

Corporate Parenting Committee

Tuesday 8 November 2016

2.00 pm

Ground Floor Meeting Room G01B, 160 Tooley Street, London SE1 2QH

Membership

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

Reserves

Councillor Adele Morris

INFORMATION FOR MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

Access to information

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Contact

Paula Thornton 020 7525 4395 or email: paula.thornton@southwark.gov.uk

Members of the committee are summoned to attend this meeting

Eleanor Kelly

Chief Executive

Date: 31 October 2016



Corporate Parenting Committee

Tuesday 8 November 2016

2.00 pm

Ground Floor Meeting Room G01B, 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

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 dispensation in respect of any item of business to be considered at this meeting.

5. MINUTES

1 - 4

To approve as a correct record the minutes of the open section of the meeting held on 12 July 2016.

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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: 31 October 2016



Corporate Parenting Committee

MINUTES of the OPEN section of the Corporate Parenting Committee held on Tuesday 12 July 2016 at 2.00 pm at the Council Offices, 160 Tooley Street, London SE1 2QH.

PRESENT:	Councillor Victoria Mills (Chair) Councillor Evelyn Akoto Councillor Jasmine Ali Councillor Helen Dennis Councillor Kath Whittam Councillor Kieron Williams (Vice-chair) Florence Emakpose (Co-opted Member)
OFFICER SUPPORT:	David Quirke-Thornton, Director of Children's and Adults Services Alasdair Smith, Director, Children and Families Simon Mitchell, Senior Commissioning Manager Dr. Stacy John-Legere, Designated Doctor Angela Brown, Designated Nurse Rachel Howard, Performance and Quality Assurance Lead, Children's and Adults' Services Vanessa White, Head of Service, Permanence, Children's and Adults' Services

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Barbara Hills.

2. CONFIRMATION OF VOTING MEMBERS

The members listed as present were confirmed as the voting members for the meeting.

3. ELECTION OF A VICE-CHAIR

RESOLVED:

That Councillor Kieron Williams be elected as vice-chair of the corporate parenting

committee for the 2016/17 municipal year.

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 meetings held on 23 February and 22 March 2016 be approved as a correct record and signed by the chair.

7. SOUTHWARK'S ALL AGE AUTISM STRATEGY AND HOW THIS IMPACTS LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN - UPDATE

RESOLVED:

1. That a 'deep dive' report be received to the November meeting relating to 3 to 5 children identified on the autistic spectrum, so that the committee can examine the processes followed for these particular cases.
2. That the committee also receive an update to the November meeting on the requested audit of the numbers of Southwark looked after children and care leavers with autism. This report should set out a way forward from the social care and educational perspective in response to the committee's request for additional information.
3. That officers also include within the November report, benchmarking and examples of other authorities that have done well in this area.

8. FOSTER CARE TRAINING

RESOLVED:

1. That the committee receive an update report to its March 2017 meeting, including progress on the workshops planned with Southwark virtual schools on the secure base model and involvement of wider family members.
2. That in reference to the on-going evaluation and surveys that are sent to carers 9 months following interviews, that the committee receive a report to its November meeting on the results produced from this next data gathering exercise.
3. That the committee receive an update to its November meeting in respect of the

referrals on sexual health and care link (all ages, also including earlier age groups). This update should set the numbers involved, reasons and some commentary.

9. UPDATE ON CARE SERVICE RESPONSE TO ISSUES RAISED BY SPEAKERBOX

RESOLVED:

1. That the committee accepts the further response of the care service to the issues raised by Speakerbox at its meeting with the corporate parenting committee on 27 October 2015.
2. That the committee be sent details of the gardening project that will be taking place in August 2016.
3. That in an effort to promote more contact with young people, the director of children and families look an opportunity for the committee to meet the young people (perhaps have dinner) to enable informal and relaxed discussions.
4. That the committee receive a report to its November meeting on the feedback to the young people.

10. INNOVATIONS PROJECTS

RESOLVED:

1. That the work of two innovation projects be noted and that the committee consider a report on their evaluation at their November meeting.
2. That officers email to members of the corporate parenting committee a copy of the Pause project presentation.

