

APPENDIX 1

Southwark Council (version 311017)

**Children Looked After and Care Leavers
Placement Sufficiency Strategy
2018-2022**

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Foreword

Children and young people who are looked after by local authorities are among the most vulnerable and disadvantaged members of society. In September 2017, Southwark Council were responsible for protecting and ensuring the safety, stability and wellbeing of 495 children and young people in our care, placed within the borough and beyond.

In March 2017, Southwark received an overall Ofsted rating of 'Good' for our children's services and we want to continue building on our successes to ensure that we are consistently performing well across every service we provide for our children and families in Southwark.

We want all our children and young people to have the best start in life, to experience safety and stability, to be happy and healthy and enjoy life. We will give them the care and support they need to be resilient and well prepared for adulthood and independence. We will provide them with high quality care, support and guidance to ensure they get the opportunities they deserve.

We have identified our strategic priorities for sufficiency which will rely on all health, education and care services working together to impact positively on improving outcomes for our population of children looked after. This population are amongst our most vulnerable, who deserve our best efforts to improve their life chances.



Councillor Victoria Mills

Cabinet Member for Children and Schools

Chair of Corporate Parenting Committee

Our vision for looked after children

“We want all our children and young people to be safe, happy and healthy and to enjoy life. We will give them the care and support they need to be resilient and well prepared for adulthood and independence.

We will provide them with high quality care, support and guidance to ensure they get the opportunities they deserve.”

Our values and principles for looked after children

The following values underpin the planning, commissioning and delivery of services to support children and young people.

- Be the champions our young people deserve
- Deliver high quality care, support and accommodation services
- Do our best to enable families to stay together
- Keep children and young people safe at all times
- Keep children and young people’s needs and wishes central to our work
- Keep all children and young people in care and care leavers well informed about their rights and where to go for help
- Empower children and young people to take control of their own lives and realise their full potential
- Deliver proactive support that secures the best long term outcomes for all children and young people
- Ensure the views of children, young people and their families inform service improvement

In 2012, the Council developed its Care Leavers Charter. The principles are:

- To respect and honour your identity
- To believe in you
- To listen to you
- To inform you
- To support you
- To find you a home
- To be your lifelong champion

Voice of the Child and Young Person

As part of developing this strategy, we met with a focus group of children and young people in care and care leavers to inform the outcomes they would like from the implementation of the strategic priorities.

The focus group was made up of eight young people. Two were care leavers and the rest were still in care. Two were aged 15 and six were 16+, where the eldest was 21. There were 5 young women and 3 young men, with a mix of ethnic backgrounds. Two had learning disabilities or difficulties. For those in a placement, their length of stay ranged up to 12 years.

Based on their answers to the questions and the stories that they told about their personal experiences, good and bad, we have developed I statements that will be used to monitor whether the actions related to this strategy are making a difference for the young people that are intended to benefit from it. The I statements are the outcomes that we would want for any young person but are particularly important to children and young people who are in, or have left, care.

- 1. I want to feel safe in the place that I live and sleep**
- 2. I want to feel good about myself and be healthy**
- 3. I want to know what my options are**
- 4. I want to be supported to stay in, or be connected, to my (extended) family**
- 5. I want to understand the decisions that are being made about my life and be asked how I can contribute to those decisions**
- 6. I want the things that are important to me to be taken into account when making decisions about my life**
- 7. I want to feel settled and comfortable in the place that I live**
- 8. I want my preferences to be taken into account when choosing who I should live with**
- 9. I want those involved in making decisions about where I live to keep regular contact with me and be responsive to my views**
- 10. I want to learn how to be ready to live the life that I choose when I become a care leaver**

Sufficiency Duty

The council has a duty under the Children Act 1989 (section 22c) to provide sufficient placements in the locality, as far as reasonably practical, to meet the accommodation needs of our children looked after and of our care leavers. The Children Act 1989 requires that the priority consideration for placing a child, is that the placement is the most appropriate available to meet the child's needs, including any physical disability, enabling of siblings to live together if appropriate, and least disruptive to the child's education.

The Southwark Children Looked After and Care Leavers Strategy 2016-2019 contains specific strategic priorities and actions directly related to the sufficiency duty, a significant number of which have been delivered. This Sufficiency Strategy and its action plan will build on those successes, as well as consider in more depth what is needed to better support our children in care and care leavers.

