

# Corporate Parenting Committee

Monday 2 November 2015

1.00 pm

Ground Floor Meeting Room G02B - 160 Tooley Street, London SE1 2QH

## Membership

Councillor Victoria Mills (Chair)  
Councillor Evelyn Akoto  
Councillor Jasmine Ali  
Councillor Lorraine Lauder MBE  
Councillor Eliza Mann (Vice-chair)  
Councillor Kath Whittam  
Councillor Kieron Williams  
Barbara Hills (Co-opted Member)  
Florence Emakpose (Co-opted Member)

## Reserves

Councillor Lisa Rajan

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## INFORMATION FOR MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

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### Access to information

You have the right to request to inspect copies of minutes and reports on this agenda as well as the background documents used in the preparation of these reports.

### Babysitting/Carers allowances

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### Access

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### Contact

Paula Thornton 020 7525 4395 or email: [paula.thornton@southwark.gov.uk](mailto:paula.thornton@southwark.gov.uk)

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Members of the committee are summoned to attend this meeting

**Eleanor Kelly**

Chief Executive

Date: 23 October 2015



# Corporate Parenting Committee

Monday 2 November 2015

1.00 pm

Ground Floor Meeting Room G02B - 160 Tooley Street, London SE1 2QH

## Order of Business

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### **MOBILE PHONES**

Mobile phones should be turned off or put on silent during the course of the meeting.

### **PART A - OPEN BUSINESS**

#### **1. APOLOGIES**

To receive any apologies for absence.

#### **2. CONFIRMATION OF VOTING MEMBERS**

To note the appointment of Councillor Lorraine Lauder MBE as a voting member on the committee.

A representative of each political group will confirm the voting members of the committee.

#### **3. NOTIFICATION OF ANY ITEMS OF BUSINESS WHICH THE CHAIR DEEMS URGENT**

In special circumstances, an item of business may be added to an agenda within five clear days of the meeting.

#### **4. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS**

Members to declare any interests and dispensations in respect of any item of business to be considered at this meeting.

<b>Item No.</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Page No.</b>
<b>5.</b>	<b>MINUTES</b>	<b>1 - 5</b>
	To approve as a correct record the minutes of the open section of the meeting held on 13 July 2015.	
<b>6.</b>	<b>UPDATE ON LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN (LAC) AUDIT BY PUBLIC HEALTH</b>	<b>6 - 11</b>
<b>7.</b>	<b>FOSTERING SERVICE ANNUAL REPORT 2014-15</b>	<b>12 - 22</b>
<b>8.</b>	<b>ADOPTION SERVICE ANNUAL REPORT 2014-15</b>	<b>23 - 37</b>
<b>9.</b>	<b>CARE LEAVERS TRANSITIONING TO ADULTHOOD</b>	<b>38 - 44</b>
<b>10.</b>	<b>CHILDREN IN CARE AND CARE LEAVERS STRATEGY</b>	<b>45 - 79</b>
<b>11.</b>	<b>CORPORATE PARENTING COMMITTEE - WORK PLAN 2015/16</b>	<b>80 - 82</b>

**ANY OTHER OPEN BUSINESS AS NOTIFIED AT THE START OF THE MEETING AND ACCEPTED BY THE CHAIR AS URGENT.**

**EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

The following motion should be moved, seconded and approved if the sub-committee wishes to exclude the press and public to deal with reports revealing exempt information:

“That the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 1-7, Access to Information Procedure rules of the Constitution.”

**PART B - CLOSED BUSINESS**

**ANY OTHER CLOSED BUSINESS AS NOTIFIED AT THE START OF THE MEETING AND ACCEPTED BY THE CHAIR AS URGENT.**

Date: 23 October 2015



## Corporate Parenting Committee

MINUTES of the OPEN section of the Corporate Parenting Committee held on Monday 13 July 2015 at 1.00 pm at the Council Offices, 160 Tooley Street, London SE1 2QH

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**PRESENT:** Councillor Victoria Mills (Chair)  
 Councillor Evelyn Akoto  
 Councillor Jasmine Ali  
 Councillor Eliza Mann  
 Councillor Kath Whittam  
 Councillor Kieron Williams  
 Barbara Hills (Co-opted)

**OFFICER SUPPORT:** Rory Patterson, Director, Children's Social Care  
 Jane Scott, Team Manager, Specialist Children Services  
 Abdu Mohiddin, Children's and Adults Services (Public Health)  
 Elaine Gunn, Children's and Adults Services  
 Paula Thornton, Constitutional Team

### 1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Florence Emakpose.

### 2. CONFIRMATION OF VOTING MEMBERS

The members listed as present were confirmed as the voting members for the meeting. Reference to Councillor Eastham being unable to attend daytime meetings. Paula Thornton to email Councillor Eastham.

### 3. APPOINTMENT OF NON-VOTING CO-OPTED MEMBER

#### RESOLVED:

That Florence Emakpose be appointed as a non-voting co-opted member for the corporate parenting committee.

**4. NOTIFICATION OF ANY ITEMS OF BUSINESS WHICH THE CHAIR DEEMS URGENT**

No urgent items were identified.

**5. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS**

There were no disclosures of interests or dispensations.

**6. MINUTES**

**RESOLVED:**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 22 April 2015 be approved as a correct record and signed by the chair.

**7. A PUBLIC HEALTH APPROACH TO PROMOTING THE HEALTH AND WELLBEING OF LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN**

**RESOLVED:**

1. That the information presented in the report alongside that presented in the previous report to the committee (24 February 2015) be noted.
2. That current governance arrangements to ensure representation from the new public health commissioning responsibilities, the public health specialist function and the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) be noted.
3. That it be noted that the services relating to looked after children (LAC) will be audited against the best practice from National Institute for Health and Care Excellence/Social Care Institute for Excellence (NICE/SCIE). Public Health can support this in partnership with others.
4. That the cabinet member for children and schools continue to ensure that the considerable needs of LAC have a high profile in strategic commissioning by including LAC in the Children, Young Person's (CYP's) Joint Strategic Needs Assessment.
5. That the commissioning of services will be integrated across the life course, and needs of LAC integrated into mainstream services where appropriate be noted.
6. That it be noted that health services effectively capture the voice of children and young people.
7. That public health will work with social care and others to audit LAC services using the NICE/SCIE toolkit which will also help inform a health scorecard.
8. That a report with interim findings, including two or three areas doing well and areas not doing so well, to be presented to the committee in November 2015.

## 8. UPDATED HEALTH ACTION PLAN FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN

### RESOLVED:

1. That the updated action plan and the key issues for consideration in delivering the action plan to improve health outcomes for looked after children and care leavers be noted.
2. That an audit is undertaken in social care to consider what has caused delay in completing health assessments if parents are giving their consent (point 9 on action plan “prompt health assessments for newly looked after children and young people”).
3. That the committee receive an update with regard to the appointment to the designated doctor post to the November 2015 meeting.

## 9. HEALTH PROVISION FOR CARE LEAVERS

### RESOLVED:

1. That the information presented in the report on health services and the actions being taking to ensure positive outcomes are achieved for care leavers in Southwark be noted.
2. To look into the following ideas proposed by the committee:
  - To consider developing a model similar to the one used for ‘young inspectors for accommodation’ for health
  - To gather the views of care leavers, particularly those aged 21 and over (use of social media to engage young people and get their views).

## 10. IMPROVING EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN

### RESOLVED:

1. That the information provided in the report in relation to educational needs of looked after children in Southwark be noted.
2. That it be noted that the school standards report is due to be presented to cabinet in October 2015 and Councillor Victoria Mills to raise with the council’s director of education and the head teacher for the virtual school to ensure that the data for looked after children is captured within this report.

## 11. ST. CHRISTOPHER'S MISSING CHILDREN SERVICE: UPDATE REPORT

### RESOLVED:

1. That the information presented in the report from St Christopher's Missing Children Service which provides independent return interviews to looked after children who go missing from home and care be noted.
2. That the intention to hold a session for all councillors in autumn 2015 on children missing from care; feedback from which will form the basis of a report to cabinet and corporate parenting committee be noted.
3. That as part of this session the committee requested:
  - that officers substantiate the data if children are known to be located or if not (for example may have returned to family)
  - to provide an analysis if child returning to same place or somewhere different
  - signpost excellent work being undertaken on child sexual exploitation
  - a desire for councillors to understand the information behind the figures at this session.

## 12. CORPORATE PARENTING COMMITTEE - WORK PLAN 2015/16

### RESOLVED:

1. That the work plan 2015/16 as set out in paragraph 3 of the report be noted.
2. That the draft agenda for committee in November 2015 be agreed as follows:
  - Annual report on fostering services
  - Annual report on adoption services
  - Feedback from autumn session on children going missing from care
  - Update on looked after children strategy (following presentation to 13 July meeting)
  - Audit of commissioning arrangements (as discussed under item 7)
  - Update on designated doctor appointment
  - Care leavers and transition to adulthood (Paula Thornton to email the committee to establish what committee members would like included in this report)
  - Update on take-up of free swim and gym.
3. That the annual report from the virtual head teacher to be considered by committee in February 2016 when examination data known.
4. The committee suggested a health theme for the Speakerbox meeting in October 2015.

### 13. PRESENTATION: LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN STRATEGY

#### RESOLVED:

1. That the presentation be received and the following comments made by committee be incorporated and considered as part of the strategy:
  - Strategic priorities – 9. All young people leave care when they are ready and the ideal for life after care
  - Add young people have had a say and their voice has been heard
  - Add to strategic priorities that foster and adoptive carers should feel well supported
  - Implications of benefit and welfare changes for young people captured
  - Include more health related success measures
  - Add resilience for care leavers and narrowing gap between looked after children and other children
  - Under strategic priorities, add under point 1 words to the effect that where neglect or safeguarding issues child or young person will be removed without hesitation
  - Set out joint working with other areas (for example, housing, education and health) to reinforce the continued need for this to happen
  - Practical participation with social media
  - Relationships – young people have relationships they feel positive about
  - Reducing crisis points (exclusion, visits to accident and emergency etc)
  - Reference to disability issues in strategy
  - Success, point 10 – change ‘more’ to ‘all’
  - “What children and young people tell us is important to them” middle box, conversation around where young people and children feel are not getting support/help
  - Statement young person feel secure in housing
  - Looked after children – all services shaped for this group
  - Request that strategy to go to cabinet, Speakerbox and corporate parenting committee
  - Updated version of the strategy to be emailed to committee when complete.
  
2. All further comments on the strategy to be emailed to [elaine.gunn@southwark.gov.uk](mailto:elaine.gunn@southwark.gov.uk)

The meeting ended at 4.15pm.

**CHAIR:**

**DATED:**



<b>Item No.</b> 6.	<b>Classification:</b> Open	<b>Date:</b> 2 November 2015	<b>Meeting Name:</b> Corporate Parenting Committee
<b>Report title:</b>		Update on Looked After Children (LAC) Audit by Public Health	
<b>Ward(s) or groups affected:</b>		Looked after Children	
<b>From:</b>		Consultant in Public Health	

## RECOMMENDATION

1. That the committee note the progress to date and the challenges caused by lack of staff capacity.

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

2. At the corporate parenting committee in July 2015 public health were requested to provide guidance on auditing the provision of health services for looked after children (LAC).

## KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

Progress thus far:

3. A review of the guidance and literature relating to looked after children has been carried out.
4. A list of proposed standards has been compiled from statutory guidance and best practice and arranged into an audit form. Standards have been developed from guidance that is specific to LAC such as from NICE/SCIE as well as guidance which covers a given topic area e.g. substance misuse, sexual or mental health for which the needs of LAC are considerable (see Appendix 1 for list of documents reviewed).
5. The standards proposed in this audit are broad and range from strategic leadership to collaborative working to the experience of LAC and care leavers. Each standard included will involve seeking a response from commissioners and other stakeholders about the current Southwark arrangement, any gaps and mitigating action.
6. There are many possible standards from these various sources and some may be similar / duplicate so editing has been necessary in compiling the overall list to make it manageable given the limited staff resources available for detailed and time-consuming work.
7. Meetings have been held with partners (e.g. CCG), and members for the steering group have been identified. This group will meet, planned for 21 October, to approve the final audit questions, proposed data collection methods

and leads.

### Equality analysis

8. The purpose of the audit is to ensure best standards of care for looked after children and to help reduce the gap in outcomes and achievements between this vulnerable group and the general child population.

### Resource implications

9. Staff – the strategy and commissioning division were initially working with public health to support the audit process, but due to competing priorities had to step back from involvement in August. Public health are also facing staffing challenges with the staff member who has compiled the recommendations leaving on 22 October and a more junior staff member who would have been able to carry out the audit having left in August. Staff capacity needs to be identified in order to deliver this important piece of work.

### Community impact statement

10. The care population is diverse in terms of age, gender and ethnicity. They are also a vulnerable group within Southwark with a greater need for protection to counterbalance the disadvantages they might face. By auditing the commissioning of health services for looked after children we will be able to ensure that the best arrangements are in place to support this group and to identify areas where improvements might need to be made.

### BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
None		

### APPENDICES

No.	Title
Appendix 1	List of guidance and recommendations reviewed to develop audit questions
Appendix 2	Broader set of guidance relating to topics relevant to LAC
Appendix 3	Steering Group members

**AUDIT TRAIL**

<b>Lead Officer</b>	Abdu Mohiddin, Consultant in Public Health	
<b>Report Author</b>	Abdu Mohiddin, Consultant in Public Health	
<b>Version</b>	Final	
<b>Dated</b>	20 October 2015	
<b>Key Decision?</b>	No	
<b>CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER</b>		
<b>Officer Title</b>	<b>Comments Sought</b>	<b>Comments Included</b>
Director of Law and Democracy	No	No
Strategic Director of Finance and Governance	No	No
<b>Cabinet Member</b>	No	/No
<b>Date final report sent to Constitutional Team</b>		20 October 2015

## APPENDIX 1

### List of guidance and recommendations reviewed to develop audit questions

1. *Promoting the Health and Wellbeing of Looked After Children and Young People (2015) DfE and DH.*
2. *Looked After Children and Young People* - NICE public health guidance 28 (2010, refreshed May 2015).
  - a. 52 recommendations across 17 key areas
3. *Quality Standard for the Health and Wellbeing of Looked After Children and Young People* – NICE QS31 (2013) .
  - a. 54 questions re structure, process and outcomes across 8 key areas

## APPENDIX 2

### Further guidance which could be reviewed if sufficient capacity

1. Additional NICE and SCIE guidance on mental, sexual, physical health and substance misuse relevant to LAC and young people:

<a href="#">Schizophrenia</a> NICE guideline CG17882 (2014).
<a href="#">Eating disorders</a> NICE guideline CG9 (2004).
<a href="#">Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder</a> NICE guideline CG72 (2008).
<a href="#">Anti-social behaviour and conduct disorders in children and young people: recognition, intervention and management</a> NICE guideline CG158 (2013)
<a href="#">Service user experience in adult mental health</a> NICE guideline CG136 (2011).
<a href="#">Autism diagnosis in children and young people</a> NICE guideline CG128 (2011).
<a href="#">Borderline personality disorder</a> NICE guideline CG78 (2009).
<a href="#">Antisocial personality disorder</a> NICE guideline CG77 (2009). (Includes recommendations about multisystemic therapy, multidimensional treatment foster care and family therapy and may be of relevance to some looked-after children and young people.)
<a href="#">Social and emotional wellbeing in secondary education</a> NICE guideline PH20 (2009).
<a href="#">Self-harm</a> NICE guideline CG16 (2004).
<a href="#">Social and emotional wellbeing in primary education</a> NICE guideline PH12 (2008).
<a href="#">Depression in children and young people</a> NICE guideline CG28 (2005).
<a href="#">Obsessive-compulsive disorder and body dysmorphic disorder</a> NICE guideline CG31 (2005).
<a href="#">Contraceptive services for socially disadvantaged young people</a> NICE guideline PH29 (2010).
<a href="#">Prevention of sexually transmitted infections and under 18 conceptions</a> NICE guideline PH3 (2007).
<a href="#">Alcohol-use disorders – preventing harmful drinking</a> NICE guideline PH24 (2010).
<a href="#">School-based interventions on alcohol – NICE PH7</a>
<a href="#">Interventions to reduce substance misuse among vulnerable young people</a> NICE guideline PH4 (2007).
<a href="#">Drug misuse: psychosocial interventions</a> NICE guideline CG51 (2007).
<a href="#">Drug misuse: opioid detoxification</a> NICE guideline CG52 (2007).
<a href="#">Reducing differences in the uptake of immunisations</a> NICE guideline PH21 (2009).
<a href="#">Obesity</a> NICE guideline CG43 (2006).
<a href="#">When to suspect child maltreatment</a> NICE guideline CG89 (2009).
<a href="#">Behaviour change: the principles for effective interventions</a> NICE guideline PH6 (2007).
<a href="#">Violence</a> NICE guideline CG25 (2005).

