1 sets out all the key areas for consideration.

Community impact statement

5. Southwark is committed to ensuring children looked after by its fostering service, from all parts of the community, are enabled to live close to their communities as far as possible and appropriate and with families able to meet most of their needs.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
None		

APPENDICES

No.	Title
Appendix 1	Annual Report – Southwark Fostering Service 2018-19

AUDIT TRAIL

Lead Officer	Alasdair Smith, Director, Children and Families	
Report Author	Alasdair Smith, Director, Children and Families	
Version	Final	
Dated	24 October 2019	
Key Decision?	No	
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER		
Officer Title	Comments sought	Comments included
Director of Law and Democracy	No	No
Strategic Director of Finance and Governance	No	No
Cabinet Member	No	No
Date final report sent to Constitutional Team	24 October 2019	

Fostering

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2018/19

Annual Report

Southwark Fostering Service

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KEY MESSAGES

Southwark were visited by Ofsted in January 2019 for a focused visit looking at the local authority's arrangements for children in care, including disabled children. Ofsted highlighted areas for growth and development but concluded that 'Children in care in Southwark receive effective support that helps many of them to achieve good outcomes' and further 'they continue to show drive and determination in sustaining and improving outcomes for children in care'.

A real area of success for the Fostering and Care Services for 2018/2019 is a continued focus on ensuring children for whom their permanence plan is long term fostering are matched with long term foster carers and permanency is secured. The number of children being matched with their carers long term in 2018/2019 was 16 children.

The percentage of children in care placed with in-house foster carers has reduced from 54% in 2017/18 to 46% in 2018/19. However as Friends and Family carers are approved carers by Southwark if we include these 47 children then the percentage is 59% of children placed with carers approved by Southwark.

12 new fostering households were recruited this year, 10 of these within Southwark. This is good compared to the great majority of our London neighbours.

Southwark Fostering Service remains the largest inner London borough Fostering Service in respect of the total number of children placed with in house foster carers. In comparing with outer London boroughs the only borough that offers more local authority foster placements is the London Borough of Croydon. *(Data based on the National Statistics Fostering in England 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018)

Southwark Fostering Service continued to work together with the University of East Anglia to embed the Secure Base Model of therapeutic Caregiving. The service has worked in partnership with foster carers and to roll out training to the Care Service and this will continue to roll out further across all of Children's Services in 2019/2020 as is a key part of the Southwark Practice framework.

PURPOSE OF ANNUAL REPORT

The purpose of the document is to report on the activity of the Fostering Service fulfilling obligations in the Fostering Services Regulations (2011) to review and improve the quality of care, and National Minimum Standards (2011) to report to the executive side of the local authority. It will cover: performance and developments in Southwark's delivery of Fostering Services; how the council is compliant with key national minimum standards; and the service offered to those seeking to foster and those children in care who are fostered. This report details the work of Southwark Council Fostering Service from 1st April 2018 to 31st March 2019.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

When a child enters care, it is one of the most important and significant changes in their life and it is crucial that the families who look after these most vulnerable children through foster care are the best they can be. As part of its wider agenda to create a fairer future for the most vulnerable children and families, Southwark Council wants every child to grow up in a safe, stable and loving home. For those children who cannot remain with or return safely to their birth families, good quality foster care offers the best opportunity for them to experience a warm and loving family environment while the most appropriate plans are made for their future.

The Fostering Service is a service for children in care. It is committed to supporting stable placements for children and young people where foster care is the identified plan. The service is a key element in the council's drive to place more children and young people with Southwark foster carers in or near the borough where possible. It is a fundamental part of our sufficiency strategy to develop enough in-borough placements with the range and capacity to meet the needs of Southwark's children who cannot live at home for whatever reason. This year the Fostering Service recruited 12 new fostering households, 10 of whom live in Southwark as well as reapproving one carer who lives in the borough but had taken a break from fostering for a couple of years

The aim of the Fostering Service is to provide high-quality care for children and young people in safe, secure and nurturing families. The Fostering Service in 2018- 2019 have fully embedded the Secure Base Caregiving Model within the Fostering Service and worked to embed across Children's Services in particular the Care Service. We aim to develop highly skilled foster carers, supported by reflective, challenging and enabling social workers. Our goal is to give children and young people the best possible childhood, to help them become valued members of society and to maximise their life opportunities.

Southwark's response to the national fostering context

During 2017-2018 two key reports on Fostering commissioned by the government were published:

- The Education Select Committee Enquiry into Fostering Published in December 2017
- Foster Care in England Report Commissioned by the Department of Education and published in February 2018 making 36 recommendations for Government.

Both reports state clearly that, for many children and young people, foster care provides the protective - and loving - environment that they need to develop and thrive. Sir Martin Narey and Mark Owers write:

"The care system in England, in which fostering plays a predominant role, has an undeservedly poor reputation. The reality is that fostering is a success story."

The Government published its response to these two reports in July 2018 and their vision for fostering and children in care. The vision is broken down to five areas:

- Children are listened to and involved in decisions about their lives
- Foster parents receive the support and respect they need and deserve to care for children
- There are enough high quality fostering placements in the right place, at the right time
- Local Authorities commission placements according to the needs of the child
- Children experience stability regardless of permanence plan.

This vision chimes with the Fostering Service's Business Plan. The key developments for 2019/20 are set out in the final section of this report..

CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE IN SOUTHWARK

Activity Overview - children	31st March 2014	31st March 2015	31st March 2016	31st March 2017	31st March 2018	31st March 2019
Children in care	550	500	475	498	491	459
Children in foster care	424 (77%)	390 (78%)	369 (78%)	381 (77%)	381 (78%)	385 (84%)
Children with Southwark registered foster carers	242	228	241	231	205	179
Children with Independent Fostering Agency carers	144	129	96	109	138	159
Children with friends & family foster carers (approved at Panel)	38	33	32	41	39	47
Matches for Long Term Foster Care during the year	3	4	3	3	15	16

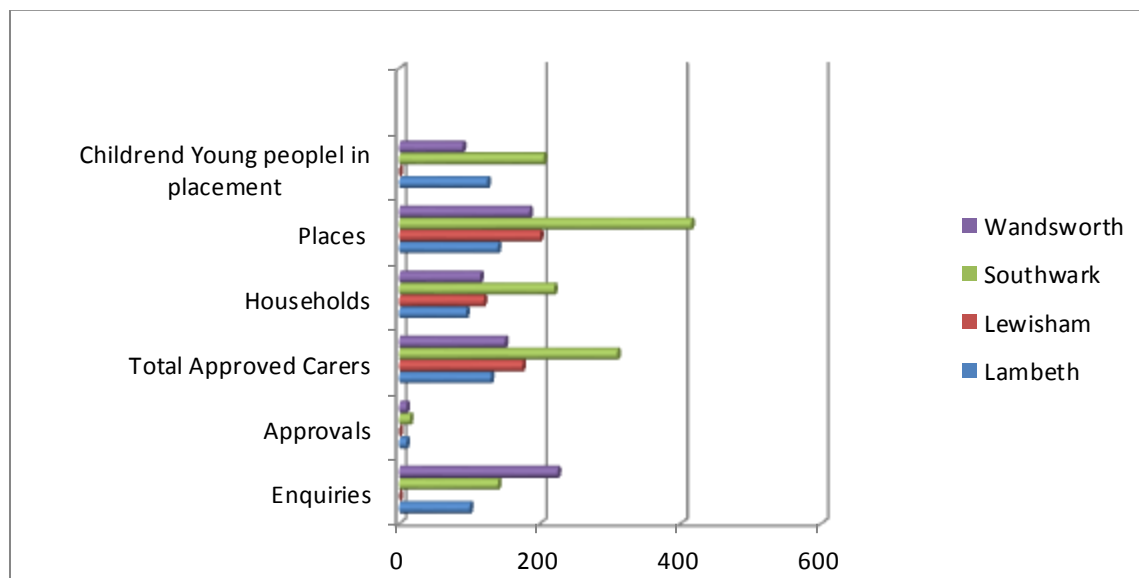
*Figures for 2018/2019 remain provisional subject to the final submission to the DfE.

On the 31st March 2019 the number of children in care was 459. This is a decrease of 32 (7%) compared to 31st March 2018. The proportion of children in foster care (all types including connected carers) is now 84% which compares very favourably with the England average of 73%. The use of Independent Fostering Agencies has increased, up from 138 to 159. In part this can be attributed to a decrease in the number of Southwark (unrelated) foster carers with 20 ceasing to be approved this year, and an older cohort of young people with more complex needs. Southwark are doing well in ensuring children in care are being placed wherever possible in a family setting, with 47 children placed with connected carers, an increase of 8 since 31st March 2018.

The tables below illustrate how we compare with neighbouring boroughs in relation to fostering capacity. This is taken from the last publicly available data. It does show that Southwark continues to be a relatively high capacity service.

Information on Fostering approved households at 31/3/2018

	Lambeth	Lewisham	Southwark	Wandsworth	Total
Enquiries	100	0	140	225	465
Approvals	10	0	15	10	35
Total Approved Carers	130	175	310	150	765
Households	95	120	220	115	550
Places	140	200	415	185	940
Children and Young people in placement	125	0	205	90	420



Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children

As of the 31st of March 2019 the number of unaccompanied asylum seeking children was 45, a decrease of 8 since 31st March 2018 when there were 52. Of these unaccompanied children 38 were placed in foster care - 84%. This proportion has increased since 31st March 2018 when 71% were placed in foster care. 29 out of 38 (76%) were placed with Southwark approved foster carers and 9 out of 38 (24%) were placed in IFA foster placements.

Changing Age Profile

Since 2016/2017 The age profile of children in care has been increasing. As of 31st March 2019 42% of children and young people in care were aged 15 or older, as opposed to 38% on 31st March 2017. The proportions of children aged 0-5 has decreased, 29% of children in care were aged 0 -9 in 2016/17 but in 2017/2018 this fell 5% to 24% and in 2018/19 remained at 24%. This has reduced the number of younger children requiring placements and highlighted the need for placements for older children and sibling groups.

Southwark's Provision of Foster Carers

Southwark remains committed to provision of in house foster carers for children in care and the need to recruit more carers who are able to look after adolescents and sibling groups remains a focus. The last year has seen a disappointing decrease in the percentage use of Southwark's internal fostering provision from 54% in 2017/18 to 46% in 2018/19. Recruitment of foster carers is increasing but this is not yet making sufficient impact as at the same time many foster carers aged 70 plus are retiring and as part of service improvement and following implementation of the Secure Base Therapeutic Caregiving Model, some carers have not been able to meet the standards of care that the service requires and have decided to resign or in a very few cases it has been recommended they cease to foster.

