

<b>Item No</b> 7	<b>Classification:</b> Open	<b>Date:</b> March 26 2008	<b>Meeting Name:</b> Corporate Parenting Committee
<b>Title:</b>		Children Looked After: Performance Report	
<b>Ward(s) or groups affected:</b>		All	
<b>From:</b>		Strategic Director of Children's Services	

### RECOMMENDATION(S)

1. That the committee note and consider the issues outlined in this report.

### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

2. Services for children looked after are monitored through a series of national and local performance indicators. Southwark's latest performance against these indicators, together with other relevant activity data, can be seen in the scorecard in **appendix 1**. This information is monitored on a monthly basis at senior management meetings. Summary information is monitored by the Young Southwark Executive.

### KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

3. Overall the data set for Southwark's children looked after as at January 2008 is showing strong performance. Key issues to note include:
  - the highly positive trend on adoption rates has continued over the last quarter
  - total numbers of children looked after have dropped again to a new low of 562
  - the educational attainments levels of children upon leaving care are also showing some improvements
  - the stability of children looked after (indicator 18) has declined slightly over the quarter
  - children looked after missing 25+ school days in the last 12 months has improved slightly but remains off our challenging local target

### Summary of the September 07 indicator set (appendix 1)

4. **The number of looked after children (*Indicator 9*)** at 562 continues the downward trend since the last report and is now better than the target level of approximately 580. This target was set taking into account the fact that Southwark's rate per head of population was significantly above a number of comparable boroughs. This progress is to be welcomed as evidence of stronger preventative services and alternatives to care.
5. **Adoption rates (*Indicator 5 and 34*):** Strong performance sustained from Quarter 2 through into Quarter 3 has brought the total to 44 adoptions (or special guardianship orders) so far this year, compared to 32 in all of 2006/07. The rolling 12 month rate is now 11.3% against the annual target

of 7% in this key APA letter improvement area. There has also been an improvement in the numbers placed for adoption within 12 months of the best interest decision (increasing from 50% in 06/07 to 93.8%).

6. Within the looked after population there has been a small increase in the proportion placed in **residential care** (14.8% end of January 2008 compared to 11.8% in September 2007). However we are still below our statistical neighbours. Priority is given to placing children in a family setting wherever possible. (*Indicator 27*).
7. The number of **unaccompanied asylum seeking children** has fallen to 64 compared to 86 at the year end (*Indicator 11*).
8. The percentage of children looked after in **kinship placements** with relatives or friends at 7.1% has slightly decreased from the Quarter 2 rate of 7.6%. This remains below the comparator average of 10.9%, but is partly a reflection of our success at encouraging families to apply for Special Guardianship Orders. (*Indicator 30*)
9. Around half of children looked after are **placed outside the borough** but 69% are placed within a 7-mile radius of their home address continuing trend of Quarter 2. Only 6.6% are placed more than 20 miles from home, which is better than the comparator group average of 11% (*Indicators 20,21 and 22*).
10. **Stability of placements for children looked after:** the short term measure of looked after children with 3 or more placement moves in the last 12 months has improved from 12.8% in September to 12.1% in January, close to the local target of 12%. (*Indicator 17*). The longer term measure of children looked after for 2.5 + yrs who have been in the same placement for 2 years has shown some reduction, and at 62.6% is now below the local target and the comparator average performance (*Indicator 18*). This measure is subject to a high profile national PSA target of 80%, although few authorities are achieving this rate. The reduction is partly a reflection of the positive adoption figure and the fact that the total number of CLA has reduced.
11. **Children looked after who communicated their views to their statutory review** (*Indicator 35*): Latest performance shows that 95.4% have communicated their views to their statutory reviews. This is a strong performance, now exceeding the 92% 2007/2008 target and significantly above the national 2006/2007 average of 87%.
12. **Timeliness of reviews for children looked after** (*Indicator 36*): end of year performance at 94.3% was strong compared to the national average of 87%. In-year data is not yet available but system improvements are expected to rectify this later this year.
13. **Employment, Education and Training status of Care Leavers** (*Indicator 39*): Some progress made since September 2007, now standing at 0.83 which shows the number of care leavers in employment, education or training at 19 is heading in the right direction towards the draft target of 1.0 (which reflects parity with the population rate). It should be noted that this

target has been made more challenging by improvements in the population rate overall compared to 2005/2006, which is in itself to be welcomed.

14. **Education of children looked after – attainment upon leaving care (indicators 40,41 & 42):** The indicators on the qualifications of children leaving care have shown good improvements this quarter. Although still below our local target, the proportion leaving care with 1 GCSE+ and with 5 GCSE A-C+ is at the highest rate yet recorded. This improvement was anticipated given the much improved results of those children looked after in 2006 and 2007, as these children are now leaving care.
15. **Ethnicity of children looked after: (indicators 43-47):** The ethnic composition of children looked after remains fairly stable, with over representation of mixed parentage children and under representation of white children compared to population data being the chief features.
16. **Children looked after who missed 25+ school days in the last 12 months (Indicator 50):** at 13.7% Southwark performance has improved slightly on Quarter 2, but this still represents a significant decline on the very good 2006/2007 outturn of 8.3%. Although 13.7% remains better than the 2006/2007 statistical neighbour average of 15.2% this trend clearly needs further examination, and may be linked to data collection improvements.
17. **Health of Children Looked After (Indicator 48):** 83.4% of children looked after have up to date dental and health checks, a slight drop in performance and now below our target of 87% for 2007/2008. This may be affected by recording and systems issues, which do not reflect the true performance.

### **Policy implications**

18. This decision has been judged to have no policy implications.

### **Community Impact Statement**

19. The decision to note this performance report has been judged to have no or a very small impact on local people and communities. Clearly the quality of these services has a big impact on children looked after from all communities. The ethnicity breakdown of the children looked after population is shown in appendix 1.

### **Resource implications**

20. This decision has no resource implications.

### **Consultation**

21. The management team of Children's Safeguarding and Specialist Services have discussed the indicators set out in appendix 1.

## **SUPPLEMENTARY ADVICE FROM OTHER OFFICERS**

### **Strategic Director for Legal and Democratic Services**

22. No legal implications are arising from this report.

## Finance Director

23. No comments sought

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
Every Child Matters Performance Reports	Performance, Planning and Quality	Adrian Ward 0207 525 3720

## APPENDICES

No.	Title
Appendix 1	Children Looked After Performance Scorecard Jan 08

## AUDIT TRAIL

<b>Lead Officer</b>	Rory Patterson	
<b>Report Author</b>	Adrian Ward	
<b>Version</b>	Final	
<b>Dated</b>	March 18 2008	
<b>Key Decision?</b>	No	
<b>CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / EXECUTIVE MEMBER</b>		
<b>Officer Title</b>	<b>Comments Sought</b>	<b>Comments included</b>
Director of Legal and Democratic Services	Yes	Yes
Director of Finance	Yes	Yes
List other officers here		
<b>Executive Member</b>	Yes	Yes
<b>Date final report sent to Constitutional/Community Council/Scrutiny Team</b>	March 18 2008	