## APPENDIX 3

### LAC audit steering group members

#### Southwark CCG

Clarisser Cupid – Safeguarding Nurse

Kate Moriarty-Baker -

#### Southwark Local Authority

Jane Scott – Head of Care, Children’s and Adults’ Services\*

Jane Senior - Market Development Manager, Children’s and Adults’ Services

Celia Parker – Principal Social Worker, Children’s and Adults’ Services\*

Abdu Mohiddin – Consultant in Public Health

*Vicki Spencer-Hughes – acting Consultant in Public Health*

#### GSTT

Ajay Sharma\*

Beatrice Cooper – Designated Doctor

Barbara Hills –

Angela Brown – Designated Nurse

\*= confirmed

<b>Item No.</b> 7.	<b>Classification:</b> Open	<b>Date:</b> 2 November 2015	<b>Meeting Name:</b> Corporate Parenting Committee
<b>Report title:</b>		Fostering Service Annual Report 2014-15	
<b>Ward(s) or groups affected:</b>		All	
<b>From:</b>		Director, Children's Social Care	

## RECOMMENDATION

1. That the corporate parenting committee accepts the annual report of Southwark Fostering Service 2014/15.

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

2. The purpose of the annual report document is to report on the activity of the fostering service fulfilling obligations in the Fostering Services Regulations (2011) to review and improve the quality of care, and National Minimum Standards (2011) to report to the executive side of the local authority. It will cover: performance and developments in Southwark's delivery of fostering services; how the council is compliant with key national minimum standards; and the service offered to those seeking to foster and those children in care who are fostered.
3. The report details the work of Southwark Council fostering service from 1 April 2014 to 31 March 2015.

## KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

4. Southwark fostering service continues to provide good quality care for a significant proportion of children and young people in care to the council.
5. 2014/15 was a time of considerable change for the service that has built a good foundation for the future.
6. The recruitment of foster carers declined during 2014/15 and has led to plans for a renewed approach to increase the capacity of the fostering service and quality of care offered.

## Community impact statement

7. Southwark is committed to ensuring children looked after by its Fostering Service, from all parts of the community, are enabled to live close to their communities as far as possible and appropriate and with families able to meet most of their needs.

**BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

<b>Background Papers</b>	<b>Held At</b>	<b>Contact</b>
None		

**APPENDICES**

<b>No.</b>	<b>Title</b>
Appendix 1	Annual Report – Southwark Fostering Service

**AUDIT TRAIL**

<b>Lead Officer</b>	Rory Patterson, Director, Children's Social Care	
<b>Report Author</b>	Alasdair Smith, Head of Service, Permanence, Children's and Adults' Service	
<b>Version</b>	Final	
<b>Dated</b>	20 October 2015	
<b>Key Decision?</b>	No	
<b>CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER</b>		
	<b>Officer Title</b>	<b>Comments sought</b>
	Director of Law and Democracy	No
	Strategic Director of Finance and Governance	No
	<b>Cabinet Member</b>	No
	<b>Date final report sent to Constitutional Team</b>	20 October 2015



2014/15

# Annual Report

## Southwark Fostering Service



### Get the facts on fostering

- Visit [www.southwark.gov.uk/fostering](http://www.southwark.gov.uk/fostering)
- Call 020 7525 4497 or 020 7525 0971
- Email [fostering@southwark.gov.uk](mailto:fostering@southwark.gov.uk)

## **KEY MESSAGES**

Southwark Fostering Service continues to provide good quality care for a significant proportion of children and young people in care to the Council.

2014/15 was a time of considerable change for the service that has built a good foundation for the future.

The recruitment of foster carers declined during 2014/15 and has led to plans for a renewed approach to increase the capacity of the Fostering Service and quality of care offered.

## **PURPOSE OF ANNUAL REPORT**

The purpose of the document is to report on the activity of the Fostering Service fulfilling obligations in the Fostering Services Regulations (2011) to review and improve the quality of care, and National Minimum Standards (2011) to report to the executive side of the local authority. It will cover: performance and developments in Southwark's delivery of fostering services; how the Council is compliant with key national minimum standards; and the service offered to those seeking to foster and those children in care who are fostered.

This report details the work of Southwark Council Fostering Service from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2014 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2015.

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

When a child enters care, it is one of the most important and significant changes in their life and it is critical that the families who look after these most vulnerable children through foster care are the best they can be. As part of its wider agenda to create a fairer future for the most vulnerable children and families, Southwark Council wants every child to grow up in a safe, stable and loving home. For those young children who cannot remain or return safely to their birth families, good quality foster care offers them the best opportunity to experience a warm and loving family environment while the most appropriate plans are made for their future.

The Fostering Service is a service for children in care. It is committed to supporting stable placements for children and young people where foster care is the identified plan. The service is a key element in the Council's drive to place more children and young people with Southwark foster carers in or near the borough where possible. It is a fundamental part of our sufficiency strategy to develop enough in-borough placements with the range and capacity to meet the needs of Southwark's children who cannot live at home for whatever reason.

The aim of the Fostering Service is to provide high quality care for children in safe, secure and nurturing families by means of recruiting and developing highly skilled foster carers supported by reflective, challenging and enabling social workers in order to give children and young people the best possible childhood to help them become valued members of society, maximising their life-long opportunities

## CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE

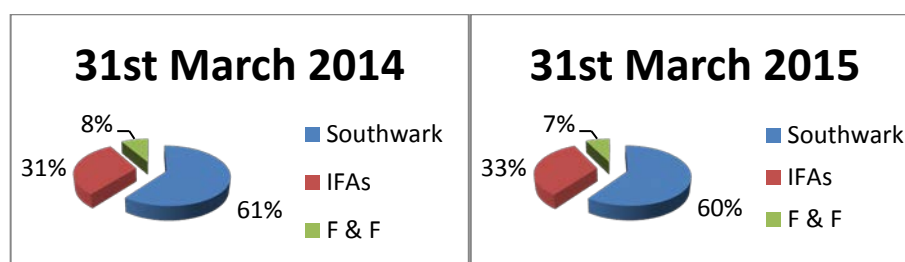
Activity Overview - children	31 <sup>st</sup> March 2015	31 <sup>st</sup> March 2014
Children in care	505	550
Children in foster care	393 (78%)	417 (76%)
Children with Southwark registered foster carers	235	252
Children with Independent Fostering Agency carers	129	130
Children with friends & family foster carers	29	35

There has been a significant reduction in the overall number of children in care during 2014/15 of around 8%. This has largely been with younger children in care as a result of the reduction in care proceedings activity and increase in children adopted. The proportion of children in foster care at around 78% rose a little this year and is higher than the national average of 75%.

The last year has seen a decrease in the use of Southwark's Fostering Service. This is directly related to the reduction in children between the ages of 0-5 entering care when historically Southwark Fostering Service has provided for all these placements. Staying Put continues to have an impact on the Fostering Service with 19 young people in such arrangements on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2015 and 9 children were adopted by Southwark Foster Carers which also had an impact.

There use of Independent Fostering Agencies (IFA) has continued at around the same level. The continued use has been due to a significant rise in the use of parent and child foster placements as part of a care plan during court proceedings or assessments in the Public Law Outline. It also reflects the continuing difficulty in finding placements for teenagers able to meet their needs within Southwark provision. Children are more likely to be placed with an IFA if they are part of a large sibling group, have challenging behaviour, or have previously had a breakdown with an in-house placement.

The use of Friends and Family Foster care remains similar to previous years at around 6% of the children in care population although it has reduced slightly as a proportion of the number of children in foster care.



*Distribution of foster placement type*

**SOUTHWARK FOSTER CARERS**

<b>Activity Overview – foster carers</b>	<b>2014/15</b>	<b>2013/14</b>
<b>Foster carers approved</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Foster carers ceased approval</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Friends &amp; Family carers approved</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Family Link carers approved</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Matches for Long Term Foster Care</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>

**Recruitment of foster carers**

There has been a decline in numbers of foster carers approved. In May 2013 fostering recruitment and assessment was outsourced to an external agency. While there were initial high hopes for this arrangement and it became apparent during 2014/15 that it was failing to deliver both the quantity and quality of foster carers required by Southwark to meet the needs of its children in care. One of the main difficulties with the outsourced arrangements were the issues around quality of assessment of carers, as well as appropriateness of some of the carers who have been assessed and approved. This has resulted in 6 fostering households of the total (25% of those approved) unable to be used by the Council due to concerns, appropriateness and capacity to take placements.

A decision was made not to renew the outsourcing contract which ended in May 2015. A plan was developed to create a Recruitment Hub as a flexible, responsive and high quality method of recruiting foster carers. The Hub includes a dedicated recruitment manager working with a roles dedicated to marketing, initial visits and screening as well as business support. This will then allocate and manage assessments through a team of freelance Independent Social Worker who have been selected for their quality and professionalism.

**Retention of foster carers**

There has continued to be carers who have left the service. The main reason is resigning through mostly age but sometimes losing interest and commitment to fostering. In the last 2 years 3 out of 30 foster carers who ceased fostering left to go to another fostering agency. 4 foster carer's approvals were ceased due to concerns about the quality of care they offered.

In 2014/15 a new payment scheme was established that significantly improved the financial rewards to carers particularly those with younger children. The working of this scheme was reviewed again during the early part of 2015 and an updated, more detailed version agreed for 2015/16. Payments to foster carers are in 2 main areas, the child's allowance, which Southwark bases on the National Fostering Network rate for every age group, and the fee element which increases depending on the experience and competence of the carer and their ability to offer therapeutic care to the child or young person.

### **Support for foster carers**

All foster carers have a supervising social worker. They provide support and assistance to foster carers to manage the care they give their children and young people. Their approval as a foster carer is reviewed annually by an independent social worker. Arrangements for such reviews are undertaken through an agency specialising in this called Avocet.

The supervising social worker ensures that each carer has a learning and development plan specific to their needs and a comprehensive training programme is offered to foster carers. 2015/16 saw significant developments in the approach of the Fostering Service to offering better quality and more flexible learning opportunities.

In November 2014 a systemic model of social work practice was introduced to the service with a full time qualified family therapist embedded within the service. As well as offering a different way for supervising social workers to be supported in their role, specific behaviour based workshops were developed targeted at common behaviours experienced by carers (for example lying, self-harm and going missing). In January 2015 the whole service was trained in Empathic Behaviour Management to promote an approach to improving the quality of care children experience by focusing on "connection not correction". This will be further developed during 2015/16 as a way of strengthening more challenging placements where specific behaviours are hard to shift and more targeted, skilled care and support is needed.

All foster carers are required to complete Training, Support and Development Standards for Foster Carers (TSDs). The supervising social worker ensures they meet all standards and supports them in the task of doing so.

The Foster Carers Handbook has undergone a comprehensive review that commenced in early 2015 and a new updated version should be completed later this year to support foster carers clearly in their role. A similar process commenced with the Learning and Development Programme for Foster Carers with plans to integrate Secure Base as the foundational approach to caregiving for recruiting, assessing, supporting and reviewing foster carers. Secure Base is a framework for understanding caregiving based on attachment theory and particularly suited to foster care developed by Professor Gillian Schoffield and Dr Mary Beek at the University of East Anglia over the last 20 years and is well regarded in the sector. Empathic Behaviour Management as described above will be developed as a more specialised therapeutic approach around challenging behaviour that builds on the Secure Base approach.

The Southwark Foster Care Association (SFCA) is active in supporting foster carers and was instrumental in working with the Fostering Service to establish the new payments policy. Membership is available to all foster carers and they produce a regular newsletter for carers. They meet approximately every two months and invite different representatives from Children's Social Care to discuss issues. Separate meetings have been held with the Head of Service for Permanence, Fostering Practice Group Lead and SFCA to improve communication around how to continue to work together to improve the Fostering Service.

An annual Christmas Foster Carers Dinner and Dance took place for foster carers in December 2014 at the JK Banquet Hall in Forest Hill. Over 150 people were present and as usual it was a thoroughly enjoyable event where the Council says thank you to its foster carers for the huge commitment they give to children and young people in care.

### **Staying Put**

The Children and Families Act 2014 introduced a duty on the local authority to provide 'staying put' arrangements for fostered young people to continue to live with their former foster carer beyond their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday and potentially up to the age of 21 years if they are in education. This is a welcome development for young people who have not developed the maturity to move into independent living. The service was well placed to implement these changes as we were already enabling young people to remain in their placements while they completed exams and were prepared fully for independence.

During 2014/15, 35 young people began staying put arrangements with Southwark Foster Carers on reaching their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. On 31<sup>st</sup> March 2015 19 young people were in such arrangements with 5 of them over 18 years old. The previous year there were 22 young people in such arrangements. The average length of time for such an arrangement is around 4 months but 30% of the time in staying put is by 19 yrs old or over which is a significant increase on the previous year. This has and will continue to have resource implications for the service in relation to availability of placements for teenagers as no other children can be placed within these placements until these young people move on.

### **Short Breaks Care**

The fostering service had 46 short break respite carers offering care to 46 children with disabilities one weekend a month allowing the child's parents to have a break. Short break foster carers are specialist carers assessed and matched to a particular child. These carers generally develop a good relationship with parents and often provide care for the children for many years. The short break service is part of the wider support service for families where a child has a disability and enables children to remain within their families and communities while at the same time providing a much needed break for parents.

### **QUALITY ASSURANCE**

The Fostering Service has a clear quality assurance framework. This includes: effective fostering panel scrutiny; feedback from foster carers; management review including audit activity; as well as learning from complaints.

### **Fostering Panel**

Fostering Services Regulations (2011) and National Minimum Standards (2011) require a Fostering Panel to be constituted, which must be chaired by an independent person. Panel members include representatives from the Children's Social Care and independent members with a range of experience. The panel makes recommendations about the approval of foster carers, matches of younger children for long term foster care and in certain circumstances reviewing the approval of foster carers. Final decisions, based on the panel's recommendations are made by the Agency Decision Maker (ADM) Rory Patterson, Director of Children's Social Care. Southwark's Fostering Panel meets once a month.

During 2014/15 the Fostering Panel chair resigned due to the finding the travel too difficult from where she lived and a new chair was permanently recruited to. The panel has been strengthened in regard to safeguarding by a Child Protection Coordinator being recruited to as a key panel member and continues to have a strong multi-disciplinary focus with the vice-Chair being an Educational Psychologist.

There are quarterly meetings with the management group of the Fostering Service and the independent chair and vice-chairs as well as other key staff to facilitate good communication between the panel and the agency to focus on continuing improvement.

### **Foster Carer feedback**

In November 2015 a foster carer survey was undertaken to find out from foster carers how they experienced the service. 32 carers returned it and the responses really helped gain a better understanding of the fostering service provided. Some of the most positive headlines are that 75% of carers felt the service was either good or excellent and 87% felt the same about training and learning opportunities as well as the support received from their supervising social worker.

The areas identified that we need to improve upon are our communication with foster carers and each other; our involvement of foster carers in decision making; and our systems and procedures so social workers can spend more time doing their jobs well.

These are helpful themes that we will be working on during 2015.

### **Management overview and audit activity**

Case file audits have been carried out during 2014/15 and an audit plan developed for 2015/16. There was an identified need to improve the quality of recording and a need to focus more on the quality of annual reviews of approval. The quality of fostering assessments for approval of carers continued to be a concern that contributed to the ending of arrangements to externally commission such assessments.

### **Complaints**

In 2014/15 there were four complaints against the Fostering Service. Of these, two were resolved at stage one and one has been moved to a stage two investigation which is ongoing. The fourth one was withdrawn. Two complaints were about the response by the service when a young person had damaged the home. One complaint was about allowances. All of these complaints will be addressed through the stronger and more consistent management approach and improved payments policy for 2015/16. One foster carer referred the decision to cease her approval to the Independent Review Mechanism (IRM) which upheld the decision. The IRM is an independent panel managed by the British Association for Adoption and Fostering (now Coram BAAF) to provide an extra independent layer of scrutiny in certain circumstances like ceasing the approval of a foster carer.

## REVIEW OF DEVELOPMENTS DURING 2014/15

The following significant developments were made in the Fostering Service during 2014/15

**Establishment of a systemic model of social work practice** in November 2014. This included the forming of 4 practice groups led by an Advanced Practitioner and supported by a full time business support role. They meet weekly and share responsibility for work. There is a clinical practitioner who works full time within the service developing systemic practice. One of the Practice Groups focuses on Short Breaks (Family Link).

