

# Children in Care

# Commissioning Strategy

London Borough of Southwark

2010/11 – 2013/14

Updated September 2011

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## **1.0 Executive Summary**

Southwark's commissioning strategy for children in care seeks to deliver the following key priorities and actions:

### **Priority one – Redirect resources to reduce the need for children to come into care and to remain safely within their families**

- further develop “cusp of care” services aimed at providing alternatives to care for children and co-ordinated help for their families.
- through early intervention ensure that effective help is provided quickly, and the need for statutory intervention is reduced
- Increase adoptions, and support other ways of enabling children to leave care.

### **Priority two – Improve outcomes for children in care**

- maintain a strong focus on placement stability help improve outcomes such as educational attainment by increasing the range of suitable placements, and by strengthening placement support
- support the market to deliver placements and other services locally, including increased specialism in the in-house foster care services to reduce the need for independent fostering and residential services out of borough
- ensure universal services work together to support the needs of children in care, and care leavers.

### **Priority three – Ensure provision for children's care is good quality, efficient and effective**

- improve procurement to obtain better value for money from external providers
- ensure unit costs of all providers are understood and monitored alongside outcomes, and high cost areas are subject to challenge and review.
- further reduce the proportion of children looked after in residential care settings
- ensure the views of children help shape the development and monitoring of service standards

These changes are essential for improving outcomes for children and delivering financial sustainability in the context of the £18m savings required across children's services by 2013/14.

It is recognised that this strategy involves a change to the current range of provision locally, and this will be achieved through the better market management, including in-house services. Re-commissioning of existing

services will be tested against the extent to which they support the priorities in this strategy.

An underlying requirement is that statutory requirements are met, including progress being made towards securing sufficient accommodation for looked after children in line with “sufficiency” guidance.

## 1.0 Introduction

‘Commissioning is the process for deciding how to use the total resources available for families in order to improve outcomes in the most efficient, effective, equitable and sustainable way.’

DfE, *Good Commissioning Principals*

The purpose of this commissioning strategy is to effectively understand and plan for the current and future needs of looked after children in Southwark. The strategy covers 2011-2014 and provides a robust framework to ensure the system, as a whole, is effectively responding to the needs of looked after children and those at risk of becoming looked after.

Locally we continue to work hard to ensure we are delivering the most effective and efficient provision for the most vulnerable children and young people in the borough. Much progress has been made in improving the outcomes for looked after children however we recognise there is still a discrepancy between outcomes for this group and others. We are committed to closing this gap. *Care Matters Time to Deliver for Children in Care* (2008) sets out the ambitious national agenda to improve services for children in care, on the cusp of care, and leaving care or custody. In line with this agenda, we are clear that improving the life chances for those most at risk children and young people requires working with partner agencies and this strategy attempts to align a number of partner strategies and service plans where there are cross cutting issues, shared targets and objectives.

The strategy recognises that commissioning for Looked after Children takes place on multiple levels including **individual commissioning** to meet individual children’s needs, **service level** to meet a specific cohort or outcome and **strategically** across the borough. The document therefore provides a vision which is underpinned by principals and standard to ensure activity across all three levels of commissioning is consistent. Having a successful strategic commissioning process will allow us to effectively respond to local need and ensure we are targeting services while providing value for money. It will highlight opportunities to redesign services, develop our local market and provide greater efficiencies through reduced duplication and better integrated working. In order to ensure we are able to continue to achieve good outcomes for looked after children and control costs, the document will ensure a long term strategic approach to planning and commissioning services is maintained. This will reduce the likelihood of expensive spot commissioning and ensure we are effectively responding to the sufficiency duty for local authorities.

## 2.0 Methodology

The development of the strategy is underpinned by the 4 point DFE commissioning model (right). This structured methodology will be applied to all commissioned activity. In addition it will be used to achieve the three commissioning priorities and applied to identify and support the yearly forward plan of activities against the three priorities. The phases are summarised below.



<b>1. Phase 1 – Understand</b>	
Aim	To identify local needs, resources and priorities and agree what the desired end product should be.
Activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Undertake needs analysis</li> <li>▪ Undertake Market Analysis</li> <li>▪ Identification of gaps</li> </ul>
Outcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Comprehensive understanding of needs and provision in the system</li> <li>▪ Agreed end product</li> </ul>
<b>2. Phase 1 – Plan</b>	
Aim	To map out and consider different ways of addressing the need identified through the needs assessment.
Activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Understanding of research and best practice</li> <li>▪ alignment of provider capacity with needs projections</li> <li>▪ engagement with existing and potential future providers</li> </ul>
Outcome	Comprehensive view of preferred provision
<b>3. Phase 1 – Do</b>	
Aim	To make investment decisions based on appropriate action identified in the 'plan' stage to secure delivery of desired services.
Activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ organise – establish reporting relationships, spans of control and strategic business areas</li> <li>▪ resource – identify resources required (human, capital, ICT)</li> <li>▪ change management – identify causes of potential resistance and find solutions to manage or eliminate them</li> <li>▪ appoint commissioning champion</li> </ul>
Outcome	Activity identified in phase 2 complete and embedded
<b>4. Phase 1 – Review</b>	
Aim	To monitor service delivery against expected outcomes and report how well it is doing against the plan.
Activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Use of formal arrangement to monitor performance against set criteria</li> <li>▪ Identify those services that are not meeting or are finding it difficult to meet targets set</li> <li>▪ Support services to improve performance and outcomes</li> <li>▪ Develop areas where performance is not meeting need</li> </ul>
Outcome	Ongoing effective and efficient services which are meeting need

### **3.0 Local Strategic Framework**

Locally, we have agreed a strategic framework for children in care to underpin the future commissioning of their provision. The challenge going forward is how we use the strategic commissioning approach to redesign services to achieve strategic objectives, as well as the efficiencies needed. A summary of the strategic framework is set out below:

#### **Children and Young People's Plan**

Our CYPP has two specific priorities for children in care. The Children and Families Trust is accountable for progress against these priorities, which are:

**1) *Children in care achieving their educational potential*** – by more children and young people in care attending school, realising their educational potential and overcoming the gap in achievement with their peers. For partners to be working together to maximise local expertise and provision, offer flexible, quality educational opportunities appropriate to their need, and support them when changing schools.

**2) *Young people in care succeed as young adults*** – by more young people in care living in a stable placement, taking up education, employment or training, and managing independent lives successfully. All partners bringing together their services to support those under 22 years of age into adulthood, and specialist expertise will be available to ensure the most vulnerable are safeguarded.

### **4.0 Children Looked After Commissioning Priorities**

#### ***Priority one – Redirect resources to prevent children coming into care and to remain with their families***

In line with Children's Act, 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 long term. Whenever possible placements with family will be explored unless there is clear indications that this is not in the child's best interests

#### ***Priority two – Improve outcomes for children in care***

We strive to ensure the outcomes for children in care are the same as for all children. Whilst in care children and young people are helped to be healthy, stay safe, enjoy and achieve, make a positive contribution and achieve economic wellbeing. Stable placements, that meet a child's needs, with accessible multiagency support is central to achieving these outcomes. 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. Increasing the number of Southwark foster carers will reduce our use of expensive out of borough placements and keeping children closer to home will reduce potential disruption. Supporting looked after children to make a successful transition into adulthood is essential to improve life chances and is therefore central to this strategy.

