

Item No. 11.	Classification: Open	Date: 10 November 2010	Meeting Name: Corporate Parenting Committee
Report title:		Outline Commissioning Strategy	
Ward(s) or groups affected:		All	
From:		Strategic Director of Children's Services	

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1) To agree the outline commissioning strategy for Children in Care and proposed priorities as set out in paragraphs 8, 9, and 10.
- 2) Members of the Committee to comment on any issues raised in the needs assessment.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3) Stable, good quality placements that support improved outcomes for children in care (CIC) is central to our commissioning approach. Frequent moves between care placements can have a drastic effect on the ability of children and young people to succeed across the five Every Child Matters outcomes.
- 4) Care Matters prioritises improving local authority commissioning of placements, ensuring that children are placed outside of their local area in exceptional circumstances and improving placement stability by increasing placement choice. The Children and Young People Act requires local authorities to have regard to the benefit of having a number of providers and a diverse range of placements to reflect the needs of children in care.
- 5) Children's Services currently commissions all children's placements from a range of in house and external providers. Almost half of the specialist children's services budget is spent on the children in care population. External placement commissioning accounts for 60% of all expenditure for the children in care service which is broadly made up of placement related costs. The nature of children's placements is that they are very high cost, therefore the management of the placement market is crucial to ensure cost effective placements that achieve the best possible value for money.
- 6) Following on from our last Joint Area Review, there were a number of key recommendations for Children Looked After Services to support this area of work. These included undertaking a robust analysis of the reasons for recent declines? And to develop a commissioning strategy to drive forward local commissioning priorities and developments to support improved stability and outcomes for children in care. These recommendations have informed work to date, however we are now reviewing our commissioning strategy to ensure it reflects current priorities and needs.
- 7) The following sets out the proposed commissioning priorities going forward, as well some of the issues the strategy needs to address.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

Proposed local commissioning priorities for children in care are as follows:

- 8) Priority one – redirect resources to prevent children coming into care and to remain with their families
 - A) In line with the Children Act (1989), Southwark believes that wherever possible children should remain with their families. Every effort should be made to offer targeted, joined up support for children on the cusp of care, so children come into care when there is no other alternative. When children come into care, we will seek to reunite children with their parents and extended family as an alternative to remaining in the care system on a long term basis. Whenever possible placements with family will be exhausted unless there is clear indications that this is not in the child's best interests

- 9) Priority two – improve outcomes for children in care
 - B) The outcomes for children in care are the same as for all children and whilst in care they are supported to be healthy, stay safe, enjoy and achieve, make a positive contribution and achieve economic wellbeing. Stable placements that meet a child's needs is central to achieving these outcomes for children in care. This will be delivered through a mix of corporate parent and external resources, delivered in partnership with placement providers to ensure that those in care have access to the right support, at the right time.

- 10) Priority three – ensure provision for children care is good quality, efficient and effective
 - C) All provision, especially placements should be of good quality. In working with providers we will ensure that we put in place mechanisms to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of provision. We will monitor quality and ensure it is in line with agreed standards and proactively manage the costs of providers.

Summary of Needs Assessment

- 11) In Southwark, the number of children in care is generally above that of statistical neighbours. The trend for the past few years has been of decline, but figures are once again on the rise and currently standing at around 540. Analysis of trends of those entering care shows that of our current children in care population 235 children entered into care at aged five or under (41.7%), of these 89 were under one (15.8%) and 145 (25.7%) were aged 13 or above at time of entry. On average around 5-6 children became subject to care proceedings each month. Analysis shows that the majority of children aged 13-17 years old have been looked after for three years or less.

- 12) There is a significant proportion of these young people that go home within the first year, of those the majority go home within the first month. The vast majority of children who leave care within the first year go home to their parents or others with parental responsibility. Once in care, 65.2% of children are placed with foster carers, 8% are placed in a home or hostel, 8% with relative or friend, 7% within independent living, and the remainder placed within a variety of other placement types.

- 13) Placement stability has declined over the previous years rising to 14.1% of children experiencing three placements or more in 12 months. However, long term stability has improved since the 2008 Joint Area review, 72.2% of children aged 16 or under and looked after continuously for at least 2.5 years are in the same placement for 2 years or more or placed for adoption. In both cases, performance is in line with statistical neighbours. Outcomes for children in care across the five Every Child Matters outcomes remain in line or slightly above statistical neighbours in most cases. Refer to relevant appendices for further detail.

Policy implications

- 14) There are no new policy considerations.