This strategy reflects the ambitions set out in the Southwark Five Year Forward View (FYFV) for health and social care 2016-21 which focuses on population and placed based commissioning, whole-system value and how care is delivered. The strategy also aligns with the Joint Strategic Framework for CYP which sets out the CCG and Council's shared priorities for CYP (including early years and 0-5 school readiness, emotional wellbeing and mental health, admission avoidance and crisis planning, vulnerable groups and risky behaviours), as well as Southwark Council's Children and Young People's Plan (including outcomes associated with early help, choice and control, safety and stability).

This strategy fully embraces the government guidance, *Putting Children First* (2016) that places emphasis on placements that are safe and stable, so that the child experiences continuity of care, and prepares the child for independence by helping them to build strong relationships, achieve in education and work, lead healthy lives, and actively participate in the decisions about their lives.

We will ensure that all children and young people who require accommodation are provided with a safe, stable placement that has been matched to their needs and enables them to form meaningful relationships with trusted adults for as long as they need them.

We will continue to strive to increase the range and scope of in-house fostering, and adoption services to ensure we have families available to offer placement choice to children and young people best placed to meet their needs.

We will ensure that the use of family based care both internally and externally remains a preferred option to secure appropriate family based accommodation for children and young people and promote stability and permanency in these as appropriate for the child.

We will also expand our involvement and access to external provision where this is best placed to meet the needs of children who cannot be accommodated within our provision. This will involve working with other boroughs across the South-East region.

Engagement & Methodology

In order to fully understand the needs of our looked after children, and to develop new ways of working to improve outcomes, a needs analysis has been undertaken as well as benchmarking performance against statistical neighbours. Evidence of best practice has been reviewed based on models that demonstrate good outcomes elsewhere. Commissioners have held individual meetings with children and young people in care and care leavers, providers of Southwark services and colleagues from other boroughs to identify areas for improvement and agree areas for action.

We have incorporated outputs from reviews including:

- Gaining Independence Report 2016: transforming support and housing for Southwark Looked After Children/care leavers and young people at risk of homelessness aged over 16 years¹
- Ofsted Report on Southwark Council's Children's Services (2017)
- Southwark Looked After Children: Health Annual Report 2016-2017
- The Strategy Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (2015)
- LAC and Care Leaver Forum (October 2017)

We have considered national guidance, reports and research including:

- Putting Children First (2016)
- Residential Care in England (2016),
- Keep on Caring: Supporting children from Care to Independence (2016)
- Children Act 1989,
- Children Leaving Care Act 2000
- Children & Young Person's Act 2008
- Children & Families Act 2014
- Children & Social Work Act 2017
- Homelessness Reduction Act 2017

¹ Gaining Independence Report: Transforming Support and Housing for Southwark Looked After Children/Care Leavers and Young People at risk of Homelessness aged over 16 Years (2016)

The Way Forward

This strategy is a route map for ensuring that there is sufficiency of placements for Southwark's looked after children. Therefore, in order to reach the destinations of the strategy, the council must commit resources to delivering and monitoring the action plan that has been developed.

What will success look like?

- Effective Early Help and Edge of Care Services
- Reduced need for children to enter care through lower numbers of looked after children
- Good use of Family Group Decision Making processes to enable families to develop their plans to safely reduce the need for children to enter care or lifelong links
- Permanence for children entering care at earliest opportunity
- More placements matched to needs of the child
- Siblings kept together whenever in their best interests
- Increased short term and long-term placement stability
- Increase the number of in-house Southwark foster carers
- Reduce the number of independent sector fostering placements
- Reduce the number of children placed in residential care
- Reduce the placement number and costs of semi-independent placements
- A greater range of fostering placement types within our fostering service matched to the needs of our children
- CAMHS and CCG working together with social care to deliver timely assessments, treatment, and funding of therapeutic help for children and young people
- Robust quality assurance of independent providers with clear outcomes measures for the child
- Innovative and creative solutions

How will we achieve this?

The delivery of the strategy will be directed by the Sufficiency Strategy Delivery Group, which will be co-chaired by the Director of Commissioning and Director of Children and Families.