**Priority three – Ensure provision for children care is good quality, efficient and effective**

All provision, especially placements should be of good quality. We will ensure providers improve the efficiency and effectiveness of provision. We will monitor quality and ensure it is in line with agreed standards and manage the costs of providers

**5.0 Needs Analysis**

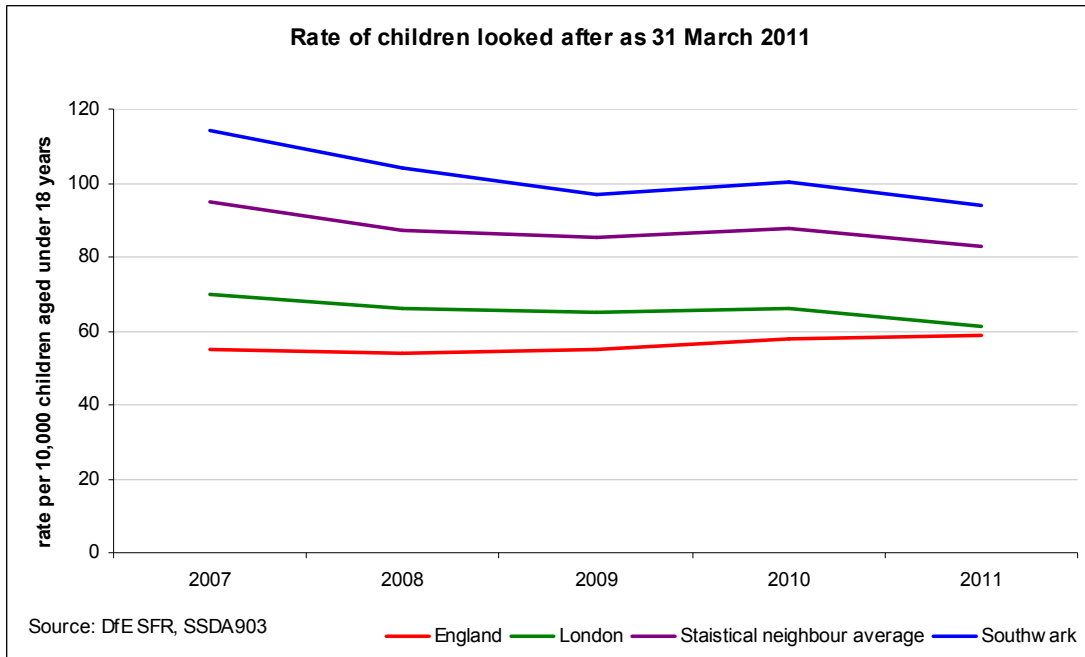
The needs analysis forms part of the ‘understand’ phase of the commissioning process. The overarching needs analysis, which is summarised below, will provide a foundation for understanding the looked after children population, including predicting future needs and will indicate the geographical distribution of need, identify gaps in provision.

The needs analysis will be built upon on an ongoing basis as new data is obtained, and fed into the commissioning process.

The following section provides an overview of the LAC population in Southwark and highlights current performance. An in-depth analysis is attached in Appendix 1.

**Summary of Needs Analysis**

**5.1 Looked after Children**



## Numbers of children looked after 2010 and 2011 and Rates per 10000 children

	Number		Rate	
	2010	2011	2010	2011
<b>England</b>	<b>64,410</b>	<b>65,520</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>59</b>
<b>London</b>	<b>10,960</b>	<b>10,390</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>61</b>
<b>Inner London</b>	<b>4,910</b>	<b>4,600</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>75</b>
Camden	265	275	67	69
City Of London	15	10	159	93
Hackney	295	265	57	51
Hammersmith & Fulham	260	250	82	79
Haringey	590	615	121	125
Islington	315	325	94	94
Kensington & Chelsea	155	130	52	43
Lambeth	565	500	105	92
Lewisham	525	485	90	81
Newham	560	490	85	74
<b>Southwark</b>	<b>555</b>	<b>520</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>94</b>
Tower Hamlets	350	325	70	63
Wandsworth	205	205	41	40
Westminster	245	210	71	57

Around 520 children were looked after by Southwark (Mar 2011). The table shows the numbers are generally above that of statistical neighbours. The trend for the past few years has been of decline, but numbers are rising slightly again. As a rate per head of population this is some 85% above that of Hackney, a relatively comparable borough in many ways. **There is therefore clearly potential to significantly reduce total numbers in care, and this is the outcome this commissioning strategy is seeking to achieve.** Nevertheless it is recognised that significant reductions would take some time to work through the system and the demand for placements in the short term is likely to remain at around 500.

Analysis of trends of those entering care shows that of our children in care population as at end March 2010 204 children entered into care at aged five or under (39.1%), of these 66 were under one (12.6%) and 136 (26.1%) 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 entering care aged 13-17 years old have been looked after for three years or less.

Most children are placed with foster carers (73.6%) or within semi independent placements.

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 been strong, with 72.2% of children aged 16 or under and looked after continuously in the same placement for 2 years or more or placed for adoption. Outcomes for children in care across the five ECM outcomes remain in line or slightly above statistical neighbours in most cases.



Adoption: Recent comparative data for 2011 shows adoption rates are below average, with 17 adoptions completed in the year. This indicates there is scope for reducing numbers of children looked after by this route. However this needs to be considered alongside the growth in special guardianship orders of which there were 21 last year. These offer an alternative form of permanency planning but one that is arguably less suitable for younger children and this issue is to be subject of a more detailed analysis.

Appendix 1 provides further information, including information on the relatively high referral rates.

## **6.0 Currents Services and costs and the savings agenda**

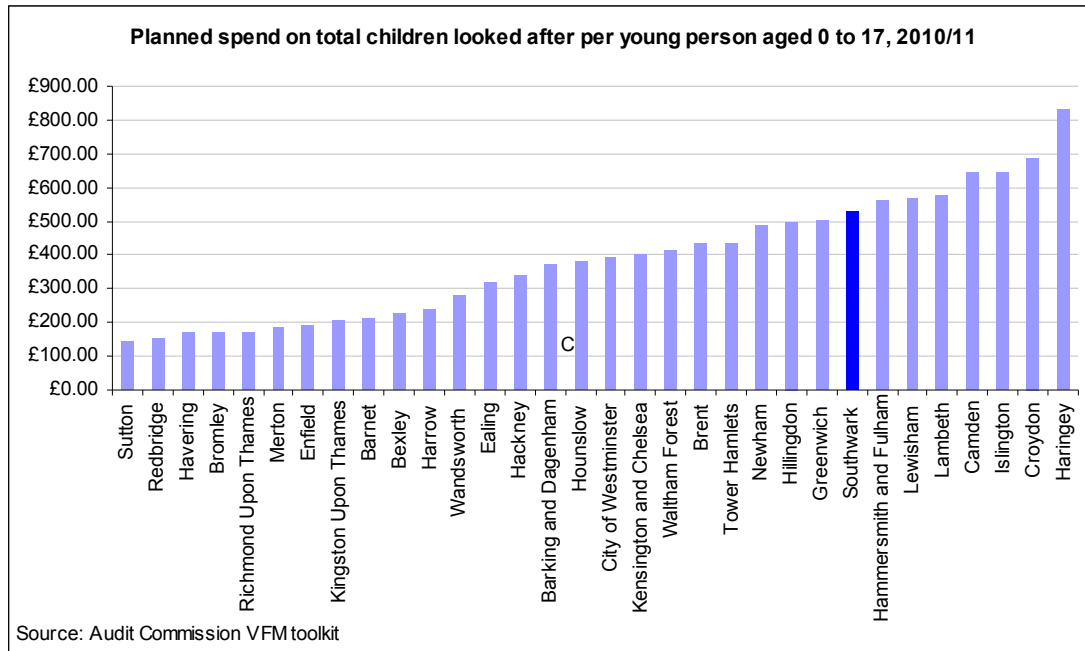
Children's Services currently commissions all children's placements from a range of in house and external providers. Almost half of the specialist children's services budget is spent on the children in care population. External placement commissioning accounts for 60% of all expenditure for the children in care service which is broadly made up of placement related costs as set out in the table below. 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.

<b>2010-11 social care placements budgets</b>	<b>£m</b>	<b>budgeted cost per placement £</b>	<b>placement FTE</b>
In- House Fostering	4.63	14,261	325
Independent / Agency Fostering	4.12	50,245	82
Residential Placements	6.28	139,450	45
Secure	0.28	279,579	1
Semi- Independent	1.71	46,251	37
Family Placements	0.34	10,021	34
Mother & Baby	0.54		
18+ Sec 24	0.20	10,116	20
Special Guardianship	0.56	4,911	115
Residence Orders	0.63	7,467	85
Adoptions	1.03	6,624	155
Disabilities	1.64	102,568	16
Youth offending	0.35	99,316	3.5
	<b>22.33</b>		

The above costs on children looked after services are significantly higher than the budgets for other aspects of specialist support services for children in need. For example the budget for Family Support services is £5.6m, less than 25% of the looked after children budget.