**Increase in resources** to more effectively deliver a higher quality Fostering Service. The resources were re-evaluated through the Social Work Matters program to ensure that the effective capacity was available to provide the most effective support to foster carers.

**Recruitment of a stable and experienced management team** able to take the service forward. The team was not completed until January 2015 with the recruitment of an experienced Fostering Manager with a track record of quality and improvement. This is a good platform to develop the Fostering Service.

**Introduction of a new Payments to Carers Policy.** This was a big change to the previous approach with improved fees given to carers as well as clearer written information about allowances, fees and other entitlement. This was further reviewed and developed with a high value placed on principles of transparency, accountability and fairness, as well as ensuring foster carers were rewarded fairly for the care they give to children and young people.

## DEVELOPMENT PLANS FOR 2015/16

2014/15 was a time on unprecedented change for children's social work in Southwark. Southwark Fostering Service has always delivered a good service as recognised by its last inspection by Ofsted in November 2011. The next 3 years are seen as a time of renewal for the Fostering Service to embed and grow the new model of systemic social work practice, built on a foundation of the Secure Base caregiving framework, while developing bespoke therapeutic approaches for more challenging behaviour through Empathic Behaviour Management (EBM) and systemic practice.

The foundations for the renewal of the Fostering Service were dug and set in 2014/15. The next 3 years will see a continued program of renewal that aims to develop a more child centred service with improved quality of care offered to children alongside increased capacity to meet the needs of Southwark children and young people.

The Development Plan 2015/16 has specific objectives ensuring:

**Quality and stability of placements – to improve the offer of therapeutically informed and supported care.** We will establish Secure Base<sup>1</sup> as our foundational approach to caregiving for recruiting, assessing, supporting and reviewing foster carers. We will develop a comprehensive learning and development offer for foster carers incorporating Empathic Behaviour Management (EBM)<sup>2</sup> and systemic practice. We will develop support systems around carers through developing a Placements Service alongside the Fostering Service to improve placement choice and strengthen matching and support to placements from the outset.

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<sup>1</sup> Schoffield, G & Beek, M, The Secure Base Model – promoting attachment & Resilience in fostering and adoption, BAAF 2014

<sup>2</sup> Elliot, A Empathic Behaviour Management for Foster and Adoptive Families, Jessica Kingsley Publications 2013



**Capacity of Service – to increase the number of active fostering households by 25%.** This is a 3 year objective to dramatically shift the balance of caregiving for Southwark children more towards our own Fostering Service, nearer to Southwark, building on incentives like the Council Tax scheme that will roll out during 2015/16. We will develop a new recruitment hub better able to recruit the right high quality foster carers our children need and launch a new modern recruitment campaign as a priority using all ways of modern media to deliver effective fostering recruitment.

**Friends and Family Carers – to increase the use of and support to and learning offered.** We will offer support for all carers temporarily approved under Regulation 24 and develop the learning offer for them. We hope in the longer term to see a greater proportion of children live with friends and families foster care as part of a larger strategy around enabling young people to live with their families as far as possible.

**Long Term Foster Care – to have a clear policy, practice and scheme with more internal placements.** We will develop this by building on our successful approach to delegated authority and through the course of the year implement the new regulations around long term foster care. 2015/16 will see the development of clear policy and practice while subsequent years will see the developing of a clearer scheme as part of the wider approach to renewing the service.

**Workers have the knowledge and expertise to make a real difference to children's wellbeing.** We will continue to develop our workforce to improve their skills and abilities to children's lives through their carers. During 2015/16 we will recruit to establish a fully permanent and highly competent workforce and continue to train all advance practitioners in systemic practice to lead the development and learning of the workforce. All practice groups will have a supervising social worker trained in Theraplay Level 1 and there will be further training and development to build the identity and skills base of supervising social workers.

We will ensure that all practice, learning & development is informed by a shared child-centred commitment to excellence within the Fostering Service.

<b>Item No.</b> 8.	<b>Classification:</b> Open	<b>Date:</b> 2 November 2015	<b>Meeting Name:</b> Corporate Parenting Committee
<b>Report title:</b>		Adoption Service Annual Report 2014-15	
<b>Ward(s) or groups affected:</b>		All	
<b>From:</b>		Director, Children's Social Care	

### RECOMMENDATION

1. That the corporate parenting committee accepts the annual report of Southwark Adoption Service 2014/15.

### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

2. The purpose of the annual report document is to report on the activity of the adoption service fulfilling obligations in the Adoption National Minimum Standards (2011) and Adoption Service Statutory Guidance (2011) to report to the executive side of the local authority.
3. The report covers: performance and developments in Southwark's delivery of adoption services; how the council is compliant with key national minimum standards; and the service offered to those seeking to adopt and those affected by adoption through the provision of adoption support. It will also identify any significant trends within adoption and how Southwark can continue to meet the changing demands within the Adoption Service.
4. The report details the work of Southwark Council Adoption Service from 1 April 2014 to 31 March 2015.

### KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

5. Adoption performance continues to improve in Southwark on almost all measures including most impressively a 95% increase in the number of children adopted in the last 2 years.
6. We still need to do some things quicker, particularly matching children with adopters.
7. There have been significant developments within the national landscape of adoption and the council's adoption service has responded well to this.

### Community impact statement

8. Southwark is committed to ensuring children with an adoption plan, from all parts of the community, are enabled to live with families able to meet most of their needs as soon as possible.

**BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

<b>Background Papers</b>	<b>Held At</b>	<b>Contact</b>
None		

**APPENDICES**

<b>No.</b>	<b>Title</b>
Appendix 1	Annual Report – Southwark Adoption Service

**AUDIT TRAIL**

<b>Lead Officer</b>	Rory Patterson, Director, Children's Social Care	
<b>Report Author</b>	Alasdair Smith, Head of Service, Permanence, Children's and Adults' Service	
<b>Version</b>	Final	
<b>Dated</b>	20 October 2015	
<b>Key Decision?</b>	No	
<b>CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER</b>		
<b>Officer Title</b>	<b>Comments sought</b>	<b>Comments included</b>
Director of Law and Democracy	No	No
Strategic Director of Finance and Governance	No	No
<b>Cabinet Member</b>	No	No
<b>Date final report sent to Constitutional Team</b>	20 October 2015	

2014/15

# Annual Report

## Southwark Adoption Service



### Get the facts on adoption

- Visit [www.southwark.gov.uk/adoption](http://www.southwark.gov.uk/adoption)
- Call free 0300 222 5936
- Email [adoption@southwark.gov.uk](mailto:adoption@southwark.gov.uk)

## **KEY MESSAGES**

Adoption performance continues to improve in Southwark on almost all measures including most impressively a 95% increase in the number of children adopted in the last 2 years.

We still need to continue do some things quicker particularly match children with adopters.

There have been significant developments within the national landscape of adoption and the Council's Adoption Service has responded well to this.

## **PURPOSE OF ANNUAL REPORT**

The purpose of the document is to report on the activity of the Adoption Service fulfilling obligations in the Adoption National Minimum Standards (2011) and Adoption Service Statutory Guidance (2011) to report to the executive side of the local authority. It will cover: performance and developments in Southwark's delivery of adoption services; how the Council is compliant with key national minimum standards; and the service offered to those seeking to adopt and those affected by adoption through the provision of adoption support. It will also identify any significant trends within adoption and how Southwark can continue to meet the changing demands within the Adoption Service. This report details the work of Southwark Council Adoption Service from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2014 to 31<sup>st</sup> end March 2015.

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Adoption is one of the most important and significant decisions that can be made for a child. As part of its wider agenda to create a fairer future for the most vulnerable children and families, Southwark Council wants every child to grow up in a safe, stable and loving home. For those young children who cannot remain or return safely to their birth families, adoption offers them the best opportunity to experience a warm and loving family environment throughout life.

The adoption of children from care has a high profile nationally. Southwark continues to develop in its practice and systems in order to deliver the extensive change agenda presented in various Government papers including Adoption an Action Plan for Tackling Delay (March 2012) and Further Action on Adoption-Finding More Loving Families (January 2013). Many of the propositions in these papers have gone on to become embedded in new Law, regulation and statutory guidance since this time and the Council's Adoption Service and wider system has responded well to these changes and challenges.

Over the last year the impact of the reforms to the Family Justice System has been felt through the commencement in April 2014 of the Public Law Outline. It was introduced in July 2013 and has come into full effect to reduce the duration of Care Proceedings. As well as this, the impact of the Court of Appeal cases re.B (June 2013) and re. BS (September 2013), triggering a more robust approach to decision making, has been visible in the significant reduction of children available for adoption through Placement Orders being made in the year. Within the year the Children and Families Act 2014 introduced reforms relating to adoption including: requiring Fostering for Adoption to be considered for all children unable to be placed with friends and family and repealing the requirement that 'due consideration' is given to children's racial, religious, cultural or linguistic background when matching them with adopters. The Council's Children's Scrutiny sub-committee also took a close look at the delivery of adoption services from October 2014 to a planned Policy Seminar in April 2015.

**PERFORMANCE**

Activity Overview - children	2014/15	2013/14	2012/13
Children with a Placement Order made (plan for adoption agreed by Court)	21	40	42
Children matched with adopters	32	29	28
Children with an Adoption Order granted	39	33	20

Numbers of children adopted have continued to increase, a 95% increase in two years far exceeding the national, London and statistical neighbour trend. For 2014/15 this was 14% of those who left care which is a great rise from 5% on 2010. This is good performance compared to the last available data from similar authorities and London wide.

Numbers of Placement Orders made reduced by almost 50% in 2014/15. This will have an impact on our numbers of adoptions next year as well as continuing to influence our recruitment strategy. This reduction is most likely to have been due to the impact of the Court of Appeal cases re B and re BS alongside reforms to the family justice system. One of the concerns nationally has been this reduction has led to an increase in Special Guardianship Orders (SGOs) being made as an alternative to adoption. In 2014/15 28 SGOs were made an increase of 7 from the previous year. There is not sufficient evidence within Southwark to show this relationship definitely at this stage as in 2012/13 there were 26 SGOs made. It is an area we need to watch closely during 2015/16.

**Adoption timeliness**

Rolling 3-year average				
2008/11	2009/12	2010/13	2011/14	2012/15
734	775	736	684	593
		Threshold 608	Threshold 548	Threshold 487

*the average time between a child entering care and moving in with its adoptive family (A1)*

The table shows continuing improvement. The figure for the performance year 2014/15 is 515 days which is significantly better performance compared to statistical neighbours (575), London (566) and the national figures (533). 77% of children wait less that 18 mths

25% of adoptions in 2014/15 were with foster carers in situations where the children were already living with them, all from when they entered care.

Rolling 3-year average				
2008/11	2009/12	2010/13	2011/14	2012/15
n/a	466	518	488	464

*the average time between a child entering care and moving in with its adoptive family adjusted for foster care adoptions (A10)*

### Matching children with adopters

Rolling 3 year average (days)				
2008/11	2009/12	2010/13	2011/14	2012/15
93	173	218	233	243
		Threshold 182	Threshold 152	Threshold 122

*the average time between a local authority receiving court authority to place a child and match decision (A2)*

This is the only adoption scorecard measure, out of 14, where performance has declined. A detailed analysis has been undertaken. Children in this cohort are only counted once they have been adopted. Only 15% of the adoptions in 2014/15 were matched in that year. Thus the measure captures historic not recent matching activity.

There were two main areas that explain this performance. Firstly, with more children adopted in a year than ever before this inevitably included a significant number of harder to place children including one child who had a previous adoption placement breakdown. These children generally take longer to find families for because of the level of their need. 15% of children adopted were over 5 years old and they all took significantly longer to place. These children have a disproportionate effect on the overall average. The 95% increase in numbers of children adopted in the last two years has inevitably meant that this included some children who had been waiting a long time. The second main area was a number of practice and system issues that were understood and addressed within the year. Most significant has been the transformation of the Adoption Service to a systemic model or practice mid-year in September 2014. This included a transition to children's cases being held within the Adoption Service to minimise delay and strengthen the quality of practice with more emphasis on early tracking for adoption alongside social workers in other services.

Matching practice has shown significant considerable improvement during 2014/15. The last quarter of 2014/15 showed an average of 111 days for 9 children. This is strongly influenced by adoption by foster carers including fostering for adoption. Indications about performance for 2015/16 show that improvement will continue, however with children who are harder to place continuing to comprise a significant proportion of those we need to find families for, and the numbers of children available for adoption declining, it will still be an area that needs continuing focus and challenge.

### Children waiting for adoption

Rolling 3 year average				
2008/11	2009/12	2010/13	2011/14	2012/15
52%	53% (21 months)	57% (20 months)	57% (18 months)	<b>64%</b>

*the percentage of children who wait less than 21 months between entering care and moving in with their adoptive family (A3)*

The last national data available on this shows the national average as 51% which places Southwark in a much stronger position. A cohort analysis shows no difference in gender, however, black children are more likely to wait longer than 21 months compared to white children. The in year figure for 2014/15 shows 77% moving in within 18 months which continues to show excellent performance.

Number of children waiting for adoption 31 <sup>st</sup> March				
2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
35	44	48	45	18

This shows a dramatic decline in numbers of children waiting of 60% over the last year which is evidence of a much stronger system. Of the 18 children defined as waiting for adoption:

- 2 living with foster carers who were applying directly to the court to adopt
- 6 linked with adopters to be matched in the following 2 months
- 2 in court, one with a challenge to the adoption plan that was successful and another application for a Placement Order but delayed due to another family assessment.
- 8 waiting for adoption in the sense that we were actively looking for families for them. Only 1 of these children was not in a sibling group.

The Adoption Service extensively uses all means possible to find adopters for children. The system is overseen by the Adoption Taskforce chaired by the Director of Children's Social Care that meets monthly and reviews all children waiting for adoption were there may be concerns about delay. The service has made extensive and successful use of adoption activity days and Adoption Link as well as successful family finding through strong links within the South London Adoption Consortium and other London local authorities through the consortium network. All resources possible are used including DVDs and iPads to be able to show prospective adopters the most recent picture of children. Creative support packages that have been designed around the needs of the child in the adoptive family have enabled children with a higher level of needs to be adopted. Just over a quarter of adoptions in 2014/15 were transracial showing a strong commitment to matching children based on a range of their needs embracing the change in law in this area.



## Siblings

It is important as far as possible for siblings to be placed together. Sometimes the needs of each sibling are too great for one carer to be able to meet them all. Siblings are considered harder to place because of their greater needs and the smaller pool of adopters who wish to care for them. All sibling groups for whom there is a plan of adoption are assessed using the Together or Apart Assessment Model (BAAF 2008). Of the 39 children adopted during 2014/15 there were 4 sibling groups of 2. None were separated from siblings. Of the 31 children matched with adopters in 2014/15 this included 4 sibling groups of 2 as well as 3 children with adopters of older siblings. Only one child was separated from another sibling although this was part of the care plan agreed by the Court. The profile of our children waiting for adoption makes this an area of particular challenge for 2015/16 with an increased appreciation of outcomes for children being better the sooner they move to their adoptive family.

<b>Activity Overview - adopters</b>	<b>2014/15</b>	<b>2013/14</b>	<b>2012/13</b>
<b>Adopters approved</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Adoption inquiries</b>	<b>262</b>	<b>341</b>	<b>217</b>
<b>Adoption breakdowns prior to Adoption Order</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>

## Recruitment of adopters

Numbers of approved adopters have decreased during 2014/15. The previous year saw a dramatic rise in the number of approved adopters following the Find 40 Campaign that achieved a national profile. The reduction in 2014/15 is in part attributable to a deliberate easing off in campaigning for prospective adopters. Within year we saw a reduction in children becoming available for adoption, and continuing from the previous year, a significant increase in numbers of adopters available without children. Our need for adopters developed to being particularly for those of harder to place children.

The 2014/15 Recruitment Strategy has been delivered and evaluated and a new strategy has been devised for 2015/16 with a continuing focus on harder to place children. This strategy was successful in helping account for the unprecedented numbers of children adopted during 2014/15. Of the 25 approved during 2015/16, six adoptive households had children placed with them from other local authorities. Four of these were sibling groups of 2, two of these were sibling groups of 3. We are clearly effective in recruiting adopters willing to take sibling groups although they weren't able to be matched to the sibling groups we had waiting.

Southwark Foster Carers continue to make up a significant proportion of adopters. Only 2 approved adopters of the 25 was a foster carer already caring for a child, 25% of children adopted in the year were by their foster carers who had either been approved in a previous year or made a direct application to the court for this.

There have been 262 adoption enquiries in the last year. This is significantly down but is explained through the easing off in campaigning as described above and good year in 2014/15 with the Find 40 campaign. It is still almost 20% up on the previous year. Enquiries are defined as a person contacting Southwark to discuss their interest in becoming an adopter. Telephone enquiries are managed by First for Adoption.