We will monitor and update a 12 month action plan as a living document able to grow and develop to the changing needs of our young people and the market. This will be monitored by the Children & Adults Board as well as opportunity for scrutiny given through the council's Corporate Parenting Committee.

Profile of our Looked After Children and Care Leavers

Around 306,000 people live in Southwark of whom around 64,000 are young people.² The population is expected to grow and lead to greater need for health and social care services. Southwark's level of deprivation has improved in recent years but still remains the 12th most deprived London Borough (41st nationally).

Southwark's numbers of looked after children have remained stable between 475 and 500 over the 12 months up to September 2017. Southwark has higher rates of looked after children than national and London levels (78 in 10,000 children, compared to 62 and 50, respectively in March 2017).

Our current looked after population represents 0.7% of our Southwark children and young people aged 0-18 years³ which is comparable to our neighbouring borough of Lambeth. The number of children and young people in Southwark is projected to increase by 6% over the next five years. Forecasts also suggest our cohort of looked after children aged 13 years and over will grow and that without any intervention, the proportion of older looked after children requiring residential care placements will steadily increase putting additional pressure on already scarce resources.

In common with many London boroughs and the national profile, there are more males (58%) than females in our care, and 52% of children are aged over 10 years old. About 60% of the borough's population are from black and minority ethnic groups, and just over 50% of children looked after identify as Black or Black British.

The majority of our children looked after are subject to a legal order, with only 34% accommodated under Section 20 of the Children Act with parental consent or the consent of the child if 16 years and over.

It is not unusual for children coming into care to be older adolescents (26% were aged 16 years and over), an increasing trend locally and nationally. In September 2017 Southwark had 390 care leavers. This is projected to increase to over 600 taking into account the increase in statutory duties through the Children & Social Work Act 2017 extending entitlement to care leaver services to those aged 21 to 25 who are not in employment, education or training.

² Southwark Demographic Factsheet (2015)

³ Office for National Statistics (2016)

Key areas

Reducing the need for children to come into care

We believe that children and young people are best cared for within their families wherever this can be safely achieved and that investing in providing services that are able to promote change within families is frequently more effective and efficient than removing children and placing them in alternative care. This strategy recognises the importance of services that support families to stay together, wherever it is safe to do so, therefore minimising the need for fostering or residential care. This approach is consistent with our values and principles. We are currently delivering and continuing to develop and enhance early help and preventative services with that aim.

In March 2017 Ofsted praised the extensive range of services for younger children with emerging additional needs, and the strong early help services for older children that prevented the need for statutory social work involvement. Ofsted also praised social work intervention in identifying and protecting children promptly. This preventative approach is set out in the Families Matter (Early Help) Strategy 2015-2020 and is a key priority of the Strategic Plan for Children in Care and Care Leavers 2016-2019. Southwark expects to build on this success through this strategy from 2018 to 2022.

We seek to support the resilience of families with a range of family support services and clinical interventions, complementing the core social work offer and additionally providing targeted support to families at risk of escalating into statutory services and those stepping down from Children's Social Care. The specialist Family Focus Team works with children to reduce the need for children and young people to come into care, and together with the Keeping Families Together Team has been very effective.

Southwark understands that an effective Sufficiency Strategy is dependant on ensuring that only those children who really need to be in care become looked after, for the shortest possible period that meets their needs. As far as possible children and young people will continue to be supported to live with their families.

Location of placements

In September 2017, 26% of looked after children were placed more than 20 miles from Southwark. This has increased 4% over the last 18 months due to increasing difficulties finding suitable placements for children with more complex needs and challenging behaviour. We have particularly seen this with residential placements for adolescents. Increasing awareness of risks due to exploitation have been a significant feature of this.

Ofsted (2017) recommended Southwark work to ensure the needs of those placed out of borough are not disadvantaged by slower access to important services. For the purposes of this strategy the measure of children living 20 miles plus from Southwark is a better guide to concerns about placement outcomes, as young people living near to Southwark are able to access our in-house or commissioned services for CAMHS, education or health.