It can be seen that, in line with the strategy, there are potentially significant gains to be made by increasing the proportion of provision that the in-house fostering service delivers.

Total spend on looked after children per head of population is top quartile, as would be expected given the high numbers looked after.



## Savings

Under the current local government funding settlement Southwark Council is required to make unprecedented savings of 25% in core funding over 3 years, and is also losing significant resources from the reduction or withdrawal from a range of specific grants. For Children's Services as a whole this translates as £18m core funding over 3 years (£5.76m 2011/12, £6.17m 2012/13 and £6.06m 2013/14). Planned savings include £2.5m on placement care packages (£1m 11/12; £600k 12/13 and 900k 13/14).

To deliver this agenda in a sustainable way, whilst still delivering the outcomes set out in the Children and Young People's Plan, provision will need to support a smaller number of children and young people through more effective targeted intervention that prevents children coming into care by supporting them better in their communities and families. This objective underpins the commissioning strategy.

## 7.0 Commissioning Activity

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.

<b>Commissioning priority</b>	<b>Issues to be addressed</b>
<b><i>Priority one – Redirect resources to prevent children coming into care and to remain with their families</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Better use 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</li> <li>• Develop effective Early Help models in line with the Munro report as part of our broader early intervention strategy and strengthen multi-agency work and use of common assessment tools.</li> <li>• Reduce number of children coming into care, particularly those entering within the older age groups for short periods of time and joined up support for children on the cusp of care</li> <li>• Increase rate of adoption from care through increasing the recruitment of prospective adoptive parents</li> </ul>
<b><i>Priority two – Improve outcomes for children in care</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve placement stability by minimising disruption through monitoring of placements and early intervention activities</li> <li>• Increase the in house service's ability to provide for the most complex children that are often placed within the independent market. These include               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 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 children with complex needs.</li> <li>- Improve range and type of placements for teenagers with challenging behaviours that are alternative to semi independent and residential care</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Where possible place more children within the local area in line with sufficiency requirements</li> <li>• 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</li> <li>• Screening at 13 years to identify vulnerability to teenage pregnancy, substance misuse and crime</li> <li>• Influence the commissioning of universal services to support the quality and stability of placements of children looked after, for example health and schools support.</li> </ul>
<b><i>Priority three – Ensure provision</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve range of procurement vehicles used to commission external providers that support cost reduction, increase</li> </ul>

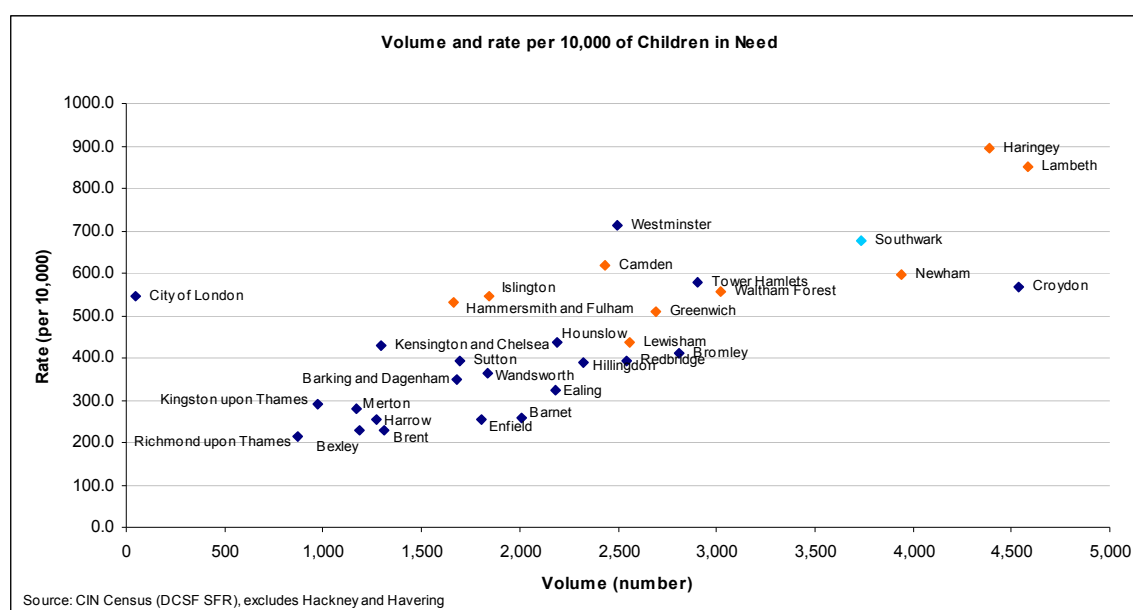
Commissioning priority	Issues to be addressed
<p><i>for children in care is good quality, efficient and effective</i></p>	<p>quality and meet local needs of the care population</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduce the use of independent placement providers and residential care proportionate to the numbers of children in care</li> <li>• Ensure value for money reviews are undertaken in all areas of children in care commissioning where high costs are identified and that costs of providers are effectively reviewed and managed</li> <li>• Strengthen mechanisms for obtaining the input of children and young people's views into the commissioning and monitoring of all aspects of services for children in care, at all stages the in child's journey.</li> </ul>

## Children in Need

Nationally, there were 382,300 children in need at 31 March 2010 of which Southwark accounted for 1.0% of children in need. In Southwark there were 3,737 children in need at 31 March 2010, which was an increase of 20.5% from 2009. This represented a rate of 677.4 per 10,000 children, which was considerably higher than the national rate of 339.0 per 10,000 children.

Southwark had the 5<sup>th</sup> highest number of children in need, improving from 2<sup>nd</sup> highest in the previous year and had the 4<sup>th</sup> highest rate per 10,000 children.

Figure 1 – Volume and rate of children in need by London boroughs



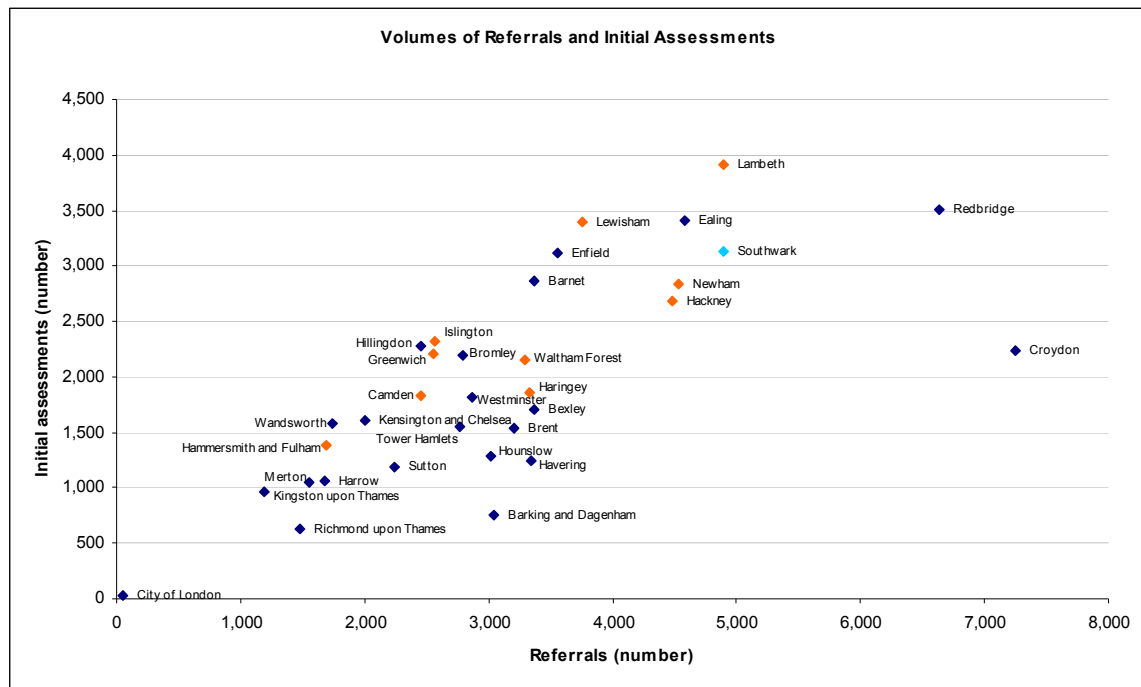
There were a total of 5,702 episodes of need throughout the year (includes children with multiple episodes).