### **Adopter Assessment timeliness**

In 2014/15 there were 25 adopters approved. Of these two were single female adopters, five were same sex couples, and the rest were heterosexual couples, either married or in a partnership. Around 25% of approved adopters were non-white.

20 of the 25 approved adopters were assessed under the adoption assessment statutory guidance introduced in July 2013. This requires prospective adopters to be assessed within 6 months as part of a two stage process. The six months can be exceeded if an adopter is particularly struggling with the process or a significant life event takes place that leads to delay. 20% (4) of adopters approved under the new statutory guidance were assessed within 6 months. The average length of an assessment was 233 days.

Of the 16 that were outside the 6 month timescale, 4 were due to adopters requesting to delay the process, either taking a break between Stage 1 and 2 or for a personal reason within one of the assessment stages. The remaining 12 were due reasons explored further below.

37% of Stage 1 assessments were completed within 2 months. 26% of assessments delayed due to adopters for reasons including issues with: getting the equivalent to DBS checks from their country of origin: delays in adopters getting their initial medical reports from their GP; and issues over completing the Stage 1 workbook to a satisfactory standard. 26% of assessment were delayed due to other reasons more in the control and influence of the Adoption Service including delays in sending off DBS checks and problems with receiving medical reports from the local authority's medical advisor when initial adopter assessments identified more complicated medical histories.

45% of Stage 2 assessments were completed within 4 months. 20% were delayed due to adopters struggling with the process or significant life events for them. This is permissible within the statutory guidance and so should not be considered out of timescale. 35% were delayed due to other reasons more in the control and influence of the Adoption Service including workforce changes; lack of management oversight of assessment progress; and delays due to additional work required to improve the quality of Prospective Adopter Assessment.

Overall therefore 65% of Stage 2 adoption assessments in 2014/15 were within the guidelines set out by the statutory guidance. There is clearly considerable room to tighten and improve this process.

### **Adoption disruptions**

There were two disruptions of placements of children placed for adoption prior to an Adoption Order being made during 2014/15. There was no information about any post-Adoption Order placements by Southwark disrupting in the year.

6 adoption placements have disrupted prior to Adoption Order in the years 2006 to 2015. 3 were placements with voluntary adoption agencies, 2 with Southwark, 1 with another local authority. This is a disruption rate of around 2%. The estimated rate of post-order disruption is 3.2% from national research. There is no data on pre-order disruption.

Any disruption of an adoption placement is a very difficult experience for everyone involved, most importantly the child but also the adoptive parent. The Adoption Service takes an in-depth look at the reasons for each disruption both in relation to the child and adopter but also the practice and systems of the Adoption Service. The learning from such processes is incorporated into the ongoing development of the service.

## **ADOPTION SUPPORT**

The need for Adoption Support has continued to grow as more children have been placed for adoption and adopted. In 2014/15, as part of the Social Work Matters transformation, the Council brought its Special Guardianship Support Service alongside post-adoption support to develop an improved offer for both groups of carers. A survey of adopters was conducted in April 2015. 24 adopters responded, 75% rated the overall service as good or excellent. The survey contained very helpful comments on the service and what adopters felt would help develop the offer for adoptive families. That has informed the development plans for the service for 2015/16.

Adoption support plans are tailored to the individual needs of the child and their adoptive parent. There is a good range of effective pre- and post-adoption support provided by the in-house workers and commissioned services that are spot purchased as needed. The nature of support provided varies considerably from advice on strategies for integrating children into families, managing challenging behaviour and support with telling difficult life story information as well as requests for professional advice and help for children in school where early developmental trauma has led to attachment difficulties. 57 assessments were made for post-adoption support post Adoption Order for adoptive families. All of these were provided with support packages. On 31<sup>st</sup> March 2015 there were 169 financial support packages for adopters. We have been more creative in our use of financial packages for adopters to enable more children to be adopted. For a small number of adopters this has included guaranteed sum of money for them to use for any therapy or training they require throughout the duration of the child's placement.

### **Support Groups**

The Adoption Service has worked closely with Southwark We Are Family (WAF) to support and promote a number of groups within the area to meet the needs of adoptive families. The service greatly values the relationship with WAF who are an adopter led support and advocacy charity was started by Southwark adopters.

WAF run a weekly support group which alternates between a morning play group one week and an evening adopter support group the next. These groups have both a support and social function and meet in Southwark. In addition WAF have a once a month Family Meeting at the weekend to involve and include adoptive families who are working in the week. WAF also run a monthly support groups for adopters who are waiting for children who are placed and have invited social workers from Southwark's post adoption service to share information at their group.

## **Training**

A rolling programme of training and workshops is provided for adoptive parents directly by the Adoption Service as well as training available through the South London Consortium and training events run by WAF. In 2014/15 this included a Parenting Course facilitated by Family Futures “*the Great Behaviour Breakdown*” and rolling Saturday Workshops on Building Attachments, Moving into Placement, Helping Children to make sense of adoption and the Great Behaviour Breakdown.

A survey of adopters conducted in April 2015. 24 responded and 75% of those felt the training was either good or excellent. This survey and other work with WAF has led to a number of suggestions to develop the learning offer for adopters that have been incorporated into the training programme for 2015/16. These include ‘Understanding and supporting adolescents who are adopted’ as well as specific training around child to parent violence (Non Violent Resistance) and Supporting Adopted Children with Education.

## **Adoption Support Fund**

The Adoption Support Fund will open for business on 1<sup>st</sup> May 2015 with 19.3 million available for agencies to apply for on behalf of their adoptive families for the provision of therapeutic services. The fund has been set up to reduce the gap between adoptive families needing therapeutic services and receiving them. From January 2015 the Adoption Service worked closely with a consultant from Core Assets to make itself ready for the launch of the fund including plans for market development and funding of Southwark Carelink (CAMHS) therapeutic help for adoptive children which was identified by the consultant as an area of excellent practice.

## **Post Adoption Contact**

The Adoption Service managed around 160 ‘letterbox’ contacts during 2014/15 as well as 11 face to face contacts between adopted children and their birth families. The nature of this contact will vary from an annual meeting to very complex arrangements involving a number of birth family members (siblings, grandparents and parents).

The impact of social networking on adoption is far reaching and extremely difficult to support effectively. There can be safeguarding concerns as young people don’t recognise the issues that necessitated the plan for adoption. It can also undermine the stability of the adoptive placement. During 2014/15 we offered training to adopters in relation to this through a number of specific courses commissioned through the South London Adoption Consortium and such training is an essential part of the preparation of being an adopter.

## **Work with birth families**

The Adoption Service has a contract with South London Adoption Counselling and Consultation Service to provide independent counselling for birth parents. The take up of this service has been increasing over the last 2/3 years with increasing promotion of this advocated by the Adoption Service. In 2014/15 9 birth parents made use of this service and the service was also provided to one birth grandmother.

In June 2015 the Council will be commencing a pilot project aimed at supporting parents who have had children repeatedly removed from their care. Southwark Pause will work with 20 women using an assertive outreach model. The pilot will last 18 months. This is a fantastic and creative approach based on the emerging success of the model within Hackney and offer birth parents a unique opportunity for high level support. Southwark Pause will work very closely with the Adoption Service and considerable preparatory work has taken place.

### **Birth records counselling**

The Council has a legal responsibility to provide a birth record counselling service to adult adoptees. The number of requests increases each year with growing requests from younger adopted people. In 2014/15 54 adult adoptees were supported in this way, an increase of almost 40% on the previous year. 13 of these were provided through arrangements with a Voluntary Adoption Agency.

## **QUALITY ASSURANCE**

The Adoption Service has a clear quality assurance framework. This includes: effective adoption panel scrutiny; comprehensive adopter feedback; management review including audit activity; as well as learning from complaints and disruption.

### **Adoption Panel**

Adoption Panels recommend: prospective adopters for approval as adopters; matches for approved adopters with children; and the suitability of relinquished children for adoption. The final decision, based on the panel's recommendations is made by the Agency Decision Maker (ADM) Rory Patterson, Director of Children's Social Care.

Southwark's Adoption Panels meets twice a month.

All Adoption Panels are independently chaired. The chair writes a six-monthly report on the activity of the Adoption Service. The last report up to March 2015 identifies the main areas for comment: the establishment of a stable workforce following a period of change; largely good or excellent Child Permanence Reports; as well as improvement in the quality of Prospective Adopter Reports. The report makes comment on timescales which are considered in detail elsewhere in this report.

During 2014/15 the Adoption Service has worked hard with the Adoption Panel to make best use of the its quality assurance potential by: developing a more systematic approach to feedback and identifying issues that need improving; strengthening the Central List particularly in relation to diversity; as well as improving the stability of business support to enable it to function most effectively. There are termly meetings with the Head of Service and independent chair and vice-chairs as well as other key staff to facilitate good communication between the panel and the agency to focus on continuing improvement.

## **Adopter feedback**

Adopter's views on the Adoption Service are gained as part of the assessment process but also routinely by questionnaire following approval. The feedback from adopters through the questionnaire for those approved in 2014/15 was a 40% response rate. Almost 100% of the 4 questions asking for adopters views on how well social worker worked with them in different areas (quality of social work assessment practice) answered either 'well' or 'very well'. This is a heartening view on the quality of our work. 40% of adopters did feel there were unnecessary delays in the process of assessment with some comments around needing to improve the administrative side of this. Other areas noted for improvement were in the written information for panel and need for a simpler information leaflet about the process of assessment.

Adopters views were gained to inform preparation for the Adoption Support Fund (February 2015) and in a survey at the Adoption Party in April 2015. The feedback from these processes are set out in the relevant sections below.

The Adoption Service works collaboratively with Southwark We Are Family, an adopter led support and advocacy group. There is a termly meeting with them that is a focal point for dialogue between the large adopter community that they represent and the Adoption Service. This has contributed to a number of service developments including the establishment of a support group for approved adopters who do not have children placed with them and involvement with the Adoption Service in making itself ready for the implementation of the Adoption Support Fund and development of its training programme. Southwark We Are Family was involved in the focus group that was part of the Review of Adoption by the Council's Children's Scrutiny sub-committee during 2014/15.

## **Management overview and audit activity**

Case file audits have been carried out during 2014/15 and an audit plan developed for 2015/16. There was an identified need to make clear recording and practice standards so there was a consistency of approach across different functions of the service. The quality assurance approach to Child Permanence Reports was strengthened with every one being audited prior to being presented to the Agency Decision Maker for a decision about suitability for adoption. A peer audit approach was commenced to try and improve the quality of Adoption Support Plans by engaging workers more in the process of ownership and reflection. There has been a more focused approach to auditing family finding activity, exploring the reasons for any delays to plug such learning back into the system in a dynamic way.

## **Complaints**

There were 7 complaints made regarding the Adoption Service during the year. A number of themes emerged including: providing better and clearer advice about the assessment and approval process; working pro-actively with adopters post-approval; developing a more systematic approach to later life letters and life-story work to ensure these are received sooner; and better continuity of practice when there are changes of worker. A lot of the underlying causes of these complaints relate to the changes to the Adoption Service particularly around workforce during 2014/15 that are described in more detail below and service developments have taken full account of the learning from these.

## REVIEW OF DEVELOPMENTS DURING 2014/15

The following significant developments were made in the Adoption Service during 2014/15

**Establishment of a systemic model of social work practice.** This included the forming of 4 practice groups led by an Advanced Practitioner and supported by a full time business support role. They meet weekly and share responsibility for work. There is no clinical practitioner in the Adoption Service so these are not multi-disciplinary teams. Carelink (CAMHS) work closely with the service which has benefitted particularly from the assessment and interventions offered by the SUSI Project where all children in care under 4 years old are assessed for their social and emotional functioning and a bespoke intervention for the carer and child delivered to improve the quality of care aiming to have a long term impact on the child's mental and emotional well-being. This is a high quality provision that has had a direct and beneficial impact on strengthening adoptive placements.

**Separation of responsibility and practice into 3 areas:** children and family finding; assessment and support of adopters; post-permanence (Adoption and Special Guardianship). It was felt that quality of practice could be improved and timescales for children and adopters better managed by more focused arrangements. This is particularly useful given the range of experience and competence within the service and intensity and complexity of some of the work.

**Children allocated within the Adoption Service from point of Placement Order.** This practice began to happen during late 2014. Children with Placement Orders and adoption plans are still allocated within other services to retain continuity of worker but during 2015 it is expected that all children where adoption is being actively pursued as the plan will be in the Adoption Service. This is anticipated to have many practice benefits by reducing delay by intense focus on family finding by workers who know the child as well as quality practice with carers and children including direct work and life story work. The signs are this is having the impact it was designed to deliver.

**Establishment of a stable permanent workforce.** The Adoption Improvement Grant for 2013/14 enabled the Adoption Service to increase its capacity quickly to deliver improved adoption outcomes. Initially this was through use of largely agency staff who provided extra capacity as well as covering for 4 full time posts during maternity leave. During 2014/15, coordinated with the Social Work Matters transformation, and the return of experienced workers from maternity leave, we moved to an almost exclusively permanent workforce. This is a highly experienced and competent workforce although some fairly new to adoption work. They have high potential and this is an excellent and exciting platform on which to continue to improve adoption within Southwark.

**Early Permanence including Fostering for Adoption.** The focus on early permanence has developed particularly around developing the practice of Permanence Consultations to other services as well as improving systems to track children where there is a prospect of adoption to reduce delay as far as possible. Southwark now has an effective Fostering for Adoption Scheme that was developed in a way that is sustainable and integrated into the main business of the Adoption Service as well as linking closely with Carelink and the Contact Service. 2014/15 saw 3 children placed in these arrangements although 4 children matched in the year were placed previously with foster parents with a plan of adoption under fostering regulations before the Fostering for Adoption regulations were enacted. The Adoption Panel became fully fit for purpose to approve such carers and we have a pool of carers available for suitable children.

## DEVELOPMENT PLANS FOR 2015/16

2014/15 was a time of unprecedented change for children's social work in Southwark. The modernisation of the Adoption Service as part of this has been substantial. With the establishment of a new management team and an almost exclusively permanent, stable and highly competent workforce, the main task of this year is to consolidate the gains that have been made and use this as a secure base to develop the potential of the system and individuals in it to achieve and sustain permanence for as many children as possible through adoption, and do so quicker.

The Development Plan 2015/16 has specific objectives ensuring:

**Children go to live with their adoptive families quicker and without delay.** We will continue to be tough on delay, and tough on the causes of delay. We have a rolling programme of audits specifically focused on family finding developing dynamic learning. This has embedded new practice standards within the service. The system tracking and Permanence Consultations as well as offer of early permanence options through Southwark's Fostering for Adoption scheme will be consolidated and grown including strengthening relationships with other services. The approach will continue to be overseen by the Adoption Taskforce.

**Prospective adopters are well supported and assessed within timescales.** We will continue to build on the feedback from adopters about the strong areas of our practice around quality of assessment work. We will improve on timeliness of our assessments and their administration as well as develop our feedback approach with adopters to hear more systematically about how effective our support is following approval.

**There are more than enough adopters available to meet the needs of all our children.** We will continue to review and evaluate our recruitment approach but also work tirelessly with all adoption agencies, using all methods possible, to explore possible placements for children. We will continue to attend Adoption Activity Days anywhere in the UK as appropriate and continue to make extensive use of Adoption Link and strong links within the South London Adoption Consortium.

**We have an excellent post permanence support service.** We will make extensive use of the Adoption Support Fund particularly to gain if possible a funded post within CAMHS to work exclusively with adopters and children, recognising the work that already happens, but giving opportunities to develop this further. We will continue to work with Southwark We Are Family to ensure the views of adoptive families are at the heart of our approach to adoption support.

The service is committed to continuous development and key to this is listening to and working with adoptive families and birth parents to further develop the service. In 2015 a key area of development will be working with the LAC Education Team and PAC-UK to promote awareness of the needs of permanently placed children in Southwark Schools and provide training and consultation from PAC-UK where the need is identified.

**Workers have the knowledge and expertise to make a real difference to children's wellbeing.** This means we will continue to invest in the skills and learning development of our workforce particularly through developing systemic practice but also ensuring all staff are trained at Theraplay Level 1 and some are trained at Level 2. This is so we can offer an increased therapeutic approach to our work with both children and carers to strengthen and support adoptive placements from the earliest point.



<b>Item No.</b> 9.	<b>Classification:</b> Open	<b>Date:</b> 2 November 2015	<b>Meeting Name:</b> Corporate Parenting Committee
<b>Report title:</b>		Care Leavers Transitioning to Adulthood	
<b>Ward(s) or groups affected:</b>		All	
<b>From:</b>		Director, Children's Social Care	

## RECOMMENDATION

1. Members consider the information presented in this report on transitional planning and support for care leavers and note the actions the council are taking to ensure positive outcomes are achieved for care leavers in Southwark.