Southwark recognises that whilst it is sometimes appropriate to place a looked after child away from the borough for safety reasons, there are implications for the management of health and educational outcomes that we must consider. **We will increase the opportunities for placing more children and young people in, or near to, Southwark.**

Stability of placements

In September 2017, 14% of looked after children in care over the previous 12 months had experienced 3 placement moves in that year. The national average is 10%. This is a measure of short term stability.

In September 2017, 58% who had been in care for over 2.5 years had been in the same placement for 2 years. The national average is 68%. This is a measure of long term stability.

Ofsted (2017) reported that 'senior managers are aware that too many children in care, especially older children, have too many placement breakdowns that are, in many cases, the result of poorly planned and matched placements' and that too many children experience numerous changes of placement that are not in accordance with their care plans. While the majority of children are matched appropriately according to their needs, there are also some children who are placed with carers or in residential units that do not meet their needs or adequately safeguard them.

There is a suitable range of placement options for children under 10 years of age, however, there is not a sufficient range of high-quality placement options available for adolescents, particularly those who present challenging behaviours to their carers⁴. This lack of sufficiency leads to a significant number of placements that repeatedly break down for these young people.

We will improve placement stability through a better supply of high quality placements, alongside improvements to practice in relation to assessment, care planning and placement.

Matching of placements

Matching a child with a foster carer or adopter is one of the 'turning points' in a child's life⁵. Relationships with people who care for them are the 'golden thread' running throughout a child or young person's life. Whatever the route to permanence, professionals must work to match the developmental needs of the child with the caregiving required to meet them. Placement sufficiency can only be improved if alongside this, practice in relation to assessment, care planning and placement are of the highest quality, and matching of a child or young person's assessed needs, with the best placement for them, is central to this.

Ofsted (2017) reported that the majority of children are matched appropriately according to their needs, but some children are placed with carers or in residential units that do not meet their needs or adequately safeguard them.

We will improve placement sufficiency through better matching of such placements to need, and the development of the provision of support to placements to meet need.

⁴ Ofsted Report on Southwark Council's Children's Services (2017)

⁵ <http://fosteringandadoption.rip.org.uk/topics/matching/>

Living with Family and Friends

If children and young people are not able to live with their parents, the council has a duty to consider whether they can live safely with family or friends. There is a need to work with families to enable them to develop these alternatives themselves. This is a key part of our social work approach that will be supported through the development of Family Group Conferencing (FGCs) so that there is an offer for families at an earlier stage when difficulties arise. Evidence to support this approach is found in Southwark's involvement with the DFEs' Innovation Programme using FGCs for children on the edge of care⁶.

We are committed, as far as is in the best interests of children, to enable their needs to be met outside the care system. **We will continue to strengthen our approach to supporting Special Guardians who take on the care of children and young people who were formerly looked after.**

Sometimes, children will be placed in the care of family members or friends and those carers will be assessed as foster carers. Over the last 3 years we have strengthened our capacity to support such carers that has seen an increase in such placements and reduced pressure on our own Fostering Service. Research recognises that children and young people placed with family and friends are often more stable and achieve better outcomes than regular foster care⁷. The council has been successful in securing funding from the Children's Social Care Innovation Program to pilot a Lifelong Links Programme starting early 2018. This is based on extensive evidence of such an approach in the US⁸

We will work with 50 children in care, over the next 3 years, and support them to make life long links with extended family members that may include being cared for by those family members.

We will continue to build the success in developing the option of family and friends placements for children and young people.

⁶ Munro et al (2017) Children's Social Care Innovation Programme Report 54. Daybreak Family Group Conferencing: Children on the Edge of Care (DFE)

⁷ Elaine Farmer and Sue Moyers (2008) Kinship Care: Fostering effective Family and Friends Placements (Jessica Kingsley)

⁸ <https://www.frg.org.uk/involving-families/family-group-conferences/lifelong-links#what-is-the-evidence-of-the-impact-of-lifelong-links>

Adoption

Ofsted (2017) reported that ‘in Southwark, early consideration of permanence for children is an embedded approach throughout the social work teams and adoption is considered for all children’. They went on to say that ‘children and adopters receive high-quality support from a stable, experienced and well-trained workforce, resulting in children benefiting from a permanent home’ and that ‘adoption is identified promptly as a potential permanency arrangement and that children develop good, trusting relationships with their social workers’.