Community impact statement

- 15) The work of the corporate parenting committee contributes to community cohesion and stability.

Resource implications

There are no specific implications arising from this report.

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
Minutes of meetings of Corporate Parenting Committee	Constitutional Team 160 Tooley Street SE1 5LX	Bola Roberts 020 7525 7232

APPENDICES

No.	Title
Appendix 1	Summary of Issues to be addressed through the commissioning strategy
Appendix 2	Age distribution of children looked after as at 4 th October 2010
Appendix 3	Children in care as at 4 th October 2010 by Ethnicity
Appendix 4	Legal status of Southwark children in care as at 4 th October 2010
Appendix 5	Length of time spent in care as at 4 th October 2010
Appendix 6	Type of placements as at 4 th October 2010

AUDIT TRAIL

Lead Officer	Rory Patterson, Assistant Director Children's Specialist Services & Safeguarding	
Report Author	Elaine Allegretti, Children's Services Department	
Version	Final	
Dated	28 October 2010	
Key Decision?	No	
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER		
Officer Title	Comments Sought	Comments included
Strategic Director of Communities, Law & Governance	No	No
Finance Director	No	No
List other officers here		
Cabinet Member	Yes	No
Date final report sent to Constitutional Officer	28 October 2010	

Appendix 1

Summary of Issues to be addressed through the commissioning strategy

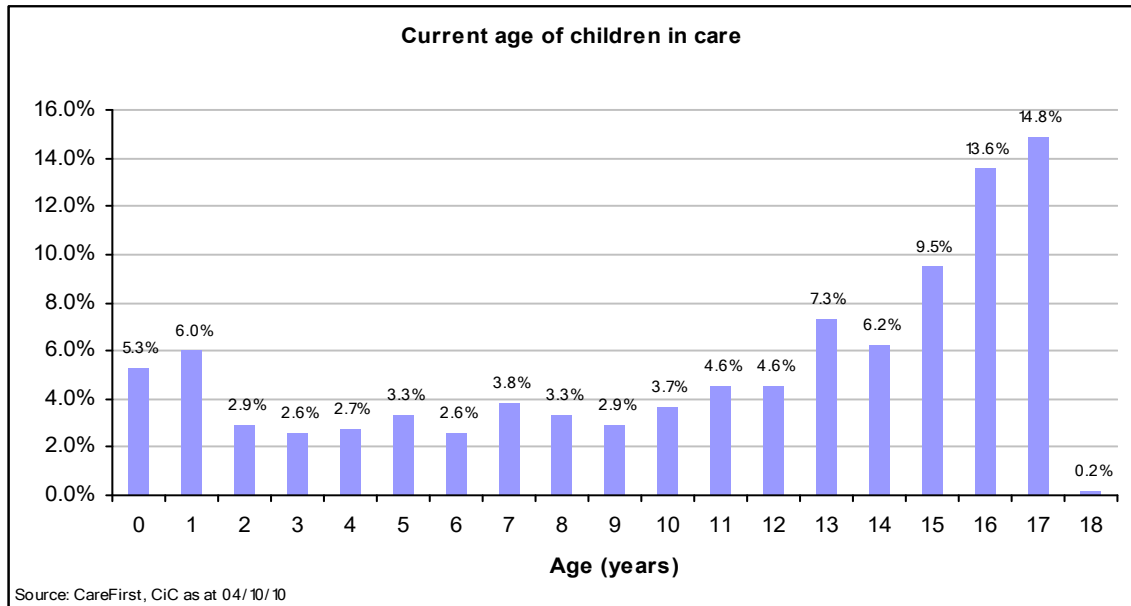
The following table sets out the issues to be addressed through our commissioning strategy in regard to each priority area. These have been developed through an in house review of current ways of working and provision.