During 1 April 2009 and 31 March 2010 there were 2,517 episodes of need starting and 1,965 episodes of need that came to an end.

Nationally there were 607,500 referrals to children's social care services in the year ending 31 March 2010, an increase of 11% from the previous year and in Southwark there was a decrease of 13% of referrals received (4,892). Although the majority of boroughs had an increase in the volume of referrals in 2010 compared with 2009 Southwark still remains with the 4<sup>th</sup> highest volume of referrals in London, improving from 2<sup>nd</sup> highest in 2009.

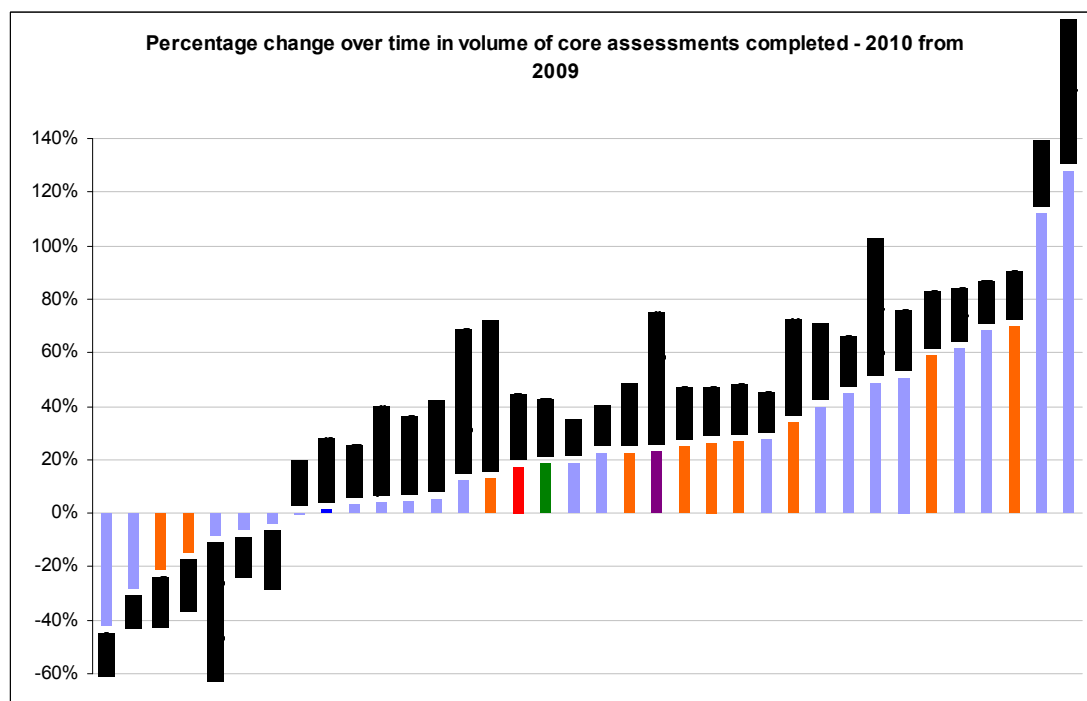
Nationally there were 390,600 initial assessments completed in the year ending 31 March 2010 and in Southwark there were 3,136 initial assessments completed. Southwark had the 5<sup>th</sup> highest number of initial assessments completed in 2010 improving slightly from 4<sup>th</sup> position in 2009. Similar to the volume of referrals a large number of London boroughs have shown a considerable increase in volumes of initial assessments.

Figure 2 – Volume of referrals and initial assessments by London boroughs



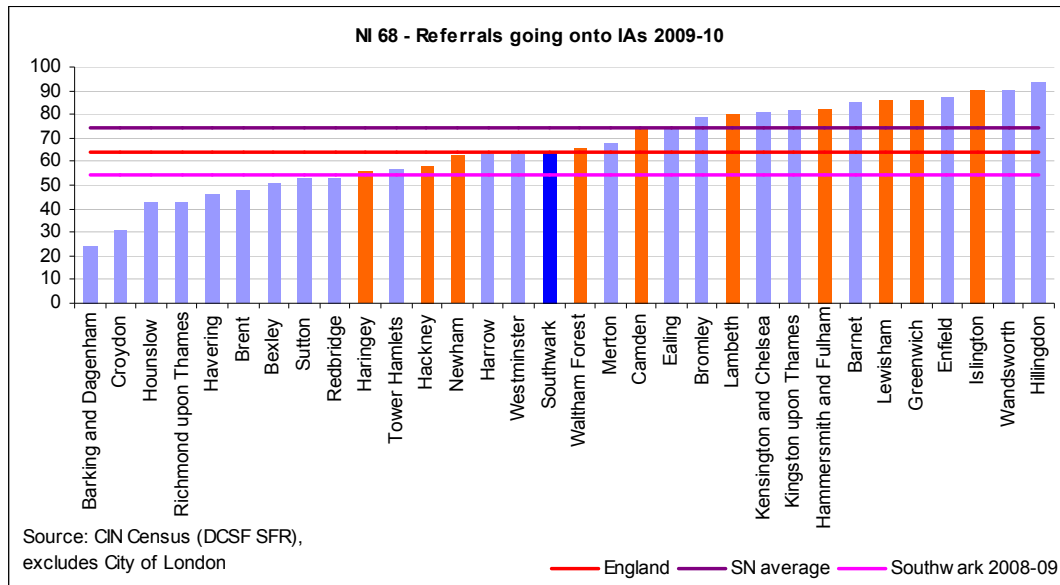
Nationally there were 141,500 core assessments completed in the year ending 31 March 2010, an increase of 17.3% from 2009 and in Southwark there were 2,502 core assessments completed (increase of 1.3% from 2009). For the fifth consecutive year Southwark had the highest number of core assessments completed in 2010. A large number of boroughs have shown a considerable increase in the volume of core assessments completed compared to 2009.

Figure 3 – Change in volume of core assessments completed by London boroughs



The rate of referrals going onto initial assessments has improved by 10 percentage points (64.1%) in 2010 bringing us in line with the national rate (64.3%). Although this is our highest rate over the last 5 years we still remain below the statistical neighbour average (74.1%). Southwark is now ranked 17<sup>th</sup> out of the 32 London boroughs (excluding City of London) compared with 23<sup>rd</sup> in 2009.

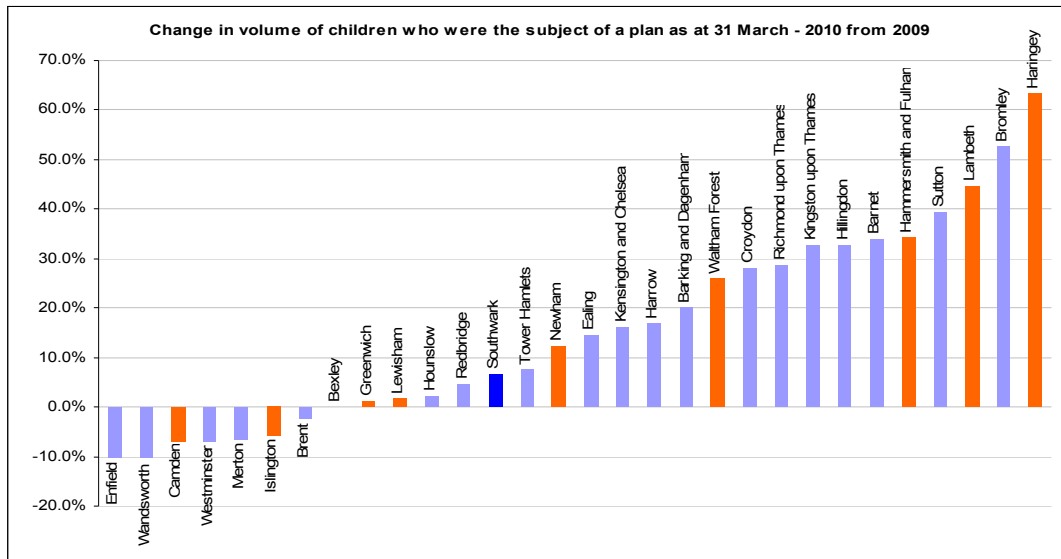
Figure 4 – Rate of conversion of referrals to initial assessments by London boroughs



### Children who were the subject of a child protection plan

Nationally, there were 35,700 children who were the subject of a child protection plan at 31 March 2010. In Southwark there were 336 children who were the subject of a child protection plan at 31 March 2010, which was an increase of 6.7% since 31 March 2009 (315 children subject to a child protection plan). This increase in volume was also evident in a number of London boroughs with Haringey and Bromley showing over a 50% increase in volume over the last 12 months.