The percentage of all children who ceased to be looked after because they were adopted in Southwark was 8% in 2016/17. This is lower than the previous year (12%) but reflects that changing national picture in adoption with lower numbers of children being adopted.

Southwark is very proud that Ofsted (2017) has judged our adoption service to be “outstanding” with “excellent” preparation of adopters. The government requires local authorities to work with each other to form Regional Adoption Agencies (RAA) by 2020.

We will maintain and develop the sufficiency of adoption placements through taking leadership within the development of the Regional Adoption Agency in whatever form that takes for London.

Fostering Service

There is currently a national shortage of foster carers. This makes placing children and young people in such family settings more difficult. March 2017 saw the highest number of children in care nationally in over 30 years, a 5% rise on the previous year. Underlying this was a rise in older children in care and those with more complex needs. So, the demand for foster placements nationally is rising and recruitment is not at a pace to meet this demand.;

This mirrors the local picture not only in the recruitment of foster carers to Southwark’s Fostering Service, but in more complex children needing to be placed and the challenges in finding suitable foster care for these young people, often resulting in some children and young people being placed in residential care.

The very large majority of our children are placed in foster homes (89%). *Putting Children First* emphasises the importance of foster care for helping to improve children’s lives and enabling them to achieve, noting that fostering can achieve stability and continuity of care for challenging children when carers have access to good therapeutic resources, training, and respite care.

Southwark has one of London’s largest fostering services. The recruitment and assessment of foster carers was brought back in-house in 2015 to increase the quality and expectations of the kind of care that children and young people should experience. It proved challenging to develop momentum in this area and during 2016/17 only 8 new carers were recruited, insufficient to maintain current numbers or to grow placements for young people with complex needs. Progress has been made in this area and over 2017/18 an estimated 15 new fostering households will be approved. This strategy recognises the need to continue to develop the capacity and recruitment of foster carers, and their capacity to meet the needs of the children they care for.

Approximately 35.5% of all Southwark foster placements are made with independent fostering agencies (IFAs) They have a valuable contribution to make to the choice, range, consistency, and quality of fostering placements available to our children looked after. However, the competitive recruitment of foster carers similarly impacts IFAs, placements are in short supply, particularly for challenging young people, and placement disruptions are as likely with IFA placements as with our own fostering service. Placements with IFAs are far more costly than in-house placements (national cost difference of £300 per child, per week). Last year there was a 17% increase in IFAs, and Southwark's spend on such placements of £5.9 million is likely to increase to £6.7 million for 2017/18.

The substantial level of profitability in this sector has raised considerable concerns, as reported to the government by Sir Martin Narey (2016).

Ofsted (2017) reported that 'most children wait too long to achieve permanence when they are in long-term foster placements. This means that children may be prevented from building strong, enduring relationships with their carers until firm agreements are reached.' Ofsted also recognised that more needed to be done to maximise the prospects of sibling being placed together.

We recognise that the sufficiency of foster placements, and the outcomes that flow from this, are supported by a strengthened approach to permanence planning in fostering, building on the success through adoption.

We will grow our own fostering service in each year of this strategy both to decrease reliance on the independent sector, and to create the range and types of fostering placements required for complex needs older children, respite, crisis intervention, siblings, and parent and child.

Staying Put

The Children and Families Act 2014 introduced the duty for care leavers to remain with their former foster carers under a Staying Put arrangement, if both the young person and the carer wanted to do so. Southwark has well established Staying Put arrangements, and last year 35 care leavers decided to remain with their former foster carers.

We will build on this success and continue to ensure care leavers remain with their former foster carers when this is right for them under Staying Put.

Residential Children's Homes

In September 2017 there were 50 children placed with in residential homes including those in the secure estate. The review undertaken for the Department of Education by Sir Martin Narey, *Residential Care in England* (2016), recognises that when carefully matched to the assessed needs of the child, residential homes can be the right placement for some children. However, in line with the legislation and guidance, fostering is the right choice for most children who cannot return home, enter special guardianship, or be placed for adoption. Local authorities must treat fostering as the first option "not least because it is much less expensive than residential care" Sir Martin Narey (2016)." The view that there are some young people who cannot live in a family placement is questionable, as the No Wrong Door (NWD) project in North Yorkshire has demonstrated, and Sir Martin agrees that the evidence of NWD suggests that there is merit in viewing residential care not as the end of the child's journey but as a bridge to fostering.