11. VERBAL UPDATE TO ISSUES ARISING FROM 22 MARCH 2016 PRESENTATION TO COMMITTEE - PLACEMENT STABILITY

The director of children and families responded to the queries listed from the 22 March 2016 meeting of the corporate parenting committee.

RESOLVED:

That the committee see a draft or final version of the front loaded/early intervention offer, to promote and support placement stability to its November meeting.

12. CORPORATE PARENTING COMMITTEE - WORK PLAN 2016/17

RESOLVED:

1. That officers and the chair of corporate parenting committee review the work plan; following which the draft agenda for the November 2016 to be circulated to members of the committee for comment.

2. That officers establish the annual reports that are due to the committee and that these be programmed in the work plan.
3. That in addition to the reports added to the November meeting, that an item on the corporate parenting principles also be received to this meeting (resulting from legislative changes).

Meeting ended at 4.10 pm.

CHAIR:

DATED:

Item No. 6.	Classification: Open	Date: 8 November 2016	Meeting Name: Corporate Parenting Committee
Report title:		Looked After Children and Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD)	
Ward(s) or groups affected:		All	
From:		Director, Children and Families	

RECOMMENDATION

1. That the corporate parenting committee note the report.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

2. In July 2016 the corporate parenting committee considered further the situation of Looked After Children (LAC) and Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD). It requested as follows:
 - That a 'deep dive' report be received to the November meeting relating to 3 to 5 children identified on the autistic spectrum, so that the committee can examine the processes followed for these particular cases.
 - That the committee also receive an update to the November meeting on the requested audit of the numbers of Southwark LAC and care leavers with autism. This report should set out a way forward from the social care and educational perspective in response to the committee's request for additional information.
 - That officers also include within the November report, benchmarking and examples of other authorities that have done well in this area.
3. This report describes progress in relation to all the above actions.
4. In Southwark 16.7% of pupils attending Southwark schools are identified as having a special educational need or disability, around a quarter of those have a statutory plan of SEN (either statement or EHC plan) the remainder are receiving SEN support (previously school action and school action plus). 44% of the children with a statutory plan have ASD identified as their primary need.
5. In Southwark there are around 480 children looked after currently. They are a highly vulnerable group who are over represented in SEND with poor outcomes across many outcome measures in health, education and social care. A large proportion of LAC have some kind of special educational need or disability.
6. 52% of all LAC have some kind of special educational need, and of these 24% have a statement or EHCP. The most frequent reason for a statement or EHCP within this cohort is for emotional and behavioural difficulties at 38%. By comparison the number with a statement or EHCP with the primary need being ASD is 8%, compared to 44% for the non LAC cohort. The gap between 44 and 8 percent may be explained by smaller numbers in the LAC cohort - we have 23-

27 of 480 with a diagnosis of ASD in the LAC cohort at our last check in April 2016 which is around 5-7% still higher than the population average of 1%.

7. One third of LAC with a statement or EHCP are female which is a higher than in the non-LAC cohort. Of the LAC after with a statement or EHCP, 71% are assessed as making progress in their setting.
8. As with many London boroughs, a significant proportion (71%) of Southwark's LAC are placed outside the Borough. 25% are placed more than 20 miles away. For LAC with a statement or EHCP, 79% are placed out of borough. Whilst many will not be attending Southwark schools or accessing Southwark community services, nevertheless the Local Authority and CCG remain responsible for their health, education and care needs.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

Deep Dive

9. Four cases have been selected for this deep dive review. They range in age from two under the age of five; one middle school years; and one is 17 years old. Three of the children are currently looked after and two of these placed out of borough. The other is no longer looked after and lives with his permanent family. Below are short pen-pictures of the children.

Child A, Male, born March 2013, became looked in February 2015 after being taken into police protection and was subsequently diagnosed with ASD in July 2015 when aged 2 years and four months.

10. Following his admission to care and diagnosis, A received a high level of support. He lived with the same foster carers throughout his time in care, and they had extensive experience of caring for children with additional needs. He received Play Based intervention from Southwark CAMHS. He also received community based services from the area in which he was placed, with LB Greenwich providing portage, speech therapy and physiotherapy.
11. Whilst he was looked after the LAC health team maintained on-going involvement and his health needs were regularly reviewed. Child A is no longer a looked after child, he was placed permanently with his adoptive maternal grandparents under a Special Guardianship Order. As well as being very experienced foster carers themselves, they have extensive experience of ASD. A is thriving in their care.