The Access to Resources Team (ART) established in 2017, continues to unify and strengthen the placement finding process, increasing the shared focus on improving placement stability and getting the right placement for children as soon as possible. The joint collaboration and decision making between ART and fostering colleagues improves placement stability primarily by getting the best possible matched placement for each child while in parallel seeking to maximise use of our own internal fostering provision where the placement choice is right for the child. Placement stability has improved and the increased use of stability meetings ensures intervention and support is provided promptly when issues arise. The focused visit by Ofsted in January 2019 was positive in its comments about ART,

'The access to resources team, which has been created since the last inspection, is having a positive impact on ensuring a more vigorous approach to identifying placements for children. More recent placements demonstrate better matching between children's identified needs and the capacity of carers to meet those needs. The quality of referral information for children who need placements has also improved, better reflecting children's unique needs and personalities, and enabling more appropriate matches to be made.'

Finding placements for teenagers with challenging behaviour, gang affiliation, those at risk of child exploitation and those at risk of or stepping down from residential care remains the most significant challenge to placement sufficiency. The Fostering Service continues to work closely with the Access to Resources Team and Clinical Service to develop more and better quality placement choice that has made a significant contribution to reducing the need for young people to be placed in residential care.

Friends and Family Foster Care

The Special Guardianship and Connected Persons team is now established and has a focus on assessing and supporting Special Guardians, as well as assessing friends and family foster carers and presenting them to fostering panel. The use of Friends and Family Foster care has increased with 47 children being in a friends and family placement for the year, under Regulations 24 and 27 of the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations (2010). This is compared to 39 children at the end of the previous year. Wherever possible when the children cannot be rehabilitated to the care of their parents and where there is a positive assessment the local authority would support them applying for an SGO to secure permanence for the child/ children outside of the care service. There were 123 Special Guardianship assessments completed for the year, with 30 Special Guardian Orders being granted and enabling those children to leave care.

Matches for Long term Foster Care

The Care Permanence Tracking Panel continues to meet monthly with the remit of ensuring all children in care with a plan of long term fostering had identified a family placement able to meet their long term needs, including thinking about therapeutic support and post 18 supports and Staying Put.

The addition of a revised Long term Fostering Policy in January 2019 has been key in ensuring practice standards are uniform across the service and in supporting the focus remaining on permanency for children in care. The policy provides clear direction around procedures for Long-Term Fostering and matching processes, as well as promoting new and innovative ideas working with Carelink, the Clinical Service and the Family Group Conference Service to promote placement stability. We will also be facilitating lunchtime workshops to fully understand Delegated Authority and these will be co-run with foster carers, supervising Social Workers and a Team Manager from the Care Service.

The Fostering Service has continued to work closely with the Safeguarding and Care Services to ensure that children in long term placements have their placement formally matched at the Adoption and Fostering Panel. For children aged 14 and over, the decision for Long-Term Fostering may be recommended outside of the Fostering Panel by the IRO at a Child Looked after Review and then referred for a decision by the Agency Decision Maker. This enables independent scrutiny to ensure the match is the best possible for the child and to provide optimum support. Attending panel is also a day of celebration for children and carers and we have introduced a matching certificate and sending out photographs of children and their carers taken with the fostering panel.

In 2017/18 15 children were matched, a 400% increase from the previous year and in 2018/19 this figure was 16 children, we had anticipated 20 but 4 were delayed going to Panel so happened in April 2019. We recognise we need to continue to increase this so that all children whose plan it is to remain in foster care have a matched placement and that we are tracking that this happens in the right timescale for each child and challenging delay.

Whilst the numbers of children being matched are only slightly increased, this is seen as positive achievement in sustaining our endeavours with matching; and securing permanency for our young people remains a priority. It is expected that in 2019/20 this will significantly increase as already in the first 2 months of 2019/20 5 children have been matched and 15 are booked into Panel up until the end of September 2019. In this regard, the Care and Fostering Service in conjunction with Coram BAAF facilitated a Fostering activity day in September 2018 where interest was shown in looked after children on the day, allowing for some to move to long term foster placements. This included two children moving from residential to foster families they met on this day and three children moving from short term foster placements to carers committed to meeting their long term needs. Additionally, the creation of a Stability Taskforce in January 2019 has been pivotal in considering how staff is utilising effective placement planning and stability meetings in maintaining permanency for children in foster care.

SOUTHWARK FOSTER CARERS

Activity Overview – foster carers	2018/19	2017/18	2016/17	2015/16
Foster carers approved	12	12	10	9
Foster carers ceased approval	21	16	8	4
Friends & Family Foster Carers (Regulation 27)	9	5	7	9
Family Link carers approved	3	3	5	5
Matches for Long Term Foster Care	16	15	3	3

Recruitment of foster carers

“I wanted to become a foster carer and especially a foster carer for Southwark Council because it’s where I live and I think it is important Southwark people foster Southwark children. We found ourselves in a situation where our youngest went away to university and we were rattling around a three bedroom flat and it’s a joy to have youngsters coming into the home. It’s something that we both wish we had done sooner.”

(Southwark foster carer since 2015)

In 2018/9 the number of general foster carers recruited – 12 - was the same as the previous year, and in addition a carer who had not been fostering for 2 years had an updated assessment and was reassessed to take placements. There was a marked improvement in the number of carer households who live in Southwark with 10 of the 12 households living in the borough. There was an increase in the number of friends and family foster carers approved by panel as long term carers for children, from 5 the previous year to 9 in 2018/19 which is an 80 % percentage increase.

In 2018/19 Southwark Recruitment Hub received 125 enquiries from households about becoming foster carers. This is a slight decrease from 2017/8 when the number was 133. During 2018/2019 a photo campaign working with Southwark Carers and Southwark Communications Team has been developed and launched, with leaflets being delivered to all Southwark households, posters displayed on bus stops and an article published in Southwark Life. This publicity has resulted in a number of enquiries to the Recruitment Hub. The target of 15 carers recruited throughout the year has not been met, and it is acknowledged that the level of recruitment over the last few years is still not providing the number of placements needed for Southwark children to provide sufficiency and choice. The fostering recruitment strategy is being updated to address this.