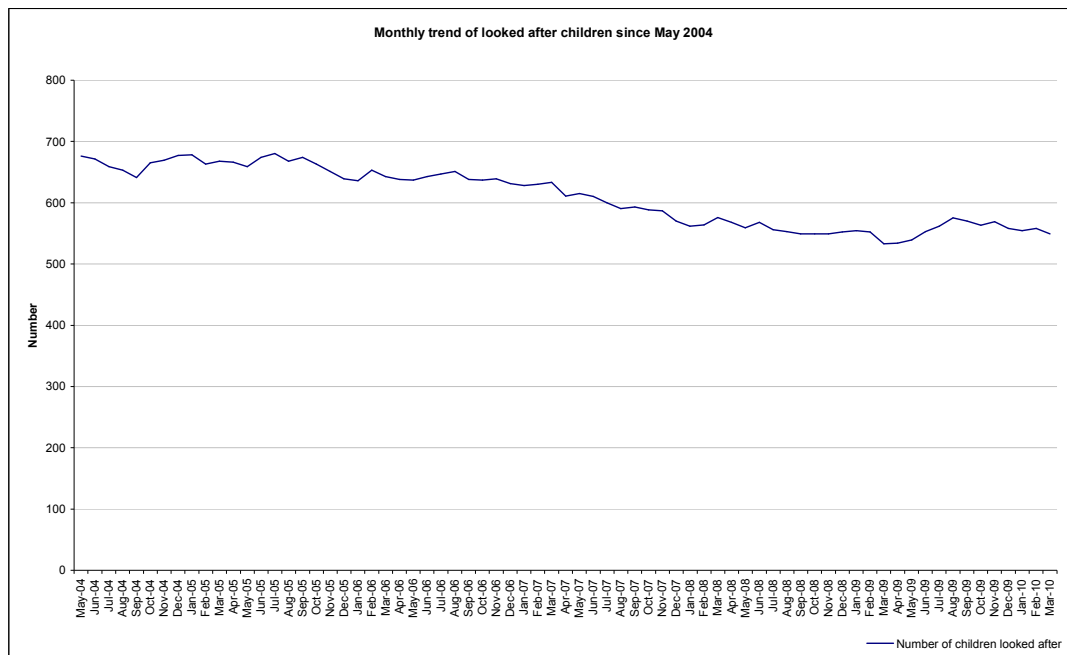
Figure 5 – Change in volume of child protection plans by London boroughs



### Children Looked After

Monthly trends show a steady decline in the number of children in care since 2004.

Figure 6 – Monthly trends of children in care



Nationally, there were 64,400 children in care at 31 March 2010 of which Southwark accounted for 1.0% of children in care. In Southwark there were 555 children in care at 31 March 2010, which was an increase of 3.7% from 2009. This represented a rate of 101 per 10,000 children, which was considerably higher than the national rate of 58 per 10,000 children.

Southwark had the 6<sup>th</sup> highest number of children in care, improving from 4<sup>th</sup> highest in the previous year and had the 5<sup>th</sup> highest rate per 10,000 children.



Figure 7 – Number and rate per 10,000 children in care as at end March 2010 by London borough

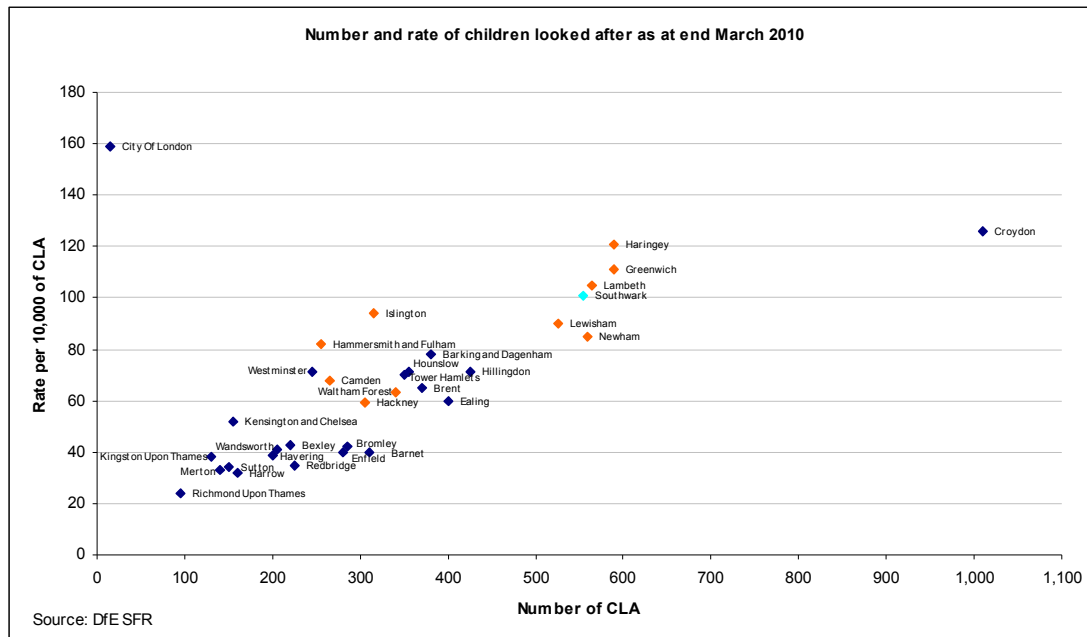


Figure 8 – Number of children in care as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2010 by London boroughs