Placing a child in a residential home requires very careful consideration of the child's needs and of the improved outcomes being sought. Children placed outside the locality may experience increased vulnerability. Ofsted (2017) judged that Southwark has placed some children in residential homes that do not meet all their needs. As an immediate response to this concern the formal scrutiny by senior managers of every residential placement was strengthened through a more robust panel process with a clear remit to ensure: the child is safe; their outcomes are improving; the placement remains appropriate; and that the child has a plan to transition to foster care or to an alternative if this is in their best interests.

Nationally, about 53% of children in residential homes have a Statement of Educational Needs (SEN) or Education, Health, and Care Plan (EHCP) and a further 28% have identified developmental disabilities and/or special educational needs without a plan. This compares to 20% and 30% of all children looked after (*Residential Care in England 2016*). Southwark's figures are not dissimilar, and this creates the opportunities for closer working together between the CCG and children's social care, to develop joined-up packages of assessment, therapeutic treatment, and funding of residential care placements, and more importantly, better assessment and treatment pathways enabling more children looked after to experience family life, either through the care of their families or in foster placements. By increasing the number of fostering placements for children with complex needs, and timely transitions,

We will reduce the number of children placed in children's homes from 2018 to 2022 and we began this work during 2017.

Very few residential children's homes are owned by local authorities or the voluntary sector and the majority of children live in privately owned provision. The council does not own any provision. Less than 6% of the 1,795 homes are located in London, whilst the North West has 24%, meaning that Southwark children are very likely to be placed considerably beyond a 20 mile radius from the borough. Cost analysis and comparisons per placement between local authority owned children's homes and the independent sector is complex, and Residential Care in England 2016 suggests that unlike the considerable profits made by the independent fostering sector, there may be little difference between the two. Placing the child in the right placement takes priority over placing a child closer to the borough, but the lack of choice for Southwark in placing children in residential care outside London creates

the challenge and the opportunity to consider if Southwark should own and operate its own children's homes in the London area, or engage in a partnership with a provider to create this resource.

We will collaborate with other local authorities so that the council, as a commissioning organisation, improves its leverage in the residential care market so that we can get work with good providers that deliver excellent outcomes at a fair price.

Care leavers

The Children and Social Work Act 2017 introduced the duty for local authorities to publish their local offer to care leavers, to include the provision of accommodation. In line with the Children Act 1989 and Care Leaving Act 2000, Southwark, maintains children in placement until 18 years of age, and assists with the provision of accommodation from age 18 to 21, or 25 if in education, for care leavers. Southwark has recently reviewed the local offer to care leavers, (see: Scrutiny sub-committee for education and children's services review of the local offer for care leavers, April 2017, and report of the Southwark Young People 16+ Support & Housing Project, May 2017; also, response of the Cabinet to the review, September 2017).

The needs and vulnerabilities of care leavers means that many are not able to transition to independent accommodation at age 18, and require support to develop their independence skills and the abilities needed to manage tenancies of their own. As stated in the Southwark Young People 16+ Support & Housing project, "the move to independent living is a formative time in many young people's lives. It is a time when many young people finish their education, take up employment and begin to pay rent and other bills in what may be their first home away from their families and foster carers."

In September 2017 there were 112 care leavers living in Semi-Independent Accommodation (SIA). This is accommodation provided by the independent sector at cost to the council (after housing benefit/universal credit housing element contribution). The cost of this kind of accommodation can be expensive, the average spend for the care leavers in SIA is £22k per annum. This is also a market where demand outstrips supply, and with the projected increase in the number of care leavers over the next 4 years, there is both a challenge and an opportunity for Southwark to innovate ways of providing more of this type of accommodation.

The Southwark Young People 16+ Support & Housing Project sets out a detailed plan in relation to improving sufficiency in this area.

We will ensure the continued development of this including close working with Housing and exploring the possibilities for council owned and managed semi-independent accommodation.

