

Item No. 7.	Classification: Open	Date: 4 November 2013	Meeting Name: Corporate Parenting Committee
Report title:		2012/13 End of Year Performance Report – Looked After Children	
Ward(s) or groups affected:		All	
From:		Director, Children's Social Care	

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the corporate parenting committee notes this report.
2. That the committee discuss how they wish to take forward any issues arising, with a particular focus on adoption performance.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

3. This report relates to 2012/13 end of year performance, and provides benchmarking where possible.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

4. In Southwark there were 565 children looked after as at 31 March 2013, which was a 2.7% increase over the last 12 months, nearing 2008 levels. The number and rate of children looked after has now increased for each of the last two years, this is in contrast to the statistical neighbour and London averages which have shown year on year decreases for the last four years. It is not possible to comment on whether this is good performance or needing improvement, entry to care is based on the needs of the child or young person.
5. Southwark, contrary to statistical neighbours and London, shows an increasing trend in number of children coming into care. This year's 10.5% increase (309 children) is double that of statistical neighbours (4.9%) and triple the London average (3.7%).
6. Children ceasing to be looked after during the year was up 17.3% (303 children), well above statistical neighbours (5.2%) and London (4.1%). 44% of children ceasing to be looked after are 16 years or over, which was similar to London (41%). This latter figure reflects the fact that young people leave care at 18.
7. The majority of our care leavers (91%) are in suitable accommodation, showing an improvement on last year. The proportion of care leavers not in education, employment and training has remained the same at 40%.
8. Performance on stability for length of placements and 3 or more placement changes shows a declining trend. A slightly higher proportion of children have had 3 or more placement changes in 2012/13 increasing from 12.7% to 13.6%. This is still within the good performance band. The slight increase in percentage is affected by the high proportion of babies in care proceedings. This can result in a number of placements in a short period of time as children and parents move in and out of assessment placements and foster care. Nearly two thirds (62.6%) of children looked after continuously for 2.5 years were in the same placement for at

least 2 years compared to 66.1% in 2011/2012. This data is still being cleansed however, and work to date suggests performance is much higher, but this is yet to be confirmed.

9. Reviews on time have improved in the last 12 months with 96% of children having their LAC reviews completed on time. Child care reviews are a statutory requirement and are undertaken by the Independent Reviewing Officer Service. The IROs ensure that child care plans are progressing to timescale and that children are well looked after and safeguarded within their placements.
10. A slightly lower proportion of children have been placed within 20 miles of their home (71% compared to 74%).
11. There has been a significant improvement in the adoption performance in the past year. Currently 16 children have been adopted and a further 27 are placed for adoption. The latter group is awaiting the final adoption order application which has to be made by the prospective adopters. We also have 39 prospective adopters in assessment which is the highest figure in the past 5 years.
12. Adoptions remains a priority in Southwark and the local Adoption and Permanence Taskforce chaired by the director of specialist services has taken forward a number of actions to continue improving permanency planning, family finding and reforming practice in some areas this year. A senior permanence advisor has been appointed to lead on the new permanence strategy, recruitment and training of staff, to ensure that performance is sustained for the future.
13. An evaluation of campaign activity was recently conducted and found that using a range of media helped to raise the profile of Southwark's adoption service and also increase the recruitment of new adopters.
14. Specifically, the 'Finding 40 Families' campaign, which included a £1,000 incentive for community groups willing to help recruit adopters was successful in increasing the number of enquiries from black and mixed heritage people. This is important because in the past adoptive parents from these ethnic backgrounds have been lower than expected.
15. Over the last 3 years 22 children had a decision to adopt changed to long-term fostering, and although there has been a slight improvement in the three year average for BME adoptions, annually we show a slight decline. Part of our recent campaign has been targeted at local faith and community groups to stimulate greater prospective adopter interest in these children. For older children adopted both the annual and the three year average shows a decline in trend.
16. Nationally, data is measured on a 3 year average, so overall our performance will still show the need for improvement despite the current year's successes. The 3-year average for timeliness in A1 (average time in days between a child entering care and moving in with its adoptive family, for children who have been adopted) and A2 (average time between a local authority receiving court authority to place a child and the local authority deciding on a match to an adoptive family, for children who have been adopted) also is over the national threshold. Timeliness data is distorted by those older children who are adopted by their foster carers. This is then reflected in the A10 figure. However, annual improvements show a considerable decrease in the average days for both measures. Adjusting for foster carer adoption for timeliness in A1 (A10) continues to show better performance than national.

17. Southwark was highlighted to have the highest number of children awaiting adoption in London and was in the bottom quartile nationally for performance last year. Our end of year performance shows 45 children waiting for adoption, more in line with Lambeth, Newham and Haringey 2012 performance. However, it must be noted that Southwark has one of the highest rates of care proceedings in London, and that many of these children entering care are babies. We would therefore expect a higher proportion of children where adoption was the plan.
18. The number of views of 'hits' on Southwark's adoption web pages has also gone up. For instance, after placing compelling and informative adverts in the Metro and Evening Standard newspapers in June 2013 there were almost 2,000 hits to the council's adoption web pages. This is an increase from 800 hits in May 2013.
19. In the coming months the service will be using Acorn, a customer segmentation tool, to analyse the characteristics of those making adoption enquiries and those who go on to adopt. This analysis will be used to identify gaps and to improve how we market directly to prospective adopters.

Community impact statement

20. The decision to note this performance report has been judged to have no impact on local people and communities. Clearly the quality of these services has a strong impact on children looked after from all communities.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
None		

APPENDICES

No	Title
None	

AUDIT TRAIL

Lead Officer	Rory Patterson, Director, Children’s Social Care		
Report Author	Monika Ciurej, Performance Information Analysis Manager		
Version	Final		
Dated	22 October 2013		
Key Decision?	No		
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER			
Officer Title		Comments Sought	Comments included
Director of Legal Services		No	No
Strategic Director of Finance and Corporate Services		No	No
Cabinet Member		No	No
Date final report sent to Constitutional Team			22 October 2013