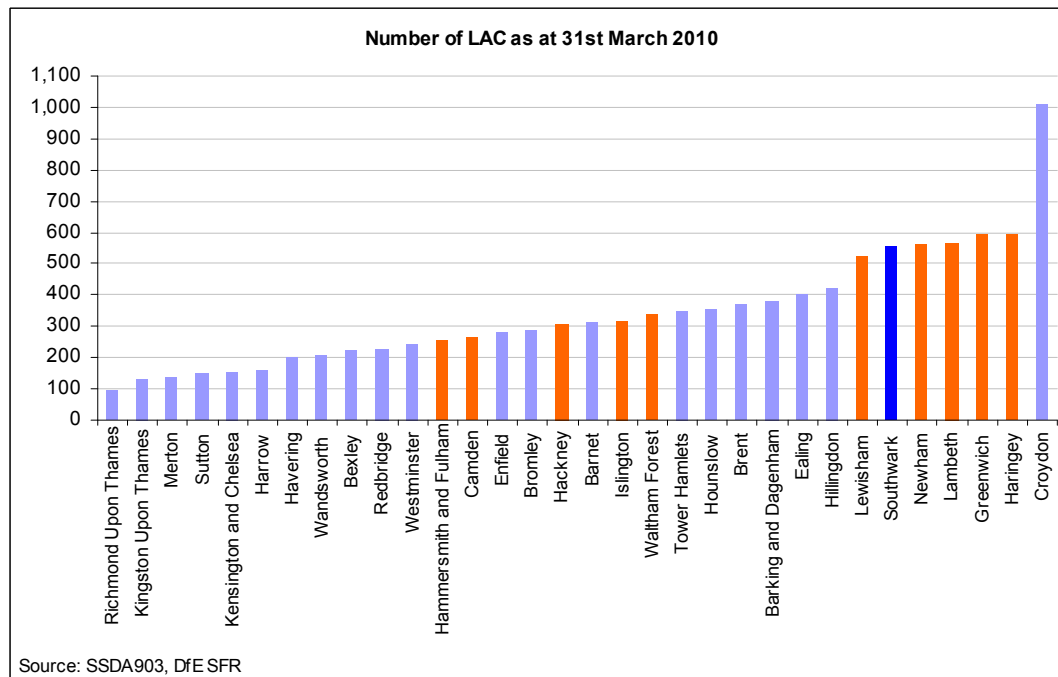
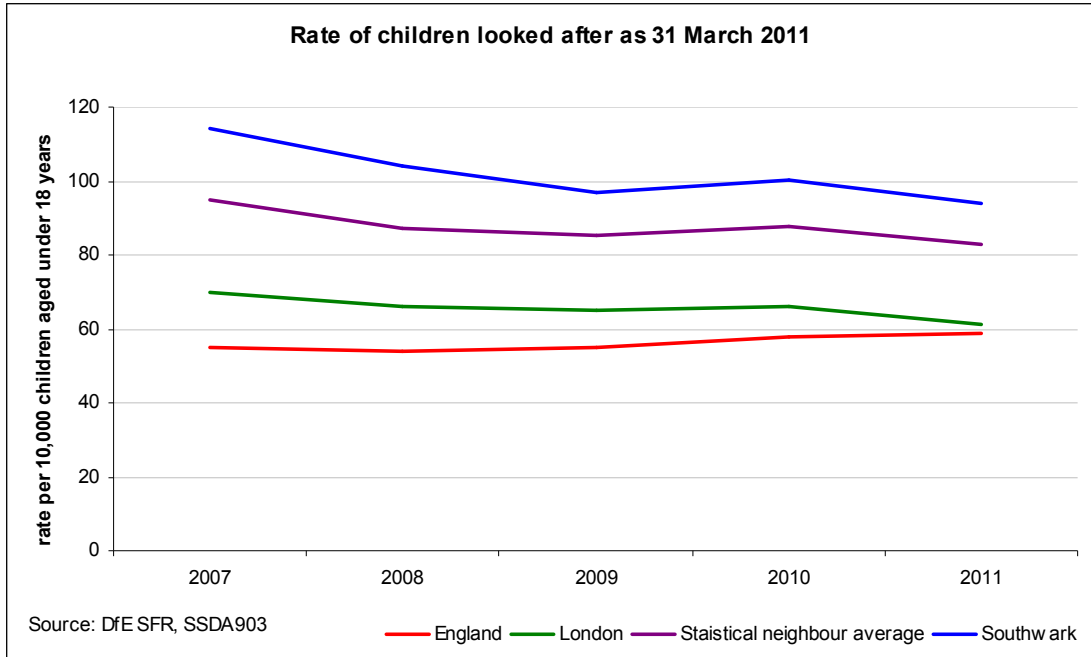


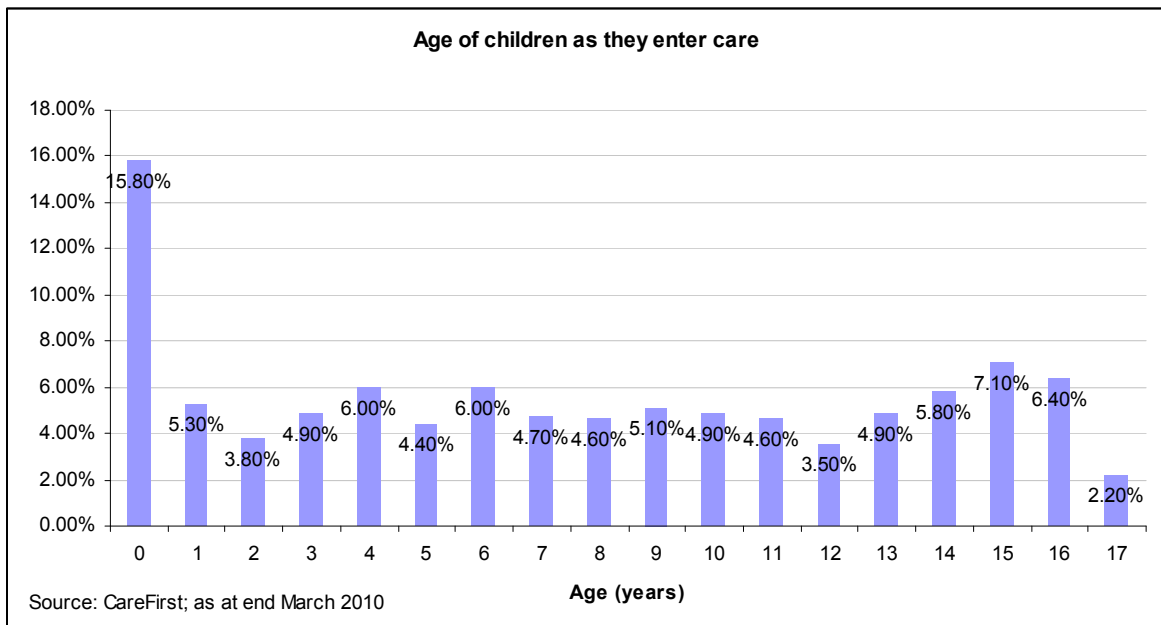
Figure 9 – Rate of children in care over time as at end March 2011



## Age Distribution

Two-fifths (40%) of children in care at end March 2010 were under 6 years when they came into care. One third (33%) of children were aged between 6 and 12 and a quarter (26%) were 13 or over.

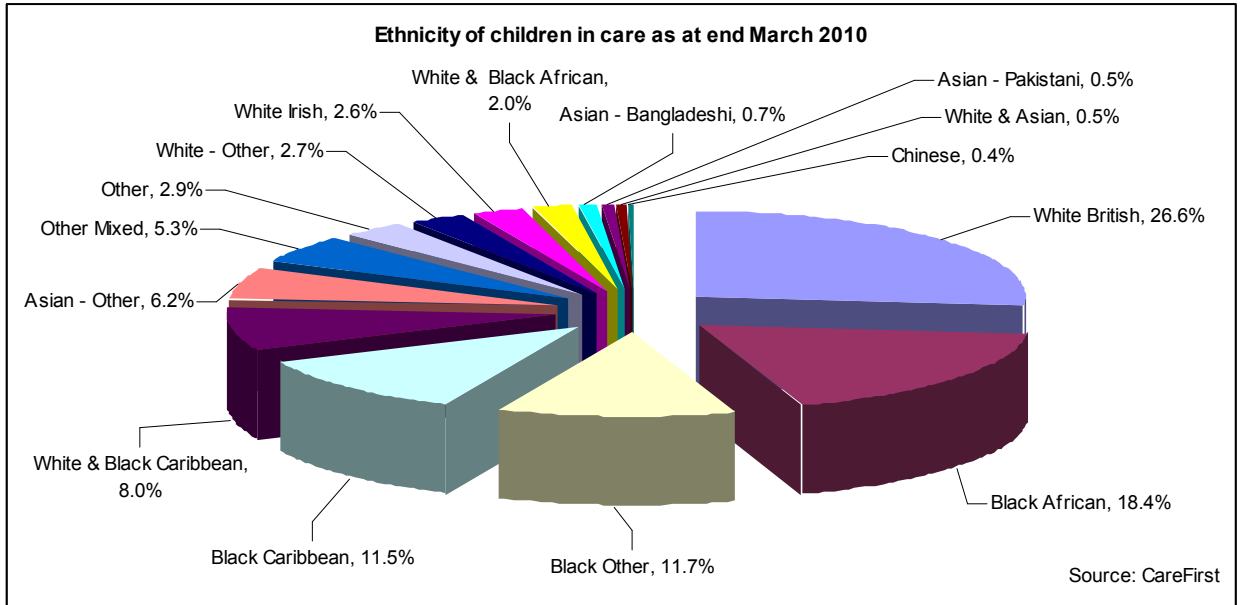
Figure 10 – Age distribution of children looked after as they entered care end March 2010



## Ethnicity

Although 42% of children in care were of a black ethnic background as at end March 2010, white British children in care accounted for over a quarter (27%) of children. Black African accounted for nearly one fifth of children in care and over one in ten children were from an other black background and black Caribbean.