Sufficiency and the enablers for better outcomes

The impact of abuse, neglect, parental dysfunction, or absent parenting, leads to emotional, behavioural and health concerns for over 50% of the children in our care. Partnership

working with health and education partners is vital to meeting the needs of children looked after. Placement stability is essential to meeting the child's evolving needs. Children's development educationally, socially, physically, and mentally, is highly dependent on the consistency of care. Placement stability is directly influenced by how the emotional and mental health needs of children and young people are met within that placement. Health and therapeutic support for those young people as well as their carers is essential to enable the council to have sufficient placements for its children and young people in care.

We will work with the CCG, CAMHS, and independent therapeutic providers to improve the effectiveness of therapeutic placement support for both children and young people and those that care for them.

For the same reasons of abuse, neglect, parental dysfunction and absent parenting, children looked after may do poorly at school, and the gap in educational achievement between them and their peers is marked. Ofsted (2017) judged that most children looked after by Southwark attend a good school regularly, receive good support from the Virtual School, and make good progress. However, the gap between our children and their peers remains wide.

We will further embed the Virtual School in the assessment, planning, and review of children looked after and their placements as well as co-working directly with all educational providers where our looked after children are.

Ofsted (2017) judged that many of our care leavers are living in safe, suitable housing and achieving good outcomes in their education, employment, and training. The projected increase in numbers of care leavers creates both challenges and opportunities in 2018-2022 that Southwark is addressing in partnership with Catch22 through a successful investment through the Department of Education's Social Care Innovation Fund. The quality of accommodation and support young people receive around this, is critical to enable the council to have sufficient accommodation for its care leavers.

We will renew our approach to working with care leavers to improve outcomes and meet the challenges that increased demand places on the sufficiency and suitability of accommodation. This work has already begun.

Action Plan – placement sufficiency priorities for next 12 months

Key area	Action Focus	Milestones/ target	Linked Indicators	Lead officer	I Statement
Adoption	Pro-actively with plans to form Regional Adoption Agency	RAA decisions made Mar 2018		Director of Children & Families	1, 2, 6, 7, 8, 10
	Develop Fostering for Adoption for older children			Head of Permanence & Resources	1, 2, 6, 7, 8, 10
Fostering	Continued targeted recruitment of specialist foster carers for complex needs/challenging behaviour older children and adolescents	By March 2018	Increased percentage of placements with in-house foster carers	Head of Permanence & Resources	7, 8, 9, 10
	Development of more specialised practical and clinical support for foster carers through CAMHs and Children's Social Care's embedded Clinical Service	Review by December 2017 Implementation by April 2018	Improved stability of all placements	Head of Partnership Commissioning for Children and Young People Head of Clinical Service	2, 4, 6, 10
	Development of parent and child, respite care, emergency care, and time-limited care placement opportunities	By September 2018	A comprehensive and seamless range of services that improves foster placement stability	Head of Partnership Commissioning for Children and Young People	3, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10
	Joint work to deliver changes to foster carer accommodation to increase capacity to care for children with complex needs and sibling groups	By April 2018	Placement stability Permanence	Director of Commissioning with Director of Children, Families, Director of Asset Management and Director of Resident Services	1, 9, 10

Key area	Action Focus	Milestones/ target	Linked Indicators	Lead officer	I Statement
	Comprehensive benchmarking review in 2017-18 of its financial and support package for foster carers, its training, and 'wrap-around' health, CAMHS and education support to inform how we improve the attractiveness of fostering children from Southwark to potential carers who are from or near Southwark	Review by March 2018 Refresh the recruitment campaign by July 2018 Increase number of carers by December 2018	Increase number of carers signed up to in-house fostering service	Head of Permanence and Head of Finance	1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 10
	Recommissioning of IFA placements through sub regional approach with other SE London authorities	Specification by March 2018 Contract award by December 2018	Matching of needs first time Demonstrably cost effective placements Improved placement stability	Head of Partnership Commissioning for Children and Young People	1, 7, 8, 9
Access to Resources business management of placements	Access to Resources Team (ART) working to an effective business model in securing independent sector placements, managing in-house placements, and achieving value for money on cost	Review by December 2017 Improvement by April 2018	Placement stability Matched Placements Permanence	Director of Children & Families Head of Permanence	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10
	ART gatekeeping of the quality and appropriateness of referrals for resources, and that these provide good detail of children's	Review by December 2017	Matched placements Improved value for money	Head of Permanence	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10