Commissioning priority	Issues to be addressed
<p><i>Priority one – Redirect resources to prevent children coming into care and to remain with their families</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better use of the range of preventative and parenting support resources across the borough to ensure that only those children for whom there is no alternative within their own family come into care • Reduce number of children coming into care, particularly those entering within the older age groups for short periods of time
<p><i>Priority two – Improve outcomes for children in care</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve placement stability by minimising disruption through monitoring of placements and early intervention activities • Increase in house services ability to provide for the most complex children that are often placed within the independent market. These include <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop a local, in house market of long term foster carers, particularly for those with specialist placement needs such as sibling groups and those with LDD (i.e. autism). This should include commissioning of multi agency provision to support these placement types - Improve range and type of placements for teenagers with challenging behaviours that are alternative to semi independent and residential care • Where possible and appropriate ensure more children are placed inside the local area in line with new sufficiency requirements • Targeted services to support carers and children in placement. That is, Care Link (CAMHS), CLA education advisers, Designated LAC nurse, out of hours foster carer support • Screening at 13 years to identify vulnerability with teenage pregnancy, substance misuse and crime
<p><i>Priority three – Ensure provision for children in care is good quality, efficient and effective</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve range of procurement frameworks around the commissioning external providers that support cost reduction, increase quality and meet local needs of the care population • Reduce the use of independent placement providers and residential care proportionate to the numbers of children in care • Ensure value for money reviews are undertaken in all areas of children in care commissioning where high costs are associated and that costs of providers are managed (placements, assessments etc)

Appendix 2

Age Distribution

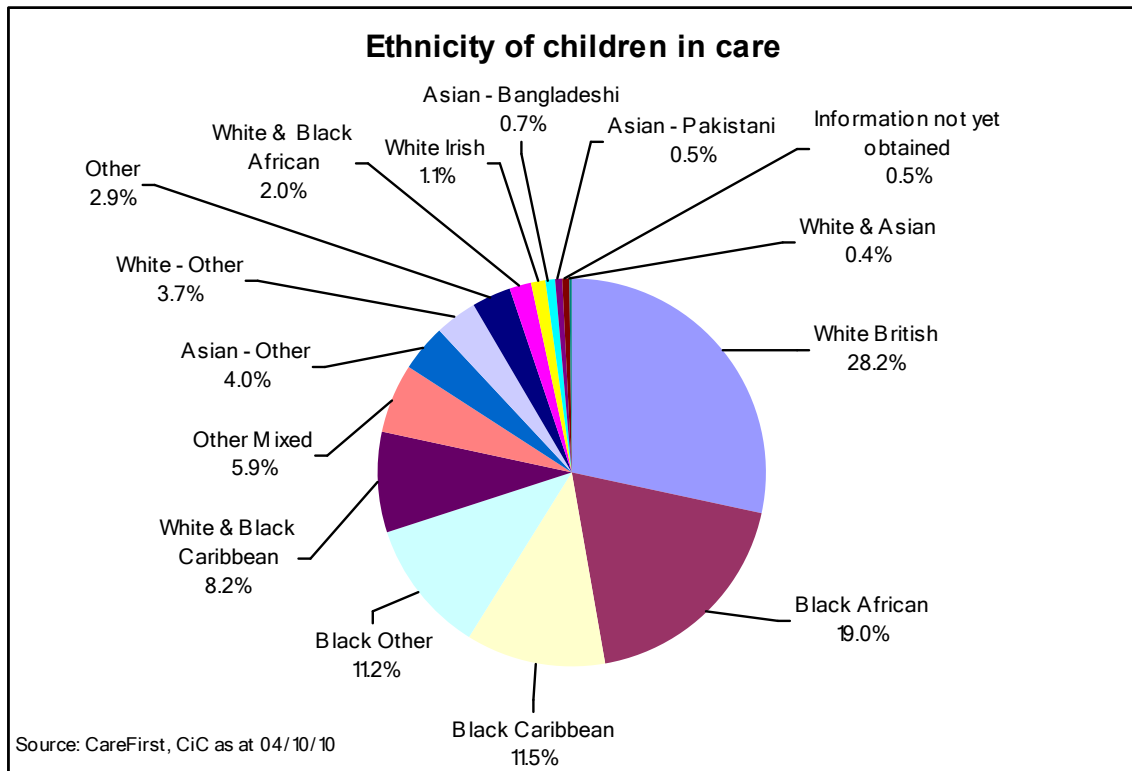
Figure 1 – Age distribution of children looked after as at 4th October 2010