Approvals for Southwark becoming a Fostering Friendly Employer and also incentives for staff across the Council who successfully introduce someone to becoming a foster carer are also proposed for 2019/20.

Retention of foster carers

The retention of foster carers is critical to the functioning of the Fostering Service. Fostering Network reported in 2017 that on average a service will lose 10% of carers annually through, retirement, adopting, changing career and de-registration. The total number leaving fostering in the last 2 years has been just under 10% each year. The majority of these were carers who left fostering due to personal circumstances, such as ill health, retirement or wanting to leave fostering to pursue another career. Two carers moved to foster with other London boroughs, and one carer was deregistered following a safeguarding investigation and standards of care issues.

The Fostering Service recognises the importance of support in retaining carers, based on a combination of regular social work support, a professional package of relevant training, opportunities for contact with other carers and adequate remuneration.

The Fostering Service responds promptly and efficiently to issues and concerns raised by foster carers. Communication includes newsletters and e-mails and phone calls about community events and opportunities. Fostering supervising social workers visit carers monthly to support carers in their role, assessing the support needed prior to each new placement which contributes to increasing carers' confidence and capabilities in taking children with high needs. There is a monthly support group and coffee morning which takes place in East Dulwich, with regular attendance from staff in the Fostering Service as well as foster carers. The support group often have guests on topics such as Welfare Benefits and new initiatives for children in care. At the carers request every 3 months there continues to be a therapist available to offer carers massages to help them relax.

Training and Learning and Development

There is a strong and growing learning culture throughout the Fostering Service for both foster carers and for staff which involves learning together. The foundation of all learning and development is built upon the Secure Base Model as a foundation for therapeutic caregiving and the more advanced Empathic Behaviour Management (EBM). The aims of the two approaches are to empower foster carers to develop confidence and equip them with the right skills and techniques to help children experience safe and secure care. There are now 57 fostering households who have been trained in EBM which involves a 2-3 day training delivered by a Clinical Practitioner with follow up interactive workshop which take place over 6 weeks. Follow up support with EBM happens in a support group held every 2 months and is regularly attended by foster carers. The last EBM course in January 2019 was attended by 13 Southwark foster carers.

The Secure Base Model introduced in September 2015 has continued to be an integral part of the training programme throughout the Fostering Service. It underpins all in-house training, therefore reaching all the carers that attend training. As a Fostering Service we deliver The Secure base Model to all Social workers within children's services who are newly qualified.

Post approval training is compulsory for all new foster carers as part of their Training Support and Development Standards (TSDS) and there are monthly TSD workshops which have helped new carers and existing carers towards completing their standards.

The fostering training programme includes:

- Working with the Department
- Safeguarding Children
- Attachment, Child Development and Secure Base
- Therapeutic Play
- Active Listening Skills and responding effectively to challenging behavior.
- Supporting your Child with Education and PEPs
- Promoting the Health of children
- Transitions and helping young people prepare for independence.
- Emotional Health and Physical Well-being

The training sessions are dynamic and interactive and are delivered by social workers, foster carers and managers in the Permanence Service together with a multidisciplinary team that includes the Virtual School, the looked after children nurses and Designated Doctor, the Clinical Service and also input from care leavers from Speakerbox who have experience of being in foster care. The training programme has developed over the past year where courses have been adapted to meet the changing needs of the service. We have started to adapt courses to incorporate the National Minimum Standards and the Regulations that govern fostering, to ensure that foster carers understand the legislation and guidance that they work under.

The Fostering Service continues to build on relationships with colleagues across the service by having training delivered by YOS (Restorative Practice and Gangs and Street violence), and Safeguarding (Signs of Safety), which were both well received. This has helped to embed our Practice Framework with our foster carers. Parent and Child Training for foster carers has been successful and will be repeated with a view of increasing sufficiency in this area.

There have been two Men Who Foster workshops, and a Team Manager from the Care Service delivered one of the sessions on Safeguarding, this received very positive feedback. One of the sessions had 10 carers in attendance.

Foster carers are increasingly required to use computers and IT to support the children they care for and the Fostering Family Support Worker continues to provide both group and individual support to help foster carers to be able to use the online booking system for training and to use computers to support education for children.

As well as traditional training it is recognised that many foster carers look after everyone else but don't often have opportunities to think about their own health, relaxation and well-being. In this regard, a well-being day for carers and staff was held, replicating the success of last year's event. This emphasises the importance of the physical and emotional well-being of Southwark's foster carers. The feedback from the 2018 event was exceptionally good; carers said they felt nourished, cared for and appreciated. The wellbeing day was used to canvass and encourage our carers to attend the Fostering Network 5k walk to be undertaken in June alongside supervising social workers.

Two experienced Supervising Social Workers deliver the Skills to Foster training for applicants who are starting their assessments to become foster carers. The training from participants on this programme is consistently rated as being excellent by prospective carers. The three day course includes multi-disciplinary input from health and education as well as the clinical service. One of the most popular parts and one which the Fostering Service recognises is crucial in fostering recruitment is the direct input of the Children's Rights Officer and young people who are care leavers. They are part of every Skills to Foster training and this is often one of the segments of the course that participants speak most highly of.

The creation of a training lead within the Fostering Service has been instrumental in driving forward the changes within training provision and this has created a training programme that is responsive yet visionary.

Feedback from carers on some of the training they received:

Challenging behaviour training

'The training made me think more outside of the box, and be more aware of different possibilities and situations.'