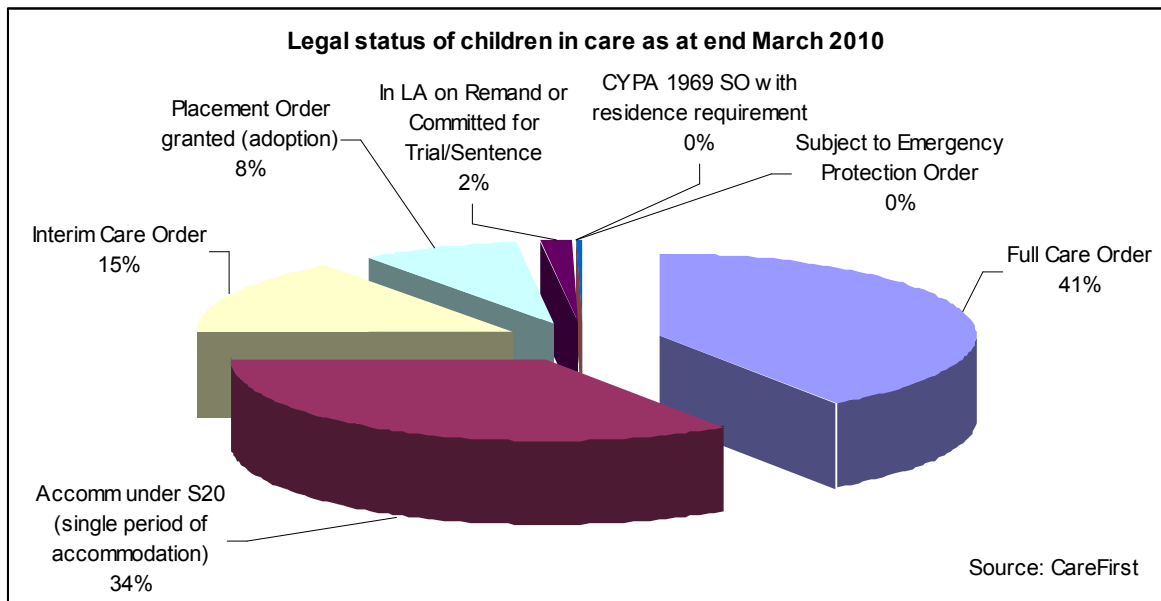
Figure 11 – Ethnicity of children in care end March 2010



## Legal Status

Of those children looked after as at end March 2010 two fifths (41%) were looked after on full care orders and one third (34%) were accommodated under section 20. There was also a high number of children looked after on interim care orders (15%).

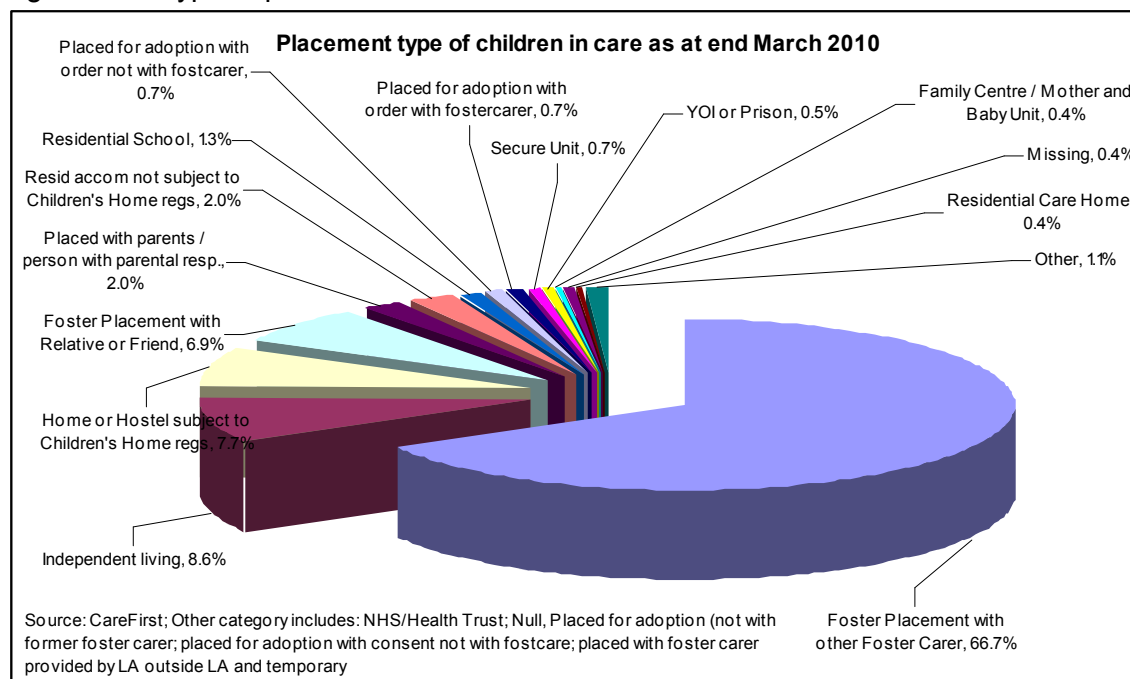
Figure 12 – Legal status of children in care as at end March 2010



## Type of Placements

Two thirds (67%) of children in care were placed with a foster carer and an additional seven per cent were placed with a relative or friend.

Figure 13 – Type of placements as at end March 2010



## Distance between home and placement

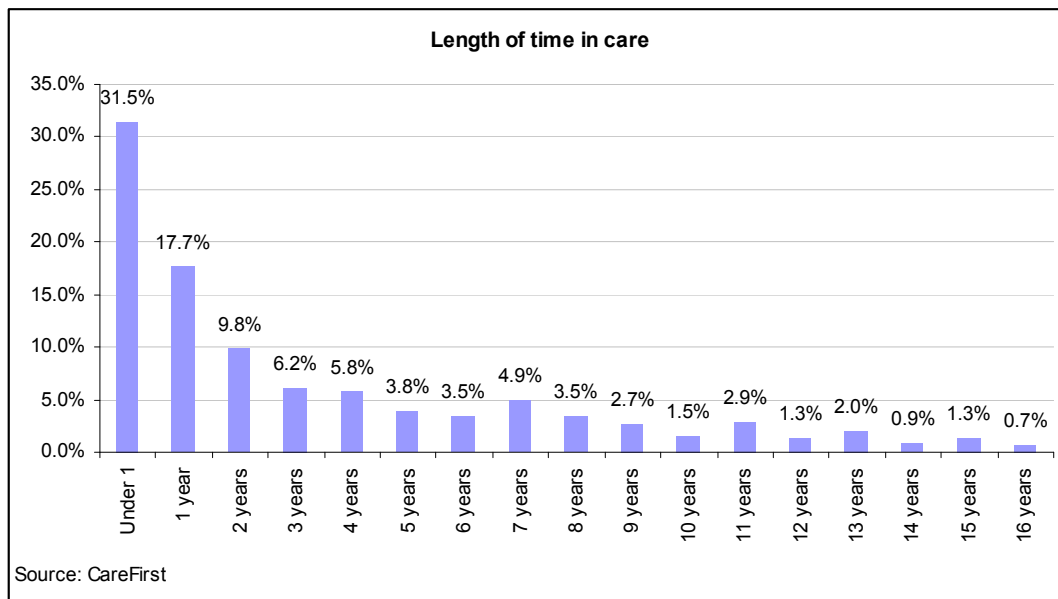
A high proportion (79%) of children in care were placed under 20 miles from their home.

Distance from home	Number	%
Less than 7 miles	338	61.6%
7 - less than 20 miles	96	17.5%
20 miles or more	74	13.5%
Unavailable	41	7.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>549</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

## Length of Time in Care

Nearly a third (32%) of children were in care for under one year. An additional 18% were in care for one year and one in ten children were in care for 2 years. Five per cent of children were in care for 13 years or more.