Appendix 3

Ethnicity

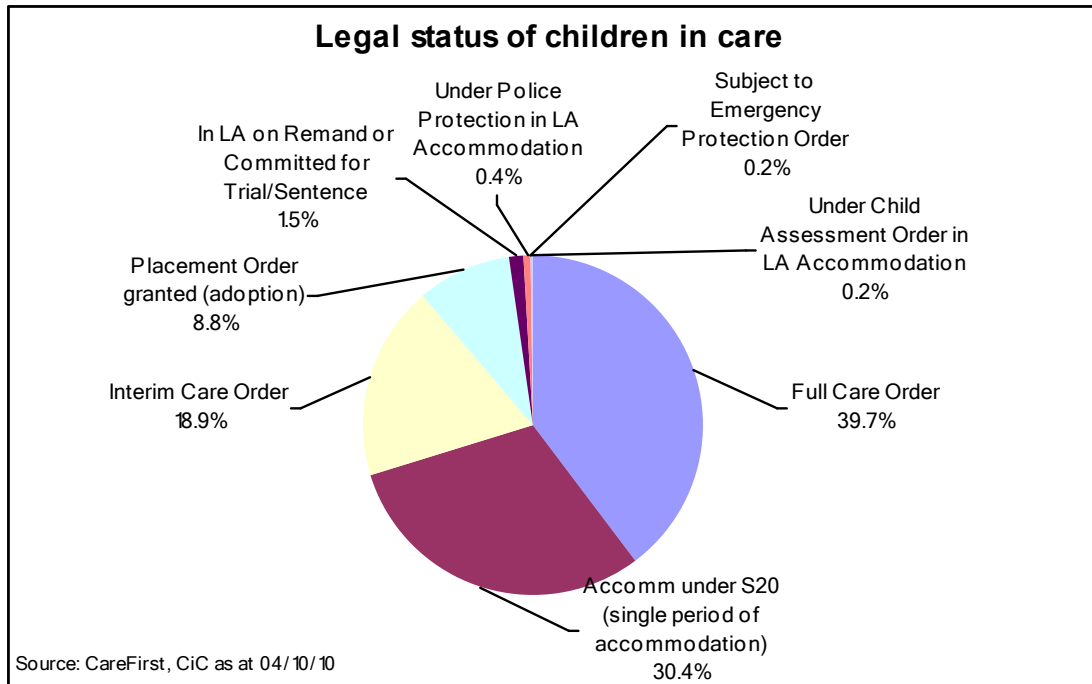
Figure 2 – Children in care as at 4th October 2010 by Ethnicity



Appendix 4

Legal Status

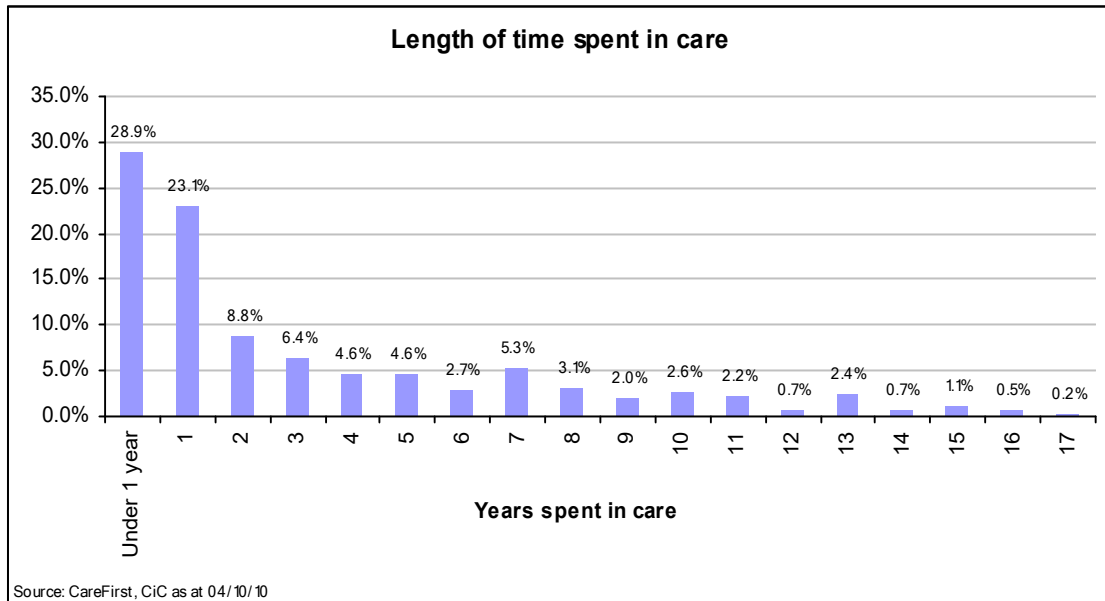
Figure 3 – Legal status of Southwark children in care as at 4th October 2010



Appendix 5

Length of Time in Care

Figure 4 – Length of time spent in care as at 4th October 2010



Appendix 6

Type of Placements

Figure 5 – Type of placements as at 4th October 2010