'The training was delivered in a friendly and professional way that encouraged active participation by all the attendees. Useful strategies were recommended for managing challenging behaviour in young people.'

Non-violent Resistance training

'I will now be more confident in dealing with issues relation to the children in our care.'

'It has provided a focus for improving my parenting skills, which has improved relationships in my family between myself, my husband and our son. It has provided us with a very useful set of tools which will help us to be a calm and happy family.'

Unaccompanied minors training

'It was good to share with other carers their experiences of young people from other countries.'

'Lots of good and relevant information which helps us to become more aware and understanding of our young people.'

Support for foster carers

Despite its rewards, foster care can be a very demanding vocation. Southwark's Fostering Service recognises this and understands good outcomes for children can only be achieved when foster carers feel valued, supported and equipped to provide the attention, commitment and care that children who may have experienced neglect, harm and loss require.

Support for Foster Carers encompasses the following:

- Allocation and support of a dedicated Supervising Social Worker during the working week and access to dedicated out of hours support 7 days a week.
- Foster carer induction for all newly approved households and as a refresher to existing foster carers.
- A comprehensive post approval training programme that incorporates therapeutic care giving model. The aim of this approach is to help foster carers feel confident and equip them with the right skills and techniques to help children experience safe and secure care.
- A more advanced approach to caring – Emphatic Behaviour Management for more challenging behavior.
- Training pathway for foster carers to enhance professional development and quality of placements linked to a clear payment approach.
- Therapeutic intervention and support from a lead clinician, medical advisor, education, and Carelink service to support children in placements and the fostering household.
- Regular carer support groups accessible for all foster caring households run by the Fostering Service.
- Regular communication and information sharing is maintained via emails, quarterly fostering newsletters and coffee mornings.

- A Foster Carer run support group has also been set up and continues to meet and offer peer support to all foster carers.
- Following the service running a Well-being day in March 2018 a Foster carer walking group has established meeting regularly in Southwark parks and also a group of foster carers who use the gym.
- An annual foster carers ball is held to thank carers for their commitment to improving the lives of looked after children and young people in Southwark.
- Membership and advice to Fostering Network for all Southwark foster carers which offer independent advice and support with allegations.

Staying Put

“This Christmas we had over 20 of our children at our house. This time they came back with their partners and their children. Seeing them now and remembering them how they were- that’s the real reward for foster carers.”

(Southwark foster carer)

The Children and Families Act 2014 introduced a duty on the local authority to provide ‘staying put’ arrangements for children in foster care to continue to live with their former foster carer beyond their 18th birthday and potentially up to the age of 21 years if they are in education. This is a welcome development for young people who have not developed the maturity to move into independent living and who want to remain as part of a family. The service was well placed to implement these changes as we were already enabling young people to remain in their placements while they completed exams and were prepared fully for independence.

On 31st March 2019 there were 43 young people staying put with their foster carers. The majority of these were with Southwark carers. What is also increasing is the number of young people who have gone away to stay at University in halls of residence and shared accommodation but who also return to former foster carers for support and to enjoy family life during the University breaks.

Supporting staying put arrangements are a key part of offering a secure base to children that they are supported to continue full family membership, a key aspect of this is being able to remain in a family setting until they are ready for independence. The approach we take in Southwark regarding payments is very similar to that taken in other local authorities.

The Staying Put guidance and the Staying Put policy is in the process of being updated, with input from foster carers, young people and staff. This is due to be finished in July 2019.

Short Breaks Care – Family Link

At the end of March 2019 the Family Link Team had 32 short break respite carer households offering care to 41 children with disabilities, allowing the child's parents or guardian to have a break. Short break carers are specialist foster carers assessed and matched to a particular child. These carers generally develop a good relationship with parents and often provide care for the children for many years. The short break service is part of the wider support service for families where a child has a disability and enables children to remain within their families and communities while at the same time providing a much needed break for parents and guardian. During 2018/19, 3 new family link carers were assessed and approved.

Linking is based on children's needs and families preferences so families work together with the social worker and carer to carefully establish a relationship and design together the support for each child, for some children this can be daytime breaks for some overnight stays and for some children a mixture of daytime and overnight respite. Referrals come from the Children with Disabilities Team to Family link and each child with their social worker and family has a profile about them which includes an Education Health Care Plan, and the child's health profile. There is a matching process and a short period of introductions (up to two introductions between the child, parent, short break carer and SSW) prior to proceeding with the placement. Matches are reviewed under the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations 2010 Reg 48. Carers and links are reviewed annually by an Independent Reviewing Officer.

Carers are recruited via people interested in fostering who may not be able to foster full time due to their work commitments, as well as some carers recruited through having existing community connections to children who they want to support.

A key aim is supporting Children and their families and preventing children from needing to become permanently looked after. In terms of a joined up service from April 2018 together with Children with Disabilities Family link became part of the All Age Disability Service who continue to work closely with the Fostering Service in ensuring all carers are compliant with fostering regulations.

Feedback from families and children who receive a service from Family Link is consistently high. One parent said of the family link foster carer *'she takes very good care of him and I am very happy'*. When speaking about her allocated social worker she said *'she will always explain things with you properly'*.

(Parental Feedback to Family Link February 2019)

QUALITY ASSURANCE

The Fostering Service has a Quality Assurance Framework, which is part of the overarching quality assurance and performance framework for Southwark Children's Services. The framework includes: effective Adoption and Fostering Panel scrutiny; foster carer feedback through consultations, the annual review process and feedback on training and development; management oversight and review including audit activity; as well as learning from complaints and placement breakdowns.