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

2. The previous corporate parenting committee requested further information to be provided regarding:
  - The health needs and development of services and provision for Care Leavers
  - Information regarding young people requesting to remain with their foster carers under Staying Put arrangements.
  - Details of the Southwark Offer for Care Leavers and staying in contact arrangements when they leave care.
3. Every year Southwark will have a cohort of young people being supported to leave care. The projected number from September 15-16 is 93. This is vary, depending upon the rate of admission of 16/17 year olds who are vulnerable and may require accommodation. Unaccompanied minors and asylum seekers under eighteen years, self-refer to children's social care, will also become part of this next group of care leavers.
4. Children in Care leave usually leave the care of the local Authority on their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. Local Authorities must support care leavers until they are 21 years old or up to 25 if they are in education or training. Some young people will stay put with their foster carers under new arrangements, other young people may return home to their families and many will start to live in different types of supported or independent accommodation.
5. The government promoted the requirement for care leavers to receive comprehensive support to help them to achieve their potential as they make their transition to adulthood. The details of how Southwark will achieve this is outlined in our Achieving Excellence plan.

## **Achieving Excellence and Care Leavers Strategy**

6. In October 2013, the government published a cross-departmental strategy for young people leaving care. This aimed to remove the many practical barriers that care leavers face.
7. The National Audit Office report released in July 2015 reflected that there was not strong evidence that the strategy was working effectively across government departments. The report suggested that there has been lack of evidence of a sustained effort to continuously improve and no regular reporting of progress or outcomes. This has an impact on how local government translates the intentions into improving local services. An example of this will be how the new universal credit roll out will affect care leavers and their benefits.
8. The new inspection arrangements will have a specific focus and 'sub judgement' on care leavers. In particular it will look at:
 

'Young people leaving care and preparing to leave care receive support and help to assist them in making a successful transition to adulthood. Plans for them to leave care are effective and address their individual needs. They are safe and feel safe, particularly where they live. Young people acquire the necessary level of skill and emotional resilience to successfully move towards independence. They are able to successfully access education, employment, training and safe housing. They enjoy stable and enduring relationships with staff and carers who meet their needs.'
9. Our care leaver strategy and achieving excellence plan focusses on the detailed work required to achieve the above outcomes. The activity and documents are regularly reviewed and updated to ensure continuous improvement.

## **KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION**

### **Care Leaver Health Needs and Service Developments**

10. The range of current and specific health provision for care leavers within borough and out of borough is under review. Consultations with young people and health professionals have been undertaken by the Care Service, Children's Rights and the Children and Young Peoples Health Partnership during 2015.
11. The current health provision for care leavers encompasses a specialist service from our health partners based at Sunshine house. The lead LAC specialist doctor and nurses will ensure that medicals are reviewed, children and foster carers are met with and health advice and interventions offered and followed up. For children placed out of borough there is a consultation with the lead LAC doctors and nurses in the respective local authority and information is shared to promote the best outcomes for children and young people. Our local child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) provision are joined up with Sunshine house and discussions and meetings will be arranged to discuss the mental health and well being of specific children, in conjunction with the social worker and foster carer, residential worker. Plans will be developed to ensure the most appropriate services and interventions.
12. The care service have clinical practitioners as part of the overall integrated model of providing services to children and young people. This has become more embedded since the transformation. The clinical practitioners are able to advise the group responsible for the young person regarding approaches to promote good mental

health. They also provide joint working and individual work for young people. They are flexible and able to meet with young people in their home, a park or college. They are trained to be able to work effectively in these environments using a range of techniques and approaches. We also work with universal services and voluntary groups within Southwark and local authorities where young people may choose to remain.

13. Key messages from care leavers from focus groups held over the last two months.
  - Care leavers valued a personal approach that was not judgmental. These characteristics were the biggest influence on young people actively engaging in addressing their health concerns.
  - The environment and context came second to the approach. Young people named flexible outreach services in particular the Family Nurse partnership and health services attached to the Crisis homeless services. ' They do their job well'. Help a wide spectrum of young people'. Helpful and provide emotional support'. Good support and advice to care for my baby'.
  - Guys and St Thomas and the Maudsley were referenced as a positive provider of health provision for care leavers. 'Care about service users'. 'Took time with me and showed they cared'. Also local general practices were positive when they had the right engagement and respect for care leavers.
  - The factors that influenced young people not engaging were: lack of interpersonal skills by staff, lack of confidentiality, sense of judgment if the young person disclosed that they were a care leaver.
  
14. Key messages from a professionals health consultation related to the delivery of services to care leavers:
  - The LAC health team doctors and nurses reported that they experienced delivering health summaries to young care leavers of key importance. They are a requirement and often need sensitive management of how the information is shared. This will frequently lead to discussions about life stories. It was also noted that for those young people who remain placed out of borough it can be more challenging to co-ordinate health services and information through partner health agencies.
  - The sexual health worker noted that sexual health clinics are better attended and less stigmatizing than they used to be. Health huts in the Youth offending service and Youth service are accessible and flexible to young peoples needs.
  - Social care staff considered health services were used more regularly by young people who were well prepared for independence. Predominantly those young people who had been in longer term foster placements had a more positive experience of health services and understood how to access what they needed. Young people who entered care later were often less prepared and knew less about the variety of health provision available.
  - Other key information shared, focused on issues of drug and alcohol misuse, particularly noted in the asylum seeker population. Helping connect young people to domestic violence services when it was not always possible to monitor closely the impact that negative and abusive relationships were having on the young person.

- The feedback from young people and professionals has been shared and further work will be undertaken to respond to those areas where we can make a difference quickly. Such as the health passport information and life story work. Ensuring workers have the necessary flexibility and engagement skills. The general feedback is considered within the Children and Young Person's health development group work stream and recommendations made to the steering group to inform the new implementation of services for children and young people within Southwark. Care leavers are highlighted as a priority within this work.

### **Care Leavers staying put with their foster carers**

15. The Planning Transition to Adulthood for Care Leavers Regulations and Guidance 2010 and the Fostering Regulations and Guidance 2011 both require local authorities to have a Staying Put policy. The aim of Staying Put is to provide continuity of care for care leavers who wish to continue their education within a supportive family environment. Being offered similar opportunities to their peers. Also for young people with special needs or who are particularly vulnerable, staying put can provide the additional security and continuity of care to assist them transition into adulthood with family support and assistance.
16. The age of leaving home among the population as a whole is rising and the transition to adulthood is becoming increasingly complex. Children looked after often leave care to become independent before the age of 18. Research and evidence highlights that where children in care experience an extended transition more akin to their peers, they achieve better outcomes.
17. The current profile of young people 'Staying Put' is as follows-
  - 46 young people are in Staying Put arrangements with their foster carers as of October 2015.
  - Of these 33 are EET and 13 are NEET
  - 19 are female and of these 6 are NEET and 13 are EET
  - 27 are male and of these 7 are NEET and 20 are EET.
18. All young people who choose to stay put will have a pathway plan which will detail support to assist with achieving their goals. The Care Service work actively to support young people with work and employment opportunities within the community. Placements are supported by a supervising social worker and personal advisor. Some placements will also have additional services from the transitions service or disabilities services.

### **Southwark Offer for Care Leavers**

19. Young people preparing to leave care and care leavers aged 18+ will have a Pathway Plan and reviews of their pathway plan to detail what are the key needs which require support. The pathway plan can detail how a young person will access support regarding preparation for leaving care, life skills, independence skills and who will help them with this.
20. Southwark offer a range of support for care Leavers in the process of preparing to leave care and once they have left care. This includes:-

- Accommodation. Young people are assisted to stay put with foster carers, to live in a range of supported housing. To live in their own tenancy with floating support of varying types and degree's of input.
- Education. Young people are supported financially to access educational opportunities. Financial support packages will include covering the cost of laptops, books, travel, accommodation. Dependent upon the type of course.
- Southwark have an Independent Visitor Scheme which is currently extended to 19 years. This captures the first year of transition from 18-19 which can often be particularly challenging for young people. The Scheme matches volunteers to befriend and mentor young people for at least a year. The individual arrangement is flexible and depends upon the young person's needs and circumstances and helps them to have a more independent input into developing their skills and helping them to have another voice to assist with their views. This service is particularly helpful for young people who do not have any positive relationships with their birth family.
- Our LAC doctors and nurses alongside our Camhs colleagues in Carelink will help young people to manage the initial transition to adulthood. Our Clinical Practitioners based in the Care Service can work with young people up until 25 if they are in education.
- The children's rights service are delivering an emotional resilience programme jointly with Young Minds to support young people with the skills to manage difficulties and challenges as they become more independent.
- The care service is developing more life story skills for workers to be able to help young people to make sense of their history, culture and identity. Often as young people move into independence they question some of the reasons for coming into care in order to make sense of their family connections going into adulthood. We have a specialist worker who is leading on this project.
- The transitions team in Southwark work closely with the care Service to advise and in some instances to take over case management of young people where the transition to adulthood will be more challenging. Particularly in relation to disability or a range of difficulties which impede their general life skill development.
- The personal advisor will keep in touch with a young person at least every two months. A young person can make arrangements for how this is experienced but in most instances this will be a personal visit to the young person's home. The local authority are required to ensure that all efforts are made to locate young people who are not responding to contact being made or whose current address is unknown.

### **What Care Leavers told us about what they needed help with when planning to leave Care- February 2015**

21. In February 2015, the Children's Rights Team led a consultation with care Leavers about what they would like help with as they worked with their social workers and personal advisors to assess their needs and develop and review their pathway plans. The following are some of the key area's highlighted.

- Learning about finances, for example how to pay rent, access or receive information on benefits, water and electricity bills, managing money, saving, credit cards and what to do if you are evicted.
  - How to do electrics, such as change light bulbs and use a boiler safely.
  - The process of how to apply for a council house
  - How to apply for work
  - Learning what it means to be healthy
  - Learning how to deal with stress
  - How to cope on your own
  - Self esteem
  - Learning how to be part of the community you live in so you are not isolated
  - Help applying for college
  - Hygiene
  - Cooking
  - Communication skills
  - Where to go for help
  - How to manage health
  - Where to go if you are pregnant
  - Healthy relationships, such as what you are entitled too and how to keep safe)
  - 'Realities of life class'
- Most young people prefer to receive help and assistance on an individual basis around the above areas as it allows for greater flexibility and confidentiality about their personal information. Group work is offered where young people find this helpful and support in accessing community services.

#### **Actions being taken:**

- Improved planning, development and co-ordination of health services for care leavers.
- Ensuring that Staying Put arrangements are regularly reviewed and young people and Staying Put carers are consulted about their experiences.
- Promoting what Southwark Offers with Care Leavers and to continue to listen and incorporate their views into service developments.

#### **Community impact statement**

22. Southwark Looked After Children services works to promote the best possible outcomes for children in care. The care population is diverse in terms of age, gender and ethnicity and we closely monitor these protectiveness characteristics to ensure we understand specific needs and are able to deliver services that address these needs. It is recognised that placement stability, engagement in education,

access to leisure and healthy lifestyles all help to build resilience for young people to successfully achieve economical wellbeing and make a positive contribution. Effective performance monitoring supports these objectives and enables us to identify areas where improvements may need to be made.

## BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
National Audit Office. Care Leaver's transition to adulthood. July 2015.		
<b>Link:</b> <a href="https://www.nao.org.uk/report/care-leavers-transitions-to-adulthood/">https://www.nao.org.uk/report/care-leavers-transitions-to-adulthood/</a>		
HM Government. Care Leaver Strategy. A cross-departmental strategy for young people leaving care. 2013		
<b>Link:</b> <a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/care-leaver-strategy">https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/care-leaver-strategy</a>		

## APPENDICES

No.	Title
None	

## AUDIT TRAIL

<b>Lead Officer</b>	Rory Patterson, Director Children's Social Care	
<b>Report Author</b>	Jane Scott, Head of Care	
<b>Version</b>	Final	
<b>Dated</b>	21 October 2015	
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<b>CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER</b>		
<b>Officer Title</b>	<b>Comments Sought</b>	<b>Comments Included</b>
Director of Law and Democracy	No	No
Strategic Director of Finance and Governance	No	No
<b>Cabinet Member</b>	No	No
<b>Date final report sent to Constitutional Team</b>	21 October 2015	

<b>Item No.</b> 10.	<b>Classification:</b> Open	<b>Date:</b> 2 November 2015	<b>Meeting Name:</b> Corporate Parenting Committee
<b>Report title:</b>		Children in Care and Care Leavers Strategy	
<b>Ward(s) or groups affected:</b>		All	
<b>From:</b>		Director, Children's Social Care	

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. This report outlines the draft children in care and care leavers strategy and sets out the project plan for the delivery of the strategy, to be approved at cabinet. Committee members are asked to:
  - Comment on the draft Children in Care and Care Leavers Strategy (“the strategy”)
  - Note the proposed project plan for the adoption and delivery of the strategy
  - Request that each department makes a pledge to children in care and care leavers for 2016/2017
  - Agree that the delivery of the actions in the strategy are monitored through the work plan of the committee.

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

2. The council's Commissioning Strategy for Children in Care, 2011/2012-2013/2014 was developed in September 2011. It set out 3 key commissioning priorities for services for children in care and care leavers; to 1. Redirect resources to reduce the need for children to come into care and to remain safely within their families, 2. Improve outcomes for children in care and to; 3. Ensure provision for children's care is good quality, efficient and effective. It is important we provide an up to date strategy which builds on this and ensures we have in place a framework by which we can deliver effective services for children in care and care leavers whilst meeting our obligations regarding the Ofsted inspection.
3. As part of its inspection of services for children in need of help or protection, children looked after and care leavers Ofsted will ask for documented performance information to help understand the work of the local authority, this will include a request for a strategic plan for looked after children, including corporate parenting objectives, education and housing priorities, planning for permanence and children's futures.
4. Ofsted will judge Local authorities to be good if *“there is a clear and up-to-date strategy for commissioning and developing services and there are sufficient resources to meet the needs of children and young people in the local authority area. Leaders, both professional and political, drive continuous improvement so*



*that the local authority is consistently effective as both the lead agency for the protection and care of children and as a corporate parent.”*

5. The strategy and the Placement and Sufficiency strategy set out our priorities in order to provide services and accommodation for children in care and care leavers. This report outlines a draft vision, principles and values, and strategic aims and priorities for the proposed children in care and care leavers strategy. It also sets out a timeline for further engagement in the strategy ahead of its adoption at Cabinet and subsequent implementation.
6. The outline strategy has been developed using evidence and findings from a range of sources, including:
  - Feedback from children in care and care leavers via Speaker Box, the council's Children in Care Council.
  - Analysis of the current needs of the council's children in care and care leavers population set against current performance in meeting these needs.
  - Self assessments and audits by the council and partners on existing services.
  - Best practice examples from available research, from work with other local authorities and from feedback from council officers.
  - Internal and external reviews and evaluation reports.
7. The strategy incorporates the findings of the 16+ accommodation review, the action plan of the New Belongings care leavers programme, and aligns to the Families Matter Strategy and the Placement and Sufficiency Strategy.

## **KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION**

### **Vision**

8. The strategy vision describes the council's ambition for every child or young person in our care and care leavers, as follows:

***“We want all our children and young people to be safe, happy and healthy, and to enjoy life. We want them to develop into resilient adults who are ready for work and can make a positive contribution to their community. We will provide them with high quality care, support and guidance to ensure they get the best start they need.”***

9. This supports the vision and ambitions set out in the Children and Young People's Plan 2013-2016, the Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2015-2020, the Council Plan 2014-18, as well as helping to meet the Corporate Parenting Committee's aim to provide children and young people with the best start in life and develop into resilient adults, and to secure real and sustained improvements in the life chances of looked after children and care leavers.

## Values and principles

10. The strategy includes the following values and principles. These will 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, whilst keeping children and young people safe
  - Keep children and young people safe at all times
  - Keep children and young people's needs 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
  - Deliver, through action, our commitment to the **Care Leavers Charter**:
    - 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

## Strategic aims and priorities

### Strategic aims

11. The draft strategy has four strategic aims, which will support the delivery of the vision:
- 1. To be an effective corporate parent**
  - 2. Reduce the numbers moving into care**
  - 3. Build resilience of children in care and care leavers**
  - 4. Improve the quality of care**
12. It is the council's role to lead the way in being an effective corporate parent and integrate services across all council departments, schools, the voluntary sector and other public sector organisations to deliver services that meet the needs of children in care, the carers that are supporting them and those who leave care.
13. In delivering this strategy we are working with an overarching drive to reduce the need to bring children and young people into care because they remain safe, in loving family homes. This means providing the right support to families before issues escalate, working across the local authority and its partners to provide effective housing, education, health, criminal justice and employment support at all times.