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	personalities and needs to support effective matching	Improvement by April 2018			
	ART embedded in the scrutiny and gatekeeping of costs through the High Cost Placement Panel	November 2017	Resource gatekeeping Placement suitability	Head of Permanence	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10
	ART and Commissioning quality assurance and monitoring of independent residential care and SIA placements through reporting, scrutiny and site visits	Work plan for monitoring by December 2017	100% of placements monitored by Sept 2018	Quality and Performance Manager with Head of Access to Resources Team	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10
Reduce placement moves and increase stability	Strengthened care planning and management oversight of placement moves through ART gatekeeping of transfer requests and referral to AD/Director	December 2017	Placement stability	Head of Permanence	4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9
	Timely and effective clinical support linked to outcomes including greater partnership working with the CCG ensuring the quality, provision, and funding of therapeutic services to children looked after Enhance the Looked After Children service that is provided by GSTT to ensure high quality health assessments and follow up	Review by March 2018 Inform commissioning intention letters for 2019/20 by July 2018 Phased implementation from March 17	100% health checks for LAC Dental checks (90%) Substance misuse intervention (60%) Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire Score (95%)	Head of Partnership Commissioning for Children and Young People CCG, Guy's and St Thomas's NHS Foundation Trust and Children and Young People's Health Partnership (CYPHP)	1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 10

Key area	Action Focus	Milestones/ target	Linked Indicators	Lead officer	I Statement
	Foster carers fully supported in their care of children by Health, CAMHS, Children's Social Care including embedded Clinical Service, and the Virtual School, working as a team	Health: Review by March 2018 Inform commissioning intention letters for 2019/20 by July 2018 Education: TBC	100% health checks for in-house foster carers Improved foster placement stability	Head of Partnership Commissioning for Children and Young People with Lead Officer, Secondary & Further Education & Employment	1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 10
Residential care	Reduced number of residential care placements to 41 through timely transitions where appropriate, scrutinised and monitored by the High Cost Placements Panel	March 2018	Placement suitability	Director of Children & Families Head of CLA	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10
	Exploration of the potential for Southwark to access/manage its own residential children's homes through partnership with a provider or through direct ownership	Options appraisal by July 2018	Increased overall number of places available to Southwark children	Head of Partnership Commissioning for Children and Young People	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10
	Recommissioning of residential placements through sub regional approach with other SE London authorities	Specification by March 2018 Contract award by December 2018	Matching of needs first time Demonstrably cost effective placements Improved placement	Head of Partnership Commissioning for Children and Young People	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10

Key area	Action Focus	Milestones/ target	Linked Indicators	Lead officer	I Statement
			stability		
Care leavers	Commissioning, Housing, Social Care Partnership – adopt/adapt the Barnardo’s care leavers accommodation and support framework (as recommended by the Southwark Young People 16+ Support & Housing Project) as this provides a TQM model for joined up working and progressive actions to achieve sufficiency	June 2018	Increased number of young people moving through supported living into fully independent living	Assistant Director for Commissioning, Children and Adults	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10
	Increased independence skills of care leavers to move into their own tenancies with innovative support services (Catch 22 Innovation Fund Project, and the proposed Young People 16+ Support and Resettlement Service)	Benchmark percentage of young people that maintain independent and ‘debt-free’ living for more than one year by December 2017	Increase the percentage of young people that maintain independent and ‘debt-free’ living for more than one year	Representative from Ops and Assistant Director for Commissioning, Children and Adults	1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 9, 10
	Exploration of the potential for Southwark to access/manage its own semi-independent accommodation for care leavers 18+ through direct ownership and management of accommodation or through partnership with a provider	Options appraisal by September 2018	Increased overall number of places available to Southwark care leavers	Assistant Director for Commissioning, Children and Adults	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10
	Achieved cost reductions in current semi-independent	September 2018	Reduce the average unit cost for semi-	Assistant Director for Commissioning,	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10

Key area	Action Focus	Milestones/ target	Linked Indicators	Lead officer	I Statement
	accommodation through ART monitoring and scrutiny of the High Cost Placements Panel		independent living	Children and Adults	