The audits areas in 2018/9 included: an audit on placements incorporating first time entrants into care and changes of placements. The recommendations from this were increased oversight of placement planning meetings to ensure they were happening and were effective and the need for Stability Meetings to happen early in placements when there are difficulties, rather than later when issues "set in" and the focus moves towards a potential "disruption"

Fostering Panel

Fostering Services Regulations (2011) and National Minimum Standards (2011) require a Fostering Panel to be constituted, chaired by an independent person. Panel members include representatives from the Children's Social Care and independent members with a range of experience. The panel makes recommendations about the approval of foster carers, matches of children for long term foster care and in certain circumstances reviewing the approval of foster carer. The combined Panel is able to approve Early Permanence carers as both foster carers and adopters under both Adoption and Fostering regulations. Final decisions, based on the panel's recommendations are made by the Agency Decision Maker (ADMs), Assistant Director Safeguarding and Care and the Director for Children and Families.

From January 2017 the Adoption and Fostering Panel combined. The Chair of the Fostering Panel since 2014 took over the role of chairing the Joint Panel which takes place fortnightly. There have been changes in panel membership since the last annual report.

The Panel Chair and two independent panel members have resigned during 2017/18. The Panel chair and a panel member to take up new permanent roles that prevent their continued Panel membership, and the third member to take up a panel position closer to home. This led to the appointment of a new panel chair in June 2018 and the opportunity to recruit three independent and one agency panel members. Further recruitment has recently taken place that has seen the appointment of three male Panel members, yet to take up their positions. New Panel members have been welcomed by longstanding members and the changes have served to further strengthen the Panel by creating a diverse central list of suitably qualified and experienced members that reflect the communities in Southwark.

From October 2019 Adopt London South which Southwark are hosting working with nine South London boroughs will go live with two Panels covering all adoption cases across the nine boroughs. This will mean that the Panel from October 2019 will again become a Fostering Panel focussed on fostering cases. Given the drive for all children to have matched placements and the growth in placements with Family and Friends it is envisaged the Panel will continue fortnightly. At the end of July 2019 the Quality Assurance Framework and project plan for the development of the Fostering Panel will be completed. There is an opportunity here for an increased focus on the quality of reports coming to panel, and it is also envisaged that foster carers should return to panel every three years for a review of their approval. This is to ensure that carers who are not attending training and development opportunities or working professionally with the department are challenged.

The Key areas identified by the Independent Chair for improvement in the Fostering Service are:

- Meeting timeframes for Regulation 24 approvals and Regulation 27 approvals
- Continued improvement of the quality of assessments of all foster carers including Friends and Family Foster Carers.

These improvements remain the same as in 2018/2019 so it is recognised that there is a need to introduce a more robust management tracking system for timescales of friends and family assessments as well as ongoing work with Practitioners and Managers to ensure all assessments are high quality.

Changes to Fostering Payments Policy – Consultation with Foster Carers and Staff

Southwark council is going through a period of unprecedented budgetary constraints, and as a result in 2018/19 considerable savings had to be identified. One of these was making changes to the fostering Payments Policy (last updated 2015/6) whereby the rates of payments to carers would no longer be aligned to the Fostering Network rates, but instead be aligned with the Government recommended rates. Due to the new policy proposing that the fostering allowance rates decrease by up to 23% the decision was made to complete an Equalities Impact Assessment on the proposed changes. As part of this an online public consultation was implemented plus consultation drop-in events for foster carers and special guardians whose allowances are linked to the fostering allowance and would therefore also decrease.

Staff were also consulted, and came up with a number of ideas to mitigate the proposed changes, including redefining the amounts that foster carers should pay for young peoples clothing and leisure activities, so that young people themselves would not notice the decrease in their allowance.

The decision to change the policy was made by the Children's and Adults board, chaired by the Strategic Director of Children's and Adults services.

Complaints

The fostering service reviews complaints received from foster carers and uses the learning from what hasn't been done well to inform service improvement. In 2018/2019 there were three complaints relating to fostering, two of which concerned the Family Link service, and the other one relating to Fostering.

One complaint concerned lack of communication when a staff member had left – the family were not informed of this and information on the Southwark council website was not up to date. Another concerned delays in payment for a Family Link carer – her emails were not picked up due to staff absence.

The third complaint related to information about a carer being forwarded to her Fostering Network Advocate without her permission.

Communication and responses have now been improved, with the website being updated and a generic email address supplied to enable all emails to be answered in a timely way. Strict adherence to confidentiality of carers' information is now embedded throughout the service.

REVIEW OF DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2018- 2019

This section reviews our commitments to improvement stated in the Annual Report 2017/18 and reflects on the progress we made.

We will continue to recruit more foster carers living within the borough or nearby to Southwark who are able to meet the needs of Southwark Children and to ensure creative and robust support plans to enable more children to experience family life in foster care.

There has been a drive for local recruitment of foster carers and this has resulted in approval of 10 (out of 12) foster carers that live in the borough of Southwark. This remains an ongoing focus for the Fostering Service and recruitment hub.

We will ensure that more children have their permanence confirmed and celebrated in Long term Fostering Placements to feel safe and secure and enjoy family life and that they have the right support to ensure the placement remains settled and happy.

Permanence continues to be a focus for the Fostering Service. There have been improvements in matching and permanency being secured as well as the launch of an innovative and clear.

We will work with all Children's Social Workers to ensure that all children cared for by Southwark foster carers have Life Story work which their foster carers are actively involved with and that all children and their foster carers know why they are looked after and supported with this understanding.

The Fostering Service continues to work closely with colleagues in the Care Service around life story work and helping young people to understand their life journey. There is tailored training for both foster carers and staff.