14. We have set out how we will deliver effective early help and preventative services to families in our Families Matter Strategy. Both the Children in Care and Care Leavers Strategy and the Families Matter Strategy recognise that many families in Southwark have complex needs, which vary over time. They need high quality services that respond to their underlying and changing needs through integrated working, supporting families to build their resilience and achieve positive outcomes together, reducing the need for intervention by social care through the delivery of responsive community based provision.
15. We want the best of our children and young people and we aim to provide services that promote self-esteem, positive learning experiences and nurturing relationships, and help children and young people to better cope with adversity. We aim to improve the resilience of our children and young people and prepare them for a successful adult life where they can live independently.
16. We need to have the mechanisms in place to effectively monitor performance, identify and address gaps in support and use intelligence effectively to inform commissioning and service improvements.
17. As well as meeting our statutory duties we aim to develop standards which make it clear what children and young people should expect from the services they are provided. We will work with our Housing Department, for example, as they pursue plans to introduce accommodation standards so that private sector providers and landlords understand their obligations and expected standards of the accommodation they provide to our young residents.
18. We will continue to invest in the development of our workforce through programmes like Social Work Matters that focus on providing a team around the child and promote continued oversight and support from practitioners and managers. We will invest in training for our carers so they too can build resilience and provide the right support for all children and young people.

### **Strategic priorities**

19. In delivering these aims, the strategy includes the following priorities. These have been discussed with Social Care DMT, the Children's Rights Team, the Commissioning Team and the July Corporate Parenting Committee.
  1. Children and young people have a say and their voice is heard
  2. Whenever it is safe, children and young people are supported to remain with, and return to, their families or with their extended family
  3. To work in the best interests of children and young people and remove them from harmful situations where necessary
  4. Children and young people secure timely, permanent care arrangements in loving homes
  5. Children and young people live closer to home, in provision that meets their needs
  6. All children and young people in care and care leavers feel safe and

secure in their placements and accommodation

7. Our foster carers and adoptive parents feel well supported to deliver the best care
8. All children and young people are happy and in their best health
9. All children and young people achieve their education outcomes at key stage 2 and 4
10. Children and young people are diverted from criminal activity
11. All young people leave care when they are ready to live independently
12. All care leavers are in education, employment or training.

### **Outcomes and performance monitoring**

20. We will monitor the delivery of these priorities through an outcomes framework which focuses on the following outcomes for children and young people:
  - Getting involved and having a say
  - Feeling safe, secure and settled
  - Being happy and in best health
  - Getting the most from education
  - Avoiding harmful risks
  - Being prepared for independence
21. 'Journey of the Child' indicators will be used to track progress against the delivery of agreed actions in the strategy; these will continue to be monitored on a monthly basis. The delivery of outcomes can be tracked through the annual work plan for the corporate parenting committee, providing a clear governance structure for the committee.
22. The strategy will include performance framework, setting out the outcomes and related strategic priorities, the priority actions, and the performance indicators used to monitor success.

### **Governance**

23. Corporate parenting committee will oversee the strategy implementation and will monitor delivery of the key actions whilst recommending ways in which more integrated services can be developed across all council departments, schools and the voluntary sector to achieve better outcomes for children in care and care leavers.
24. Further thematic work with partners, via the proposed Children's Action Network, will help to deliver the strategic priorities in the strategy across the wider corporate parenting community.

### Delivery plan

25. The following delivery plan sets out the timescale for the completion of the strategy ahead of final approval at cabinet.

Action	Due by
Further consultation with young people via Speaker Box	October/November 2015
CPC meeting	2 November 2015
Children's Social Care DMT	4 November 2015
Dissemination at service team meetings	November/December 2015
Strategy published and implemented through service business plans and the Achieving Excellence Plan.	From January 2016
Cabinet	January 2016

### Policy implications

26. This strategy supports the Council Plan to give all our young people the best start in life by keeping them safe and stable in healthy environments where they have the opportunity to develop, make choices and feel in control of their lives and future.
27. The delivery of the strategy provides an opportunity to increase the council's role as an effective corporate parent for children and young people in our care. It supports and promotes the duties of the corporate parent in relation to safeguarding and keeps the voice and the rights of the child at the centre of our work across housing, commissioning, health, education, employment and youth offending services.

### Community impact statement

28. The care population is diverse in terms of age, gender and ethnicity and we closely monitor these protective characteristics to ensure we understand specific needs and are able to deliver services that address these needs. It is recognised that placement stability, engagement in education, access to leisure and healthy lifestyles all help to build resilience for young people to successfully achieve economical wellbeing and make a positive contribution. Effective performance monitoring supports these objectives and enables us to identify areas where improvements may need to be made.

**BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

<b>Background Papers</b>	<b>Held At</b>	<b>Contact</b>
None		

**APPENDICES**

<b>No.</b>	<b>Title</b>
Appendix 1	Draft Children in Care and Care Leavers Strategy

**AUDIT TRAIL**

<b>Lead Officer</b>	Rory Patterson, Director, Children's Social Care	
<b>Report Author</b>	Elaine Gunn, Principal Strategy Officer	
<b>Version</b>	Final	
<b>Dated</b>	20 October 2015	
<b>Key Decision?</b>	No	
<b>CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER</b>		
<b>Officer Title</b>	<b>Comments Sought</b>	<b>Comments Included</b>
Director of Law and Democracy	No	No
Strategic Director of Finance and Governance	No	No
<b>Cabinet Member</b>	No	No
<b>Date final report sent to Constitutional Team</b>	20 October 2015	

# Children in Care and Care Leavers Strategy 2015

*Image*

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## Foreword



*I am pleased to introduce our Children in Care and Care leavers Strategy. This strategy sets out the key challenges and strategic priorities to enable us to deliver high quality care and support to children and young people in care and care leavers. To develop this strategy we have gathered evidence from a range of sources.*

*We have sought feedback from children and young people via Speaker Box, our Children in Care Council. We have analysed the evidence that we have on the needs of our population and service users alongside current performance. We have completed self assessments and audits on our existing services, we have sought the views of our staff and have looked at best practice from other local authorities.*

*This strategy sets out the vision by which we aim to delivery services for children and young people in our care and those who have left our care. We want all our children and young people to be safe, happy and healthy and to enjoy life. We want them to develop into resilient adults who are ready for work and can make a positive contribution to their community. We will provide them with high quality care, support and guidance to ensure they get the best start they need.*

*As corporate parents we are committed to delivering our vision and ensuring we do our very best to improve the outcomes for those in our care and our care leavers.*

Councillor Victoria Mills, Cabinet Member for Children and Schools and Chair of Southwark Council's Corporate Parenting Committee

## Our vision

*“We want all our children and young people to be safe, happy and healthy and to enjoy life. We want them to develop into resilient adults who are ready for work and can make a positive contribution to their community. We will provide them with high quality care, support and guidance to ensure they get the best start they need.”*

## Our values and principles

To deliver our vision we will provide high quality care, support and guidance to our children and young people, we will listen to their views, champion their rights and their achievements and keep them safe. In line with our Fairer Future principle spending money as if it were from our own pocket, we will ensure that services for children in care and their carers are value for money.

The values and principles that underpin the planning, commissioning and delivery of services to support children and young people are:

- Be the champions our young people deserve
- Deliver high quality care, support and accommodation services
- Do our best to enable families to stay together, whilst keeping children and young people safe
- Keep children and young people safe at all times
- Keep children and young people’s needs 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
- Deliver, through action, our commitment to the **Care Leavers Charter**:
  - To respect and honour your identity
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  - To support you
  - To find you a home
  - To be your lifelong champion

## Outcomes for children in care and care leavers

### The national picture.

National statistics, show that 62 per cent per cent of children in care as a result of abuse or neglect, children in care are four times more likely than their peers to have a mental health difficulty and they are less likely than their peers to do well at school. Furthermore, two-thirds have special educational need or disability (SEND) and of those a significant proportion will have a statement or a learning difficulties assessment.<sup>1</sup>

Children in care are nearly twice as likely to be cautioned for, or convicted of, an offence as their peers and although estimates vary, it is thought that nearly a third of children in custody have been looked after.<sup>2</sup>

National Audit Office research shows that young people who have had a background in care are more likely than their peers to have poor social outcomes in later life. The most recent estimates are that:

- In 2010, 25 per cent those who were homeless had been in care at some point in their lives
- In 2008, 49 per cent of young men aged under 21 who had come into contact with the criminal justice system had a care experience
- In 2014, 22 per cent of female care leavers become teenage parents; and
- in 2012, it was reported that those in care and care leavers were between four and five times more like to self-harm in adulthood.

In 2014 41 per cent of 19 year old care leavers were not in education, employment or training (NEET) compared to 15 per cent of the general population.

Despite these challenges many children in care and care leavers achieve positive outcomes and succeed into adulthood. The nature of the range of challenges they can face highlights the need for effective joint working across health, education, employment, housing, criminal justice and social care. It is our role, as effective corporate parents, to ensure that all children and young people in our care are not disadvantaged by their circumstances. It is our aim to ensure that the support we provide enables all children and young people in our care and care leavers to achieve the best possible outcomes at all times.

### The Southwark picture

Southwark is a diverse borough with a resident population of 293 500 (*date*). We are the 21<sup>st</sup> most deprived borough in England with 30 per cent of children living in income deprived households<sup>3</sup>. We are one of the largest social landlords in the country.

In March 2015 We had around 500 children and young people in care. This figure has been reducing steadily since March 2012.

<sup>1</sup> [National Audit Office, July 2015, Care leavers transition to adulthood](#)

<sup>2</sup> [DfE, March 2015, Promoting the health and well-being of looked after children](#)

<sup>3</sup> [DCLG, September 2015, English indices of deprivation](#)

- Half of the children and young people who entered care between April 2014 and March 2015 did so as a result of abuse or neglect. 17 per cent entered because of family dysfunction and 11 per cent entered as a result of absent parenting.
- A high number of children and young people in care in Southwark are placed in foster care; the majority of those are in foster placements managed directly by the council.
- There has been an increase in the proportion of children in care who were subject to Full Care Orders<sup>4</sup>. The proportion has increased from 48 per cent in 2013/2014 year to the current position of around 50 per cent.
- There has been an increase in the number of children and young people accommodated under Section 20<sup>5</sup> - from 24 per cent in 2012/2013 to 32 per cent in 2014/2015.
- The highest percentage of children entering care across each of the past five years has been within the 10-15 age group, with the lowest percentage being within the 5-9 age group (with the exception of 2010/2011).
- 10-17 year olds accounted for almost 50 per cent of those entering care in 2013/2014, with the percentage of children within this age group accounting for at least 45 per cent of new care entrants across each of the preceding 4 years.
- In 2013/2014, almost a quarter of children entering care were aged 16-17, an increase of 5 per cent from 2012/2013, and the highest percentage for the past 5 years.
- In 2013/2014 43 per cent of those in care were Black or Black British, 35 per cent were white and 17 per cent were of mixed ethnicity.
- Around 3/4 of those in care live outside the borough boundary. Around 1/5 are placed more than 20 miles from their home.
- In 2014/2015 30 per cent left care because they turned 18 and 25 per cent returned home as part of the care planning process.
- 13 per cent of children in care achieved 5 A\*-C grades or equivalent at GCSE in 2013-2014.
- We have recorded concerns with the emotional wellbeing of over a third of our children and young people in care aged 5-16.

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<sup>4</sup> This is a court order which places a child in the care of Children's Services. It lasts until the child is 18 unless the court ends it before then. When there is a care order, Children's Services share parental responsibility for the child with the parents. Children's Services must find out the parents wishes about any decision they make about their child, but they always have the final say and can make plans for the child even if the parents don't agree with them.

<sup>5</sup> This is the part of the law (Section 20 of the Children act 1989) that gives Children's Services the power to look after a child when there is no-one with parental responsibility for the child or when the person caring for the child is prevented from caring for them, for whatever reason. This is also called voluntary Accommodation. <http://www.frg.org.uk/need-help-or-advice/an-a-z-of-terms>

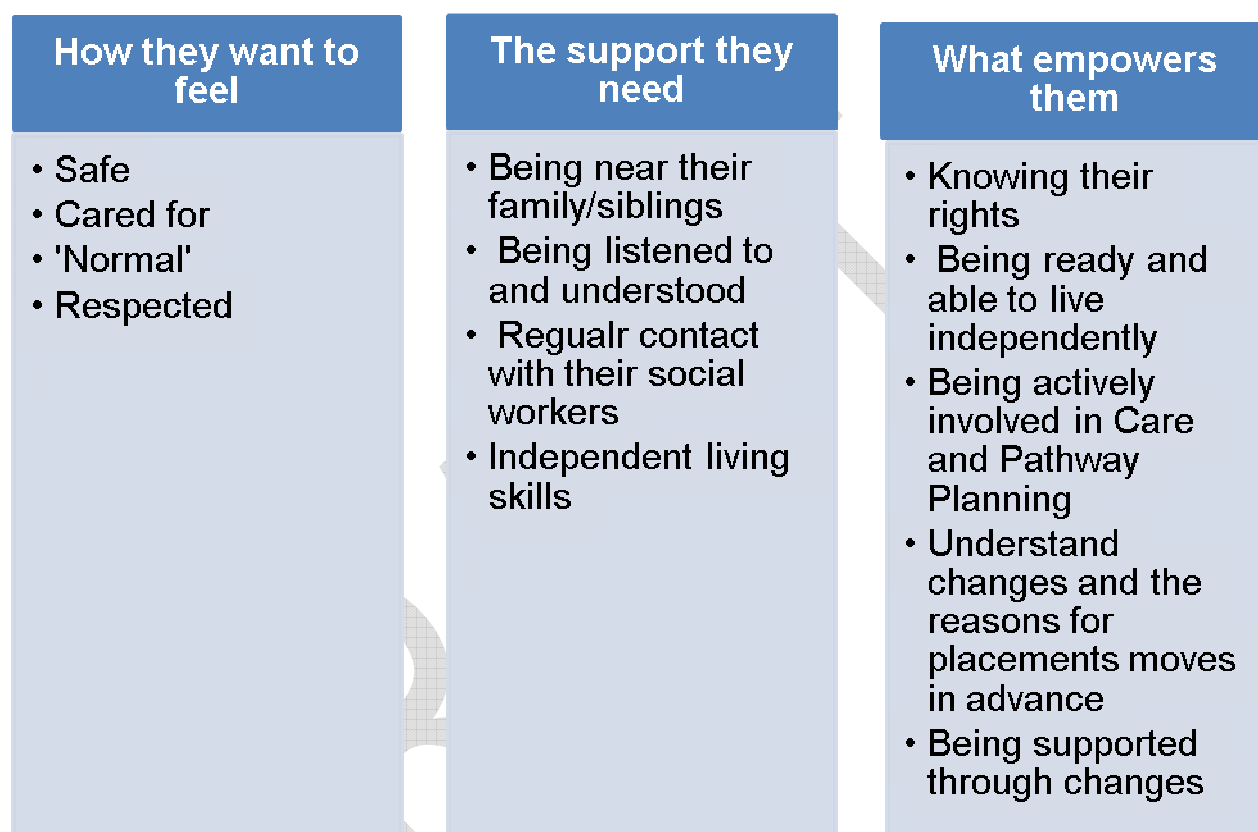
- Around half of our care leavers are in education, employment and training.
- Approximately 80 per cent of care leavers are in suitable accommodation.
  - Around 6 per cent of care leavers are in higher education. 6 per cent of care leavers are in custody.
  - In July 2015 there were 26 unaccompanied asylum seeking children and young people in our care.

The key challenges locally are:

- High number of children and young people in care, and the increasing number of older children coming into care.
- Ability to delivery flexible services that respond to the range of needs of children and young people
- Providing a range of locally based, high quality accommodation and support provision – foster placements, adoptive parents
- Engaging with care leavers
- Increasing the number of care leavers in education, employment and training
- Identifying and meeting demand for mental health/emotional well-being support
- Mitigating the impact and implications of housing benefit reforms for young people
- Increased demand for services from those with no recourse to public funds
- Narrowing the gap in the outcomes achieved for those in care and care leavers and other children
- Supporting children and young people to be resilient

## What do our children and young people say is important to them?

Research conducted by the Children's Rights Team and Speakerbox, our Children in Care Council, provide clear messages about the issues that affect our children and young people and how they can feel empowered to take control of their lives.