Child B, Female, born October 2012, became looked after in March 2013 after being taken into police protection, and was diagnosed with ASD in March 2015 when aged 2 years and five months. CU is placed in borough with Connected Persons foster carers.

12. After she had become looked after, B was seen by paediatrician at Sunshine House. In June 2014 following a Review Health Assessment significant speech and language delay and social communication concerns were identified and B was referred to speech and language team, Communication Playgroup, and SEN support. B was subsequently referred to the Social Communication Clinic in September 2014, and was seen for diagnosis in March 2015.
13. Since the diagnosis, B and her carers have been provided with a range of support services. Her carers have benefitted from help given by early years

autism support team and have completed at least two autism parenting courses which they have found informative and helpful. The organisation Contact a Family have provided help and signposted to National Autistic Society and website. She displays a range of autistic behaviours including hand clapping and spinning, she is now able to make better eye contact and, she has been taught some Makaton, the sign language, which helps her communicate.

Child C, Male, born January 2007, diagnosed April 2009 when aged 2 years and 3 months and became looked after in November 2012 aged 5 years and 10 months.

14. C experienced an adverse start in life. After receiving the diagnosis support was offered, this included portage, the social communication review clinic, DLA, the special needs dentist, and the autism support team. However, his mother withdrew from the support and issues then arose in relation to his poor attendance at pre-school and general well-being.
15. When he became looked after C was placed with very experienced foster carers in Kent. He has remained with the same carers since he became looked after and they have become his long term carers. They have given C consistent care, supporting him with a highly structured schedule both at home and at school, his carers use symbols and signing to support their communication. C responds really well to the order and structure that his carers provide. The significance of having this consistency and stability of care can not be over stated. He has a gift for music and the foster carers support his twice weekly piano lessons.

Child D, Female, born July 1999, diagnosed July 2003 at age 4 years, became looked after in March 2015 aged 15 years and 8 months having been supported with regular periods of respite care from 2008.

16. Following diagnosis D was seen regularly by community paediatric service. Onward referrals were made to child psychiatry services in 2009, and a referral was made to allergy specialist in 2010. D's health needs were reviewed annually by pediatricians at Sunshine House. Over the years following diagnosis she received SLT, DLA, and special needs health visitor input.
17. D was also supported with short-term breaks from January 2008 and when she became looked after in 2015 she moved to live at the same care home where she had been visiting for breaks. This supported continuity and consistency of care. D appears to have settled and made some progress, and she is managing to access the curriculum at school.
18. The review has considered the health, education and social care dimensions of the services provided, and the findings are organised around the NICE guidance, both in terms of the age profile, and the clinical pathways:
 1. First identification of concern re autism
 2. Diagnosis
 3. Post-diagnostic support
 4. Education : EHCP/SEN support
 5. OOB support – where relevant

19. In undertaking this deep-dive, the health and social care records of these children have been reviewed, and the views of social workers and IROs have been sought.
20. The findings are that once children become looked after, the services they receive to address their ASD have been positive. This is a small cohort, so it is not possible to generalise, however, it is clear that for these 4 children, once they became looked after, their health needs were responded to very positively. They also have had very positive placement experiences, with a strong sense of consistency and continuity of care.
21. The issues in relation to identification and support arose for these children during time when they were living with their families in the community. The issue for the wider system appears to be how professionals recognise the signs and symptoms of ASD pre-diagnosis while the children are living in the community. The two youngest children (A & B) became looked after in an emergency having been taken into police protection, and they were diagnosed after coming into care. The older two children (B & C) who lived within their families and became looked after many years after diagnosis, experienced neglect and in these cases services had been offered, but that they were not always readily accepted because of the parents unresolved needs.
22. The cases reviewed illustrate good and timely access to services provided from the LAC Health team. Some of the children who are placed out-of-borough continue to access the paediatric service at Sunshine House. This is good practice as it allows for continuity of care and a better known quality of support. Typically the level of support and access to services for those children placed out-of-borough and accessing local services is more difficult to evidence as often, their health reports are not routinely copied to the Southwark LAC health team.
23. This poses a particular problem when the children have moved placements. In response to this identified gap in need, GSTT has appointed 0.5 full time equivalent LAC nurse with remit of Southwark out-of-borough LAC via the Children and Young People's Health Partnership Project (CHYPP). We will thus be actively looking at access to services and improvement in health and wellbeing for Southwark LAC; with particular significance to those with additional needs and vulnerabilities.