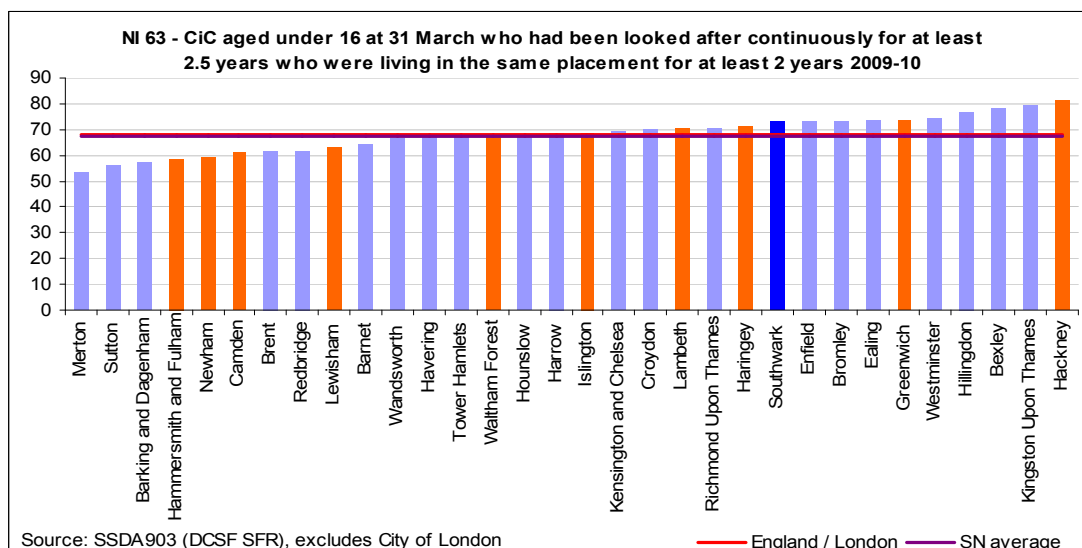
Figure 14 – Length of time spent in care as at end March 2010



### Length of placement for children looked after

Southwark has improved by 5 percentage points reaching its highest proportion over the last 5 years (72.8%). This improvement shows Southwark exceeding national (68.0%), London (68.5%) and statistical neighbour (67.4%) performance in 2010. Southwark is now ranked 10<sup>th</sup> in London out of 32 London boroughs (compared with 20<sup>th</sup> in 2009) and is now in the top quartile nationally for high performance (compared with 2<sup>nd</sup> quartile in 2009).

Figure 15 – Length of placement for children in care

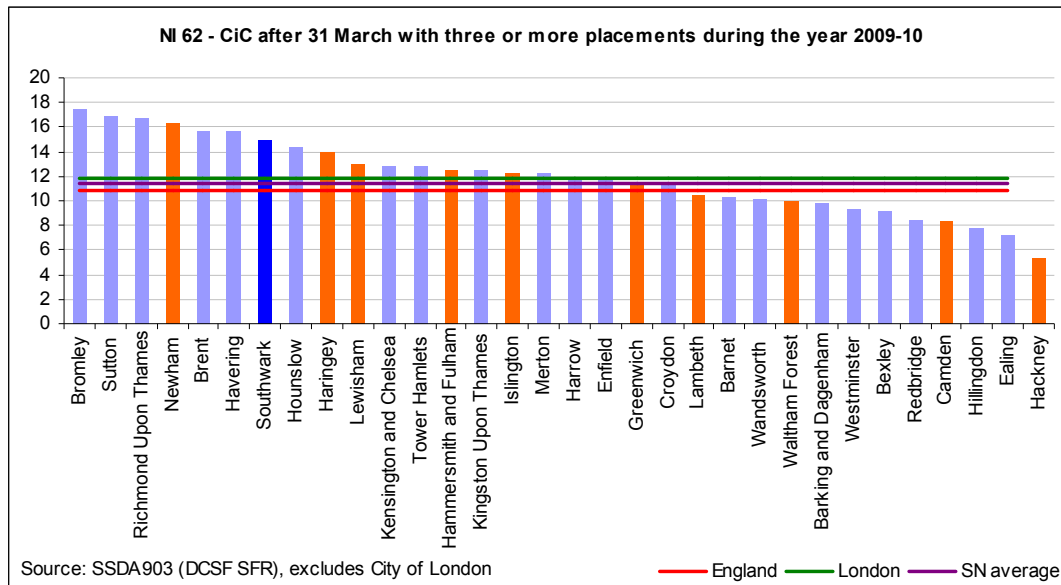


### Children looked after with 3 or more placements

Southwark's performance for children looked after with 3 or more placements in 2010 (14.9%) remains in line with the previous 12 months (14.1%). Although we remain below national (10.9%), London (11.9%) and statistical neighbour (11.4%)

performance the gap has remained stable over the last 12 months. Southwark's performance is ranked 26<sup>th</sup> in London out of 32 boroughs (excludes City of London). We have the 7<sup>th</sup> highest proportion of children in care with 3 or more placements in London and we remain in the bottom quartile nationally for lower performance.

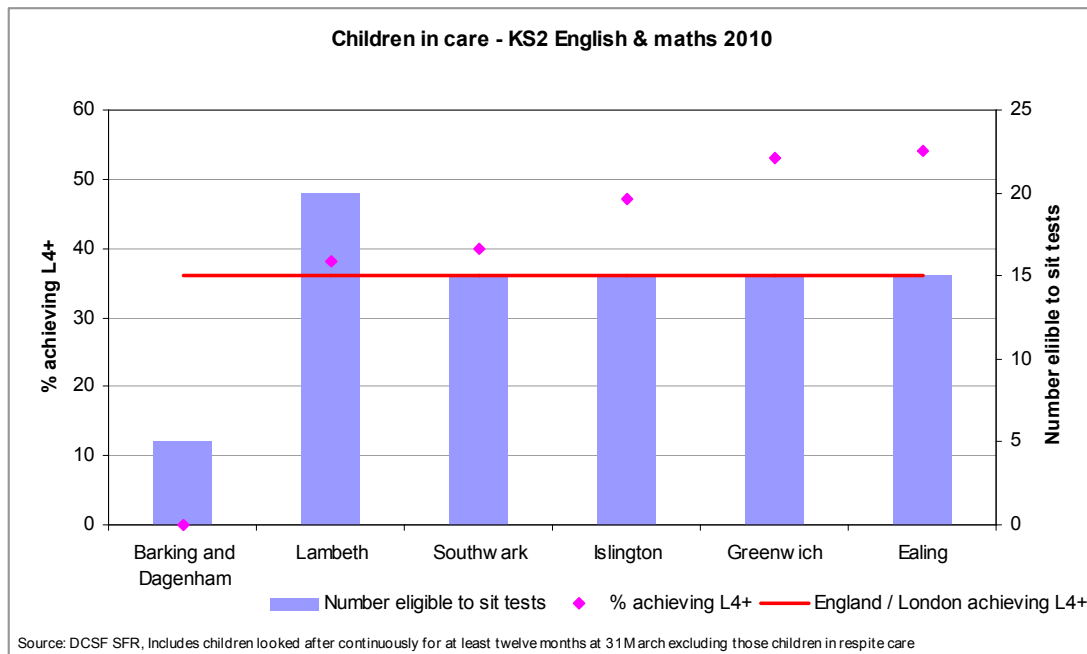
Figure 16 – Children in care with 3 or more placements



### Outcomes of children in care

In 2010 the percentage of children in care achieving the expected level in Key Stage 2 English and maths (40%) combined was above the national and London average (36%). Due to small cohort sizes it's quite difficult to make comparisons to other London boroughs. However, for those boroughs where data was available (6 London boroughs) Southwark was ranked 4<sup>th</sup>.

Figure 22 – Key Stage 2 English and maths outcomes for children in care



In 2010 the percentage of children in care achieving 5+ A\*-C including English and maths (13.7%) was above the national average (11.6%) and in line with the London average (13.9%). Out of the 11 London boroughs where data was not suppressed Southwark was ranked 7<sup>th</sup> with high performance.

Figure 23 – Key Stage 4 5+ A\*-C English and maths outcomes for children in care