### Strategic aims

#### 1. To be an effective corporate parent

The above presents a summary of the national and local picture for children in care and care leavers and highlights the key challenges the council and our partners face in delivering positive outcomes for those in our care. It is the council's role to lead the way in being an effective corporate parent and integrate services across all council departments, schools, the voluntary sector and other public sector organisations to deliver services that meet the needs of children in care, the carers that are supporting them and those who leave care.

#### 2. Reduce the numbers moving into care

In delivering this strategy we are working with an overarching drive to reduce the need to bring children and young people into care because they remain safe, in loving family homes. This means providing the right support to families before issues escalate, working across the local authority and its partners to provide effective housing, education, health, criminal justice and employment support at all times.

We have set out how we will deliver effective early help and preventative services to families in our Families Matter Strategy. Both the Children in care and care leavers strategy and the Families Matter Strategy recognise that many families in Southwark have complex needs, which vary over time. They need high quality services that respond to the underlying and changing needs through integrated working, supporting families to build their resilience and achieve positive outcomes together, reducing the need for intervention by social care through the delivery of responsive community based provision.

### **3. Build resilience of children in care and care leavers**

We want the best of our children and young people and we aim to provide services that promote self-esteem, positive learning experiences and nurturing relationships, and help children and young people to better cope with adversity. We aim to improve the resilience of our children and young people and prepare them for a successful adult life where they can live independently.

### **4. Improve the quality of care**

We need to have the mechanisms in place to effectively monitor performance, identify and address gaps in support and use intelligence effectively to inform commissioning and service improvements.

As well as meeting our statutory duties we aim to develop standards which make it clear what children and young people should expect from the services they are provided. We are working to introduce accommodation standards so that private sector providers and landlords understand their obligations and expected standards of our tenants.

We will continue to invest in the development of our workforce through programmes like Social Work Matters, our child centred, systemic practice approach to social work, which focus on providing a team around the child, and promote continued oversight and support from practitioners and managers. We will invest in training for our carers so they too can build resilience and provide the right support for all children and young people.

## **Strategic priorities**

The following presents our strategic priorities in responding to the above challenges, within the context of our overarching aims.

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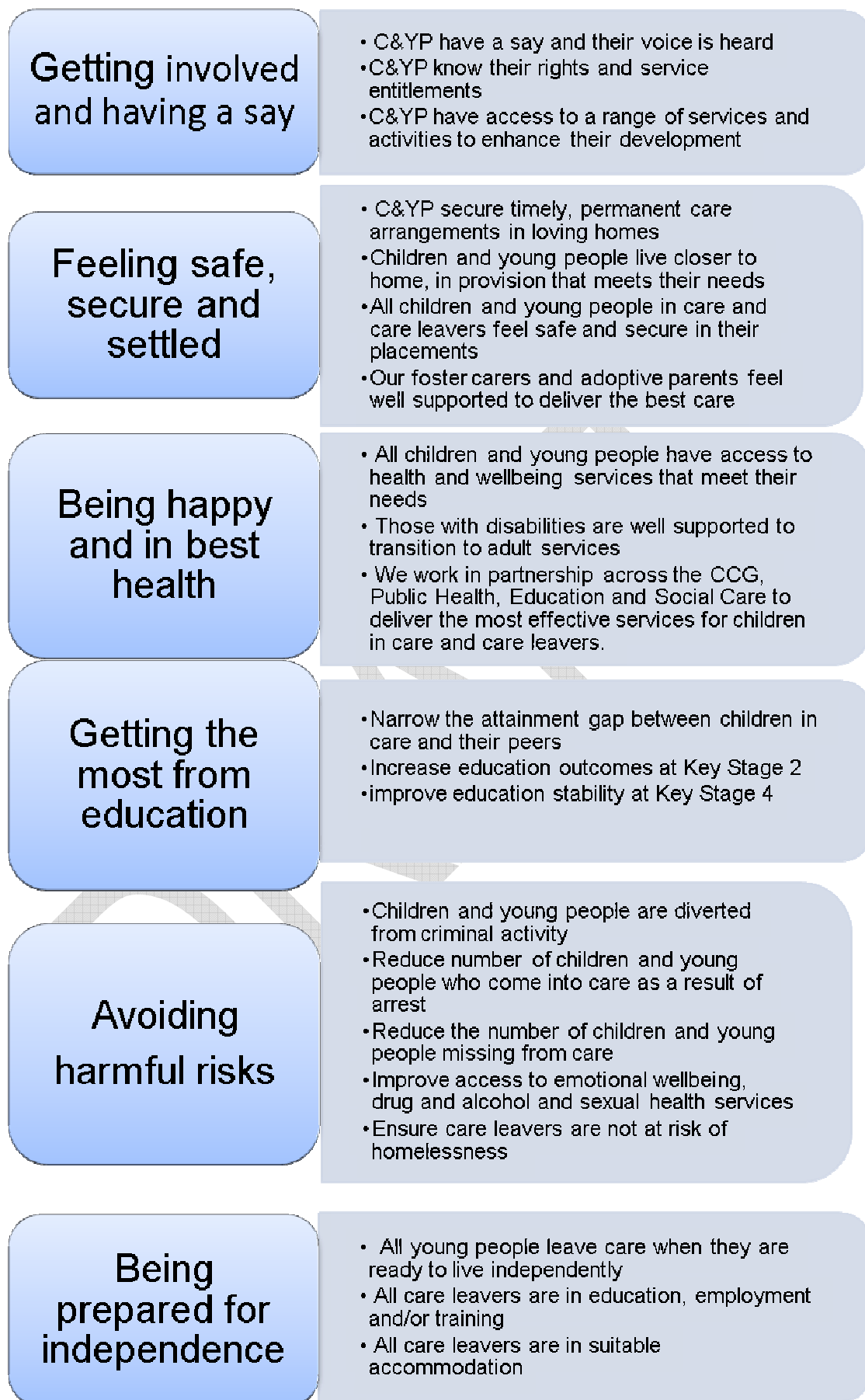
1. Children and young people have a say and their voice is heard
2. Whenever it is safe, children and young people are supported to remain with, and return to, their families or with their extended family
3. To work in the best interests of children and young people and remove them from harmful situations where necessary
4. Children and young people secure timely, permanent care arrangements in loving homes
5. Children and young people live closer to home, in provision that meets their needs
6. All children and young people in care and care leavers feel safe and secure in their placements and accommodation
7. Our foster carers and adoptive parents feel well supported to deliver the best care
8. All children and young people are happy and in their best health
9. All children and young people achieve their education outcomes at Key Stage 2 and 4
10. Children and young people are diverted from criminal activity
11. All young people leave care when they are ready to live independently
12. All care leavers are in education, employment and training

### **Delivering key outcomes for children and young people**

The outcomes framework sets out our strategic priorities in the context of the delivery of sustainable outcomes for children and young people which will support them to

succeed into adulthood. These outcomes reinforce our focus on the needs of children and young people.

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**1. Getting involved and having a say**

Like any child or young person, those in care need to be able to engage in activities that enable them to make a positive contribution to society, getting involved in decision making processes, helping them learn new skills, meet new people and develop their sense of value and belonging.

We will ensure children and young people are actively engaged with their care and pathway planning and are well informed about any changes to their plans. We will keep in regular contact with children and young people, and visit them in their placements. We will make sure young people have the opportunity to visit placements before they are move in.

We will continue to involve children and young people in our strategy and planning; building on successful programmes like the Young Inspectors. We know we have improvements to make to ensure children and young people are involved at the right moment and that they understand the parameters of their influence. We will continue to explore different ways for us to involve children and young people in planning and designing services and make better use of existing research and consultation.

We are proud of our Children in Care Council (Speakerbox), which provides a range of opportunities for children in care and care leavers to get involved in projects and activities. A group recently visited New York for example, and met with their peers in Harlem. Speakerbox developed the Young Inspectors programme where young people are trained to become inspectors of their placements. Their findings help inform commissioning decisions and the future standards for what young people expect from their accommodation.

We are part of the New Belongings programme, aimed at improving outcomes for care leavers. This is a year long programme, which is supported by The Care Leavers Foundation, delivered in partnership with Bexley, Greenwich and Lewisham councils. As part of this project we will be conducting regular surveys of care leaver's experiences of leaving care and have established a Care Leavers Forum. This will help us define our enhanced support offer for care leavers.

We will continue to ensure children and young people know their rights and entitlements and know how to access the council complaints team and advocacy services if they feel unsafe or unhappy.

## **2. Feeling safe, secure and settled**

The majority of children and young people who come into care have been subjected to abuse and neglect, which can have a profound affect on their ability to form relationships with adults and feel settled. This feeling is affected by experiences children and young people have prior to coming into and whilst they are in care, the relationships they have with their carers and the support network around them, as well as their experiences of their placements.

Children and young people may come into care for a temporary period or for the longer term and some will be permanently removed from their homes. Whether a child or young person is adopted, in friends and family care, cared for through a special guardianship order, in long-term foster care or returning to their family, our aim is always to provide high quality and stable care that enables children and young people to develop a sense of identify and belonging. It is our duty to ensure that we

remove children and young people from harmful situations and to ensure that they remain safe and settled.

We assess needs as swiftly as possible and ensure plans address the immediate and continuing needs of the child. We will make placements based on our best understanding of the child or young person's needs.

Our foster carers and adopters will have the initial and on-going support they need to provide effective care and support to children and young people at all times. We will improve placement stability, limiting the number of unplanned moves, whilst providing training and support for carers to help them to deal with challenging behaviour.

Through the delivery of our Placement and Sufficiency Strategy we will ensure that children and young people in and leaving care have accommodation that meets their needs and that there is a broad choice of placement options available to children and young people locally. We will reduce the numbers who go missing in placements by responding to the needs and wishes of children and young people, who often report that they want to see their siblings and families and be closer to home.

We recognise the impact placement stability has on educational attainment where children and young people who are settled in home and school placements are more likely to achieve positive outcomes. Through joint working between our children's social care and the looked after children education teams we will ensure good or outstanding education placements are provided and that educational attainment is promoted and closely monitored.

We will support young people to be prepared for adulthood and independence by supporting young people to Stay Put with their foster carers, where this is possible. We will provide a range of supported accommodation options that allow young people to learn to live independently in a safe environment. We recognise that managing your own home can be stressful and that often young people feel isolated when they move into independence. We will keep our door open to young people who need our support.

We know that independence is about being responsible, having a job and knowing how to manage finances and we will ensure care leavers are equipped to manage this by providing independence living skills training, and additional support to secure apprenticeships, employment and training.

We will continue to provide dedicated support to families to keep them together and prevent moves into care. We will provide mediation support for families and support young people who may be at risk of homelessness.

### **3. Being happy and in best health**

The health risks and problems children in care and care leavers are often exacerbated due to their experiences of poverty, abuse and neglect. Children in care show significantly higher rates of mental health disorders than others; conduct disorders being the most prevalent, with others having emotional disorders (anxiety and depression) or hyperactivity. They are more likely to have physical health problems than their peers and there is often no one who has an overview of their health needs or history. Delays in identifying health needs and meeting their

emotional well-being can affect all aspects of their lives, including their chances of reaching their potential and leading happy and healthy lives as resilient adults.

Compared to their peers, a high proportion of young people in care being are pregnant or are young parents. We had invested in resources to support this group through our Young Women's Worker and through innovative projects like the Pause Project. We will continue to work with young people to promote sexual health through services that are accessible and free from stigma.

The Looked After Children Health Team provides health support to children in care, conducts annual health assessments and reviews to ensure they are in their best health and have access to the right health provision.

We have a specialist Children with Disabilities Team within social care who work with families where there is a disabled child with a severe and permanent disability or a child with a lifelong condition.

CareLink mental health support services are provided to those aged up to the ages of 0-18 and although programmes of support are available for care leavers, predominately through the voluntary and community sector, there is not a dedicated services in place to support the mental health and emotional wellbeing of young people who have been in our care.

Developing emotional resilience is a key strategic aim and our Children's Rights Team is working in partnership with Young Minds to develop programmes to improve this. Our Care and Fostering Services work in partnership with CareLink to deliver assessment and intervention services for those diagnosed with mental health issues.

Feedback from consultations with children and young people concerning health draw some key themes:

The importance of:

- Being able to see a GP of the same gender (particularly for young women)
- Being listened to and being able to self refer
- Understanding their family health histories and the health risks that might present

The value of:

- Sexual health services and the different attitudes young men and women have to these
- Having a dedicated space, with walk-ins and appointments available, where young people can go to discuss health issues with health professionals and youth workers

We will work with our partners to ensure physical, mental and emotional health needs are assessed and met so that looked after children, regardless where they are placed; receive the high quality health care support they are entitled to. We will work to ensure the health needs of children in care and care leavers are reflected in health commissioning priorities and that strategic planning reflects the high need for child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) amongst the care population and those leaving care.

We will continue to develop joint health commissioning arrangements with the Clinical Commissioning Group and make the best use of available intelligence, such as our joint strategic needs assessments and feedback from consultations with children and young people and foster carers and adoptive parents to design and commission services that are accessible and better meet the health needs of children and young people.

#### **4. Getting the most from education**

Children in care, especially late entrants to care, tend to have poorer experiences of education and lower educational attainment, compared to their non care peers. Their educational outcomes, in terms of the proportion who reach the average levels of attainment expected of seven, eleven, fourteen and sixteen year olds, remain significantly lower than for all children. Many children in care have a Statement of Special Education Needs or Disability; a relatively small number of looked after children progress to higher education and too many are recognised as not in education training or employment.

Education is key to increasing life opportunities and we want all our children in care to have access to as many opportunities to learn and gain a good education as possible. We want them to enjoy their learning experiences; those in school and their hobbies and interests outside of school. We want them to be able to achieve their potential and feel well informed about the options available to them when thinking about their learning pathways and future careers.

Stability in education is vital to achieve positive outcomes, specifically around times of transition in a young person's life. We know, through our research, that that young people who are taken into care around the time of their GCSE are unlikely to achieve the threshold of good attainment, whereas those taken into care after they have completed their GCSEs are more likely to have already achieved a good outcome. We also know that care leavers who have been in care for a longer time before their 19th birthday are more likely to be in education, employment and training when they are older. This is why we are focused on improving placement stability and educational attainment at key stages 2 and 4.

Our LAC Education Team focus on delivering educational outcomes for children in care; they hold schools to account on their attainment, provide support to carers to help children in their care achieve a good education and track pupil progress. They help social workers to prepare Personal Education Plans (PEPs), which establish clear targets and actions to respond effectively to each child's needs and aspirations and provide a continuous record of their achievements.

We will continue to champion the educational achievements of children and care and care leavers and ensure we provide additional learning where this is required; ESOL for example. We will continue to support further educational attainment through PEPs that provide a good foundation to move from school/college to into education, employment and/or training. We will enable young people to go to university by providing them with financial assistant and support from their Personal Advisor.

## 5. Avoiding harmful risks

A young person's resilience to risk factors in their lives will also help minimise their own risk-taking at levels that pose safeguarding concerns; child sexual exploitation, engagement in criminal activity, for example. Children and young people become more or less resilient depending on the opportunities they are given. They will take risks as part of their development; this is natural. It is our role to make sure they are protected from harm, are equipped to make sound judgements and are not unnecessarily criminalised when they do take risks.

We recognise that adolescent and teenagers are most likely to display challenging and risky behaviour. Those who go missing from care in Southwark for example, are predominately aged between 15-17. Not all those who go missing (from home, care or education) are at risk from harm, but there are those who are at more risk of sexual exploitation, involvement with gangs and criminal behaviour, for example. We will continue to provide a dedicated service to those who go missing and prevent further incidences occurring.

We will work to develop a better understanding of the link between coercion and exploitation affecting children and young people involved with gangs as noted in Catch 22's recent Running the Risks<sup>6</sup> report. We will robustly monitor the data we have available and take all risks seriously whilst we continue to develop strong links between safeguarding, social care, youth offending and the police.

We recognise that young people in care may have particular mental health and emotional wellbeing needs that affect their behaviour and which may cause them to react negatively. We will ensure that young people are provided with services that improve their resilience and support them to deal with stress.

We will continue to provide training for carers to help them deal with more challenging and risky behaviour through emphatic behaviour management, an approach our Fostering Service has implemented to improve the quality of care children and young people experience which focuses on "connection not correction".

We will work to ensure that children and young people have consistent relationships with adults they trust, whether with their carer or social worker, mentor or advisor, and take time to understand the significance of their support networks, friends and families.

We will ensure care planning plays a key part in managing risks and that those placed out of the borough have access to the same level of support as those placed in the borough. We will actively engage young people, working through underlying issues with them, helping them to understand the consequences of their behaviour and be there for them.

Through our Youth Offending Service we will provide support that focuses on restorative justice interventions, raises awareness of risks to carers through direct support and training that ensures that carers have the skills to deal with challenging behaviour and recognise risks.