We will ensure that all Southwark foster carers continue to have access to high quality training and support to continue their professional development and to provide excellent care for Southwark children. All training will connect to the Secure Base Model of therapeutic Care Giving.

The training programme is comprehensive and meets the needs of foster carers in delivering care provision to our looked after children. The Secure Base Model is woven between all courses and ensures a knowledgeable and equipped fostering service. The courses are attended often by both SSW's and foster carers resulting in a shared understanding and vision of support for our young people.

We will ensure that the Voice of Young People, their birth families and foster carers is central to the development of the Fostering Service through listening to and working with young people, foster carers and family members. Wherever possible training will be co-delivered with experienced foster carers and young people with experience of being Looked After.

Skills to foster is co delivered by young people who are care leavers, as well as undertaking sessions in the Secure Base training. We also seek their views from their attendance at Speakerbox. Foster carers have also been involved in these courses and others.

The voice of the young people and foster carers is always sought via their attendance at training courses. Our parent and child placements also offer opportunity for feedback from birth families, and this is an area that the fostering service continues to develop.

Recruitment of staff joining the Service includes Young People being part of the decision making panels and this included the recruitment of the Fostering Service Manager in 2018/19 with the retirement of the previous post holder.

We will champion the need for young people to be connected and have Lifelong Links. This will be by supporting Lifelong Links innovation project but also by ensuring children in foster care are supported to retain key connections in their foster and birth family including their brothers, sisters and their friends.

This is a new initiative that continues to be developed with the creation of a link person between the fostering service and Lifelong links. The link person attends regular meetings with Lifelong links and shares information between the two areas. Southwark has received referrals and is working with 23 children from the identified cohort.

We will implement an improvement plan for children placed with Friends and Family to ensure these assessments are completed in timescale and where possible families are supported to apply for Special Guardianship Orders, to promote family life and not remaining Looked After.

All kinship assessments look at permanency options for the looked after child so as to promote family life and consider the support available. An independent review in the Safeguarding Service noted the positive impact of the dedicated SGO and Friends and Family Team, however compliance with completing assessments within the 16 week timescale remains low and a much more robust tracking system is needed in 2019/20 to ensure assessments are completed in a more timely fashion.

We will undertake a peer and management review on the quality of Annual Reviews for foster carers (including the voice of foster carers) and a plan to ensure all reviews have high quality analysis will be developed and implemented in 2018/19.

Staff from the fostering service will be attending a training course looking specifically at foster carers annual reviews in May 2019. This will inform the peer and management review of annual reviews which will take place in July 2019. All foster carers however are asked for feedback regarding their review, and there has been a drive to seek feedback from IRO's birth families, young people and children's social workers so as to inform the annual review. *This action has been rolled over to the 2019/20 development plan*

DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2019/2020

Ensure that the voice of children families and carers is heard, so that their views shape and improve our services and all parts of the service on a continuous learning journey

- Ensure that training for prospective and current foster carers includes direct input from care experienced young people, current carers and parents.
- Directly involve current foster carers in the training of social workers to embed the Secure Base Model.
- Ensure that recruitment of foster carers and staff involves the input of young people and of experienced foster carers.

Improve placement stability of children in the Care Service both short and long term

- Ensure effective placement planning meetings are held within 5 days of a new placement.
- Ensure challenging placements are identified as early as possible (through foster carers and SSWs) and that placement stability meetings take place as early as possible with input from Carelink or the Clinical Service.
- Referring social work team and ART to involve Carelink or the Clinical Service in any consideration of children moving so that both placement stability and the impact on the child's emotion wellbeing and educational stability and progress are carefully considered.
- Ensure management oversight through ongoing development of the Achieving Permanence Tracker for all children in care.
- Ensure adherence to the Long term fostering policy and guidance published in January 2019
- Ensure that more children have their permanence confirmed and celebrated in long term fostering placements either through the fostering panel or through IRO/LAC Review.

Maintain and further develop a stable and high-quality workforce across the Permanence Service

Give all social workers the opportunity to attend fortnightly Group Supervision sessions led by the Team Manager. All social workers can attend the across service Practitioner Forum where they have the opportunity to shape the ongoing development of the Practice Framework. Promote the Council Offer of learning and development through short courses and professional development courses.

Improve placement choice and sufficiency as set out in the Sufficiency Strategy and to reduce the percentage of children who are looked after who are living 20 miles or more from the borough

- An updated recruitment and retention plan developed and published in 2019/20 to ensure that more foster carers are recruited who live within the borough or nearby to Southwark who are able to meet the needs of Southwark children.
- Ensure creative and robust support plans to enable more children to experience family life in foster care.

Continue to Roll out and embed the Secure Base model of therapeutic caregiving across children's services as part of the Practice Framework

- Ensure that all children cared for by Southwark foster carers have life story work which their foster carers are actively involved in and that all children and their carers know why they are looked after and are supported with this understanding.
- Ensure that all Southwark foster carers can access high quality training and support to continue their professional development. All training will connect the Secure Base model.
- Ensure that all Southwark foster carers are supported to complete their TSDS within the required timescale.
- Undertake a peer and management review on the quality of Annual Reviews for foster carers (involving the voice of foster carers) completed by the Fostering Service.

Develop high quality support for friends and family foster carers and SGO carers

- Ensure Safeguarding and Connected Persons teams are supported to work more closely together in respect of Regulation 24 assessments.
- Ensure robust tracking of timescales for all assessments to ensure Friends and Family assessments are undertaken within 16 weeks and the 8 week extension is only sought in exceptional circumstances.
- Ongoing work with Grandparents Plus to develop greater support networks for all kinship carers local to carers and organized and run by carers.