Update on the requested audit of the numbers of Southwark looked after children and care leavers with autism and way forward from the social care and educational perspective in response to the committee's request for additional information.

24. Following the above deep dive, further work is to be undertaken to consider care leavers with autism. A review of 22 young people looked after aged 17 seen for health assessments identified two who had been diagnosed with ASD. These young people are at a key stage of transition into their adult lives and it will be important to ensure we are managing this critical transition well for them.
25. It will be important to ensure there is sufficient provision for these young people with ASD diagnosis. They typically struggle to cope in semi-independence or on their own independently, many of them have previously been placed in highly structured or specialist placements, and joint working between children's services and adult social services is critical to their successful transition.

26. Work by Southwark Commissioning Service undertaken in relation to Care Leavers in supported or semi-independent accommodation has shown only two specifically with ASD. It is quite possible that this is an underestimate. Care Leavers with ASD are also care for in Staying Put arrangements but it hasn't been possible to review all these placements to understand the prevalence of ASD in this group.
27. Officers from Commissioning, Southwark Virtual School and Health Services as well as Southwark Care Service will be attend the corporate parenting committee to answer questions and consider what work is possible in exploring this area further.

Benchmarking and examples of other authorities that have done well in this area

28. No benchmarking data is available nationally around ASD from other councils. The only nationally available data is around education health and care plans and not the conditions within those plans.

Conclusions

29. The deep dive has given some assurance that when children become looked after, there are good system in place to assess and understand their needs in relation to ASD and ensure young people have the help they need. When they get older, and come care leavers, the visibility of this group of young people is less clear in our system and our services may wish to consider how they can strengthen this aspect of their practice to continue to build on what seems very good practice while the children and young people are looked after.

Community impact statement

30. Where appropriate children who become looked after are best placed to remain in their borough or within a 20 miles radius of their home where they have an identity and sense of belonging, this in itself contributes to placement stability. Raising awareness of ASD, the early signs and the symptoms, will support early diagnosis and the provision of timely and effective support arrangements. This will have an important impact on the community by enabling more children and young people who need to be looked after to be cared for within or near their Southwark communities.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
None		

APPENDICES

No.	Title
None	

AUDIT TRAIL

Lead Officer	Alasdair Smith, Director, Children and Families		
Report Author	Tom Savory, Children’s and Adults Department and Stacy John-Legere, Designated Doctor		
Version	Final		
Dated	27 October 2016		
Key Decision?	No		
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER			
Officer Title		Comments Sought	Comments Included
Director of Law and Democracy		No	No
Strategic Director of Finance and Governance		No	No
Cabinet Member		No	No
Date final report sent to Constitutional Team			26 October 2016

Item No. 7.	Classification: Open	Date: 8 November 2016	Meeting Name: Corporate Parenting Committee
Report title:		Innovation Bid: Care Leavers	
Ward(s) or groups affected:		All	
From:		Director, Children and Families	

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the corporate parenting committee notes the Innovation Bid and considers any advice and support it may offer.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

2. In October 2013 the Department for Education (DfE) launched the Social Care Innovation Fund and associated Programme to act as a catalyst for developing more effective ways of supporting vulnerable children. The programme was seeking to inspire whole system change so that in five years' time we achieve:
 - Better life chances for children receiving help from the social care system
 - Stronger incentives and mechanisms for innovation, experimentation and replication of successful new approaches and
 - Better value for money across children's social care.
3. On 9 February 2016 the council's cabinet agreed the Children in Care and Care Leavers Strategy 2016-19. The first priority of this is "children and young people have a say and their voice is heard".
4. On 7 July Catch 22, in partnership with Southwark submitted a bid to transform its service to care leavers to significantly improve outcomes for them. There were over 300 such applications. The Catch 22/Southwark application has reached