Will we support those young people who do spend time in prison to effectively integrate into the community and support their resettlement.

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<sup>6</sup> [Catch22, July 2015, Running the Risks](#)



## 6. Being prepared for independence

It is our priority to ensure that our young people are fully prepared to leave care and live independently. 50 per cent of young adults aged 22 in the UK still lived with their parents in 2013. The average age for leaving home is 24 yet young people are considered 'care leavers' from their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday and most move into semi-independent or some form of independent living before that.

The government has recognised that for some this is too soon and they have introduced the Staying Put arrangement so young people can remain with their foster carers up to the age of 21.

Young people are at an increased risk of homelessness as private renting costs increase and the availability of affordable housing is reduced. Young people aged 16 and 17 who present as homelessness can be accommodated under the Children Act 1989 and moved into care under section 20 of the act; we have seen an increase in the numbers accommodated through this route over recent years and an increase in the number of young people accommodated with no recourse to public funds (NRPF).

We have a Housing Protocol in place between our children's and Housing services to ensure young people receive the correct assessment of their needs and are accommodated with the right support in place. We will continue to build on this relationship as we develop a new accommodation pathway for young people and create an integrated gateway into supported accommodation for young people in the borough.

It is our role to ensure that those in our care are effectively supported to make the transition to adulthood and independent living at a pace that is suitable to them. Our 16+ accommodation review has shown us that we are over-reliant on moving young people to semi-independent accommodation in their preparation for adulthood and that we need to increase the range of accommodation and support options to meet young people's needs and enable them to develop their independent living skills in a flexible and safe environment. The review also highlighted that young people spend too long in accommodation that is intended to be temporary and do not 'move on', indicating the challenge sourcing suitable accommodation for young people through private tenancies, a general shortage of options and also a need to adopt improved commissioning and contracting arrangements with providers.

We will work collaboratively with the provider network and with Housing and Regeneration teams to ensure we make the best use of local assets to meet the needs of our young people and care leavers.

Feedback from our care leavers has shown that some feel unsafe in their accommodation and often report feelings of isolation and loneliness. A recent external review of our support for care leavers, conducted by Catch 22 highlighted key areas for improvements. These included:

- Ensuring Pathway Plans are outcomes focused and are developed and monitored in partnership with young people.
- Developing clear accommodation pathways
- Improving the support offer for care leavers

These areas are being prioritised in our New Belongings action plan for care leavers. In line with our overarching aims and priorities the action plan also focuses on improving emotional wellbeing of care leavers by providing support to increase their resilience and increase access to employment, training and apprenticeships.

The above provides some of the context for how we have determined our strategic priorities for children in care and care leavers in Southwark, based on the delivery of our key outcomes. The following section provides details of the action we will take to deliver our priorities

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## Priority actions

**Outcome:** Getting involved and having a say

*Yeah I have got a lot out of this process, I feel like I am saying what it would be like for a young person to live somewhere and then you guys think about it. Its nice I feel like I am helping make sure kids in care live in safer and more caring places.  
(Young Inspector)*

*The trip taught me that we are the future, and we can be leaders for our community. We can make a difference; we just have to believe it.*

### Strategic priorities

- C&YP have a say and their voice is heard
- C&YP know their rights and service entitlements
- C&YP have access to a range of services and activities to enhance their development

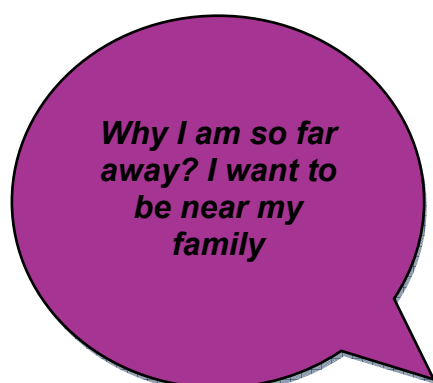
### Priority actions

- Continue to deliver programmes like Young Inspectors
- Ensure children and young people are fully informed of their entitlements
- Ensure the voice of the child is reflected in Care Planning and Pathway Planning
- Ensure children and young have access to independent advice and advocacy
- Ensure children and young people have regular opportunities to engage with peer groups and give feedback on issues that affect them
- Involve children and young people in the design and production of services that support their needs
- Learning from complaints is shared and there is evidence of impact

### Measuring impact

- No. of consultations/projects children and young people participate in
- Evidence that children and young people's voice is present in planning through regular audit
- No. receiving support through Children's Rights and independent advocacy
- No. of projects children and young people in care and care leavers are involved with to influence planning and service delivery
- Number and per cent of Stage 1 complaints answered within 10 working days (or other period agreed with complainant)

**Outcome:** Feeling safe, secure and settled



### Strategic priorities

- More children and young people secure timely, permanence arrangements in loving homes
- Children and young people live closer to home in provision that meets their needs
- All children and young people in care and care leavers feel safe and secure in their placements.
- Our foster carers and adoptive parents feel well supported to deliver to the best care

### Priority actions

- Increase use of Kinship care
- Improve timeliness of adoption
- Implement a Fostering Recruitment Strategy
- Ensure sufficient supply of good quality placements for children in care and care leavers
- Provide more placements in and closer to the borough
- Increase number of in-house foster placements that can support a range of ages/needs
- Ensure family contact in care planning
- Early identification of appropriate education
- Improve placement stability
- Improve access to therapeutic support services for families
- Reconfigure accommodation support offer, particularly for children aged 16+ (Placement and Sufficiency Strategy)

### Measuring impact

- Long-term stability: per cent children in care who have been looked after continuously for 2.5+ years who were living in the same placement for 2+ years, or are placed for adoption
- Short term stability: per cent of latest children in care cohort who have had 3 or more placements in the year
- per cent of children who ceased to be looked after due to a special guardianship order
- Number and per cent of children who ceased to be looked after due to adoption

- Permanency plans in place within x weeks of 2nd care plan review (cumulative)
- Number of registered foster carers in Southwark
- Proportion of foster carers receiving Empathic Behaviour Management training
- Proportion of adoptive parents receiving training
- Proportion of adoptive parents with post-adoption support plans
- The average time in days between a local authority receiving court authority to place a child and the local authority deciding on a match to an adoptive family.
- Average time between a child entering care and moving in with its adoptive family, for children who have been adopted (days)
- per cent Children who wait less than 18 months between entering care and moving in with their adoptive family
- No. of in house, in borough carers
- No. and per cent of children in care in placements over 20 miles from home
- per cent of children in care placed in residential care

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**Outcome:** Being happy and in best health



### **Strategic priorities**

- All children and young people have access to health and wellbeing services that meet their needs
- Those with disabilities are well supported to transition to adult services
- To work in partnership across the CCG, Public Health, Education and Social Care to deliver the most effective services for children in care and care leavers

### **Priority actions**

- Increase access to mental health and wellbeing support for children in care and care leavers
- All children and young people have an up-to-date health assessment and outcomes are achieved
- All children and young people have up to date immunisations and dental checks
- Children with disabilities are well supported to transition between children's and adult's care services
- Those placed outside of the borough receive the same high level of health service provision as those placed in and close to the borough
- All care leavers have access to their health records

### **Measuring impact**

- Percentage of children in care whose immunisations were up to date
- Percentage children who have been in care for at least 12 months who had their annual health assessment
- Percentage of children who have been in care for at least 12 months who had their teeth checked by a dentist
- Number and per cent of children in care aged 5-16 who have been looked after for at least 12 months with an SDQ score in the last 12 months

- Number and per cent of children aged 5-16 who have been in care for at least 12 months without an SDQ score in the last 12 months
- Average SDQ score of children aged 5-16 who have been in care for at least 12 months and have an SDQ score in the last 12 months
- Percentage children aged 5-16 who have been in care for at least 12 months and have an SDQ score in the last 12 months whose score is a concern (a score of 17 or over)
- Percentage of children in care identified as having a substance misuse problem during the year
- Percentage of children in care identified as having a substance misuse problem during the year who received intervention
- Number of children in care who are pregnant
- Number of teenage children in care parents

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## Outcome - Getting the most from education

*This is my home, I don't want to move to a family, I don't want to move to foster care, I want to complete my GCSE's and stay in my children's home*

### Strategic priorities

- Narrow the attainment gap between children in care and their peers
- Increase education outcomes at Key Stage 2
- Improve education stability at Key Stage 4

### Priority actions

- All children and young people eligible have in-date Personal Education Plans and outcomes are complete
- More children and young people achieving expected outcomes at key stage 2 and 4
- Children in care have good school attendance (over 90 per cent)
- All children in care attend an Ofsted rated good school

### Measuring impact

- Percentage children in care of statutory school age who are missing education
- Percentage children in care of statutory school age with an in-date PEP
- Percentage children in care achieving 5 A\*-C grades or equivalent
- Percentage children in care who were attending a school that was assessed as inadequate
- Percentage children in care achieving Level 4 in Reading at Key Stage 2
- Percentage children in care achieving Level 4 in Writing at Key Stage 2
- Percentage children in care achieving Level 4 in Maths at Key Stage 2
- Percentage children in care achieving Level 4 in Reading, Writing and Maths at KS2
- Percentage of sessions missed due to authorised and unauthorised absences from school



## Outcome- Avoiding harmful risks

***You should learn what do when you feel the worst, and teach how to build a social network, socially anxious YP are more at risk***

### Strategic priorities

- Children and young people are diverted from criminal activity
- Reduce number of children and young people who come into care as a result of arrest
- Reduce the number of children and young people missing from care
- improve access to emotional wellbeing, drug and alcohol and sexual health services
- Ensure young people who have been in care are not at risk of homelessness

### Priority actions

- To reduce the number of children and young people missing from care and school
- To reduce the number of children and young people with cautions and convictions
- To deliver the Child Sexual Exploitation Strategy (CSE) and Action Plan

### Measuring impact

- No. children missing in the month
- Rate of first time entrants (aged 10-17 years) to the Youth Justice System per 100,000 of 10-17 population
- Rate of custody use: the number of custodial sentences per 1,000 young people (aged 10-17) in the population
- Rate of re-offending of young people

## Outcome – preparing for independence

*She's not doing much [PA]; sorting out my bursary. She knows I can cope on my own. It would be nice if she popped around sometimes, just for a chat and to see what's going on*

*The way they prepare you for independence: Not just your laundry, but who to go to if your wall caves in, or a burglary.*

### Strategic priorities

- All young people leave care ready to live independently as happy and productive citizens, knowing the door is open if guidance and support is needed.
- All care leavers are in education, employment and/or training
- All care leavers are in suitable accommodation

### Priority actions

- To develop an enhanced Southwark 'offer' for young people preparing for and leaving care
- To deliver effective Pathway Planning, ensuring young people are fully engaged and have ownership of their plans
- To ensure access to a range of suitable accommodation options which meet the varying needs of young people and prepare them for independence
- For all care leavers to feel safe and secure in their accommodation
- Care leavers sustain council tenancies
- Health needs of care leavers are clearly assessed, prioritised and met

### Measuring impact

- Percentage of care leavers in Employment, Education and/or Training
- Percentage of care leavers in higher education
- Percentage of care leavers in suitable accommodation
- Percentage of care leavers in custody
- Annual care leavers feedback survey
- Number of care leavers Staying Put
- Proportion of care leavers participating in Southwark apprenticeship

<b>Item No.</b> 11.	<b>Classification:</b> Open	<b>Date:</b> 2 November 2015	<b>Meeting Name:</b> Corporate Parenting Committee
<b>Report title:</b>		Corporate Parenting Committee – Work Plan 2015/16	
<b>Ward(s) or groups affected:</b>		All	
<b>From:</b>		Director, Children’s Social Care	

## RECOMMENDATION

1. That the corporate parenting committee review the work plan for 2015/16 as set out in paragraph 3 of the report.

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

### Role and function of the corporate parenting committee

2. The constitution for the municipal year 2015/2016 records the corporate parenting committee’s role and functions as follows:
  1. To secure real and sustained improvements in the life chances of looked after children, and to work within an annual programme to that end.
  2. To develop, monitor and review a corporate parenting strategy and work plan.
  3. To seek to ensure that the life chances of looked after children are maximised in terms of health, educational attainment, and access to training and employment, to aid the transition to a secure and productive adulthood.
  4. To develop and co-ordinate a life chances strategy and work plan to improve the life chances of Southwark looked after children.
  5. To recommend ways in which more integrated services can be developed across all council departments, schools and the voluntary sector to lead towards better outcomes for looked after children.
  6. To ensure that mechanisms are in place to enable looked after children and young people to play an integral role in service planning and design, and that their views are regularly sought and acted upon.
  7. To ensure performance monitoring systems are in place, and regularly review performance data to ensure sustained performance improvements in outcomes for looked after children.
  8. To receive an annual report on the adoption and fostering services to monitor their effectiveness in providing safe and secure care for looked after children.
  9. To report to the council’s cabinet on a twice yearly basis.
  10. To make recommendations to the relevant cabinet decision maker where responsibility for that particular function rests with the cabinet.
  11. To report to the scrutiny sub-committee with responsibility for children’s services after each meeting.
  12. To appoint non-voting co-opted members.

## **KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION**

3. The corporate parenting committee review and update the work plan each meeting.

### **2 November 2015**

- Annual report on fostering services
- Annual report on adoption services
- Feedback from autumn session on children going missing from care
- Update on looked after children strategy (following presentation to 13 July 2015 meeting)
- Audit of commissioning arrangements (as discussed under item “a public health approach to promoting the health and wellbeing of looked after children” considered at 13 July 2015 meeting)
- Update on designated doctor appointment
- Care leavers and transition to adulthood
- Update on take-up of free swim and gym.

### **23 February 2016**

- Report back on St. Christopher’s Project in order to review the process (due February 2016)
- Annual virtual head teacher report.

### **Items in the programme 2015/16**

- Foster care training available, including foster carers experience
- Analysis of children out of borough who go missing and the numbers that actually return to their home
- Specific data that the committee should monitor to be aware of in order to promote placement stability
- Two or three examples/case studies of instability that has arisen in placements
- A readiness for school evaluation and clarification at the point at which the child/young persons enters care
- Autism Strategy – to review progress
- Transition from care to independent living – report back on outcome of review of semi-independent living/supported housing
- Innovation Projects.

### **Corporate Parenting Committee Meetings with SpeakerBox**

4. SpeakerBox, established in 2005, ensures that the views of looked after children and care leavers are used to influence decision making that affects their care and support. Representing children and young people between 8 and 24 years the group also provides a peer to peer networking support system for looked after children. The programme is operated independently and run by the young people themselves, although it is supported by the council’s children services team, senior managers and councillors.
5. The committee are due to meet with SpeakerBox in October 2015 and 16 February 2016.

**Community impact statement**

6. The work of the corporate parenting committee contributes to community cohesion and stability.

**Resource implications**

7. There are no specific implications arising from this report.

**BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

<b>Background Papers</b>	<b>Held At</b>	<b>Contact</b>
Minutes of meetings of Corporate Parenting Committee	Constitutional Team 160 Tooley Street London SE1 2QH	Paula Thornton 020 7525 4395
<b>Web link:</b> <a href="http://modern.gov.southwark.gov.uk/ieListMeetings.aspx?CId=129&amp;Year=0">http://modern.gov.southwark.gov.uk/ieListMeetings.aspx?CId=129&amp;Year=0</a>		

**AUDIT TRAIL**

<b>Lead Officer</b>	Rory Patterson, Director, Children's Social Care	
<b>Report Author</b>	Paula Thornton, Constitutional Officer	
<b>Version</b>	Final	
<b>Dated</b>	20 October 2015	
<b>Key Decision?</b>	No	
<b>CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER</b>		
<b>Officer Title</b>	<b>Comments Sought</b>	<b>Comments included</b>
Director of Law and Democracy	No	No
Strategic Director of Finance and Governance	No	No
<b>Cabinet Member</b>	No	No
<b>Date final report sent to Constitutional Team</b>	20 October 2015	

**CORPORATE PARENTING DISTRIBUTION LIST (OPEN)****MUNICIPAL YEAR 2015-16****NOTE:** Original held by Constitutional Team; all amendments/queries to  
Paula Thornton Tel: 020 7525 4395

Name	No of copies	Name	No of copies
<b>Membership</b>		<b>Constitutional Team</b>	
Councillor Victoria Mills (Chair)	1	Paula Thornton	10
Councillor Evelyn Akoto	1		
Councillor Jasmine Ali	1		
Councillor Lorraine Lauder MBE	1		
Councillor Eliza Mann	1	<b>Total:</b>	28
Councillor Kath Whittam	1		
Councillor Kieron Williams	1	<b>Dated:</b> 1 October 2015	
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Alasdair Smith	1		
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Sarah Feasey	1		