Item No. 10.	Classification: Open	Date: 6 November 2019	Meeting Name: Corporate Parenting Committee
Report title:		Corporate Parenting Committee – Work Plan 2019-20	
Ward(s) or groups affected:		All	
From:		Director, Children and Families	

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the corporate parenting committee agree the approach and work plan as set out in the report.
2. That the committee review and identify any further items for consideration in the work plan.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Role and function of the corporate parenting committee

3. The constitution for the municipal year 2019-2020 records the corporate parenting committee's role and functions as follows:
 - a. To secure real and sustained improvements in the life chances of looked after children, and to work within an annual programme to that end.
 - b. To develop, monitor and review a corporate parenting strategy and work plan.
 - c. To seek to ensure that the life chances of looked after children are maximised in terms of health, educational attainment, and access to training and employment, to aid the transition to a secure and productive adulthood.
 - d. To develop and co-ordinate a life chances strategy and work plan to improve the life chances of Southwark looked after children.
 - e. To recommend ways in which more integrated services can be developed across all council departments, schools and the voluntary sector to lead towards better outcomes for looked after children.
 - f. To ensure that mechanisms are in place to enable looked after children and young people to play an integral role in service planning and design, and that their views are regularly sought and acted upon.
 - g. To ensure performance monitoring systems are in place, and regularly review performance data to ensure sustained performance improvements in outcomes for looked after children.

- h. To receive an annual report on the adoption and fostering services to monitor their effectiveness in providing safe and secure care for looked after children.
- i. To report to the council's cabinet on a twice yearly basis.
- j. To make recommendations to the relevant cabinet decision maker where responsibility for that particular function rests with the cabinet.
- k. To report to the scrutiny sub-committee with responsibility for children's services after each meeting.
- l. To appoint non-voting co-opted members.

National and local context for care leavers

- 4. There is national momentum towards improving outcomes for care leavers. The government introduced 'Keep on Caring' strategy in 2016, increased council statutory duties to care leavers in the Children and Social Work Act in 2017, appointed a national Adviser for Care Leavers who produced a report in 2018, alongside the national launch of the Care Covenant. The council has responded to the various recommendations, for example by prioritising education, employment and training outcomes for care leavers in the Council Plan and developing the care leaver local offer as well as increasing service capacity for the extended personal adviser duties to 25.
- 5. Although much has been done to improve services and outcomes for care leavers, the council has an ambition to go above and beyond, by creating the best Leaving Care Service possible, by co-designing this with young people, learning from other organisations and trialling new ideas to test what works best.
- 6. In 2017 the council and Catch22 received funding from the DfE Social Care Innovation Programme to work in partnership to design and test new ways of working to support care leavers. The Care Leavers Partnership (CLP) works to improve outcomes for young people in Southwark by working across boundaries, reshaping the service delivery model, unlocking capacity in the community, and co-designing solutions. There are a number of strands that the CLP is working on to achieve our goals.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

- 7. The corporate parenting committee review and update the work plan each meeting. Following the beginning of the municipal year 2019-20, and reflecting on the momentum towards improving outcomes for care leavers, the opportunity has been taken to review how the committee works and present proposals to refresh this in relation to: non-voting co-opted members; committee approach; and work plan and suggested agenda items.

Corporate Parenting Committee work plan and suggested agenda

8. 6 November 2019

Children in care

- Foster and Adoption Service Annual Reports 2018–19

Care Leavers

Workshop theme **Housing**

9. **11 March 2020**

Children in care

- Children in Care Annual Health Report 2019 - 20
- Item to be agreed.

Care Leavers

Workshop theme **Health and Wellbeing**

10. **22 April 2020**

Children in care

- Virtual Headteacher Annual Report 2018–19
- Corporate Parenting Strategy 2020-25 (incorporating Life Chances Strategy for children in care).

Care Leavers

Workshop theme **Education, Employment and Training**

SpeakerBox

11. SpeakerBox, established in 2005, ensures that the views of looked after children and care leavers are used to influence decision making that affects their care and support particularly service planning and design. Representing children and young people between 8 and 24 years the group also provides a peer to peer networking support system for looked after children. The programme is operated independently and run by the young people themselves, although it is supported by the council's Children Services and councillors.

Community impact statement

12. The work of the corporate parenting committee contributes to community cohesion and stability.

Resource implications

13. There are no specific implications arising from this report.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
Minutes of meetings of Corporate Parenting Committee	Constitutional Team 160 Tooley Street London SE1 2QH	Paula Thornton 020 7525 4395
Web link: http://modern.gov.southwark.gov.uk/ieListMeetings.aspx?CId=129&Year=0		

APPENDICES

No.	Title
None	

AUDIT TRAIL

Lead Officer	Alasdair Smith, Director, Children and Families	
Report Author	Alasdair Smith, Director, Children and Families	
Version	Final	
Dated	28 October 2019	
Key Decision?	No	
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER		
Officer Title	Comments Sought	Comments included
Director of Law and Democracy	No	No
Strategic Director of Finance and Governance	No	No
Cabinet Member	No	No
Date final report sent to Constitutional Team	28 October 2019	

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NOTE: Original held by Constitutional Team; all amendments/queries to
Paula Thornton Tel: 020 7525 4395

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Councillor Sunny Lambe			
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Councillor Anood Al-Samerai			
Others			
Florence Emakpose (external)			
Francis Turkson (email)			
Mark Kerr (email)			
Nicky Stoupe (email)			
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David Quirke-Thornton	1		
Alasdair Smith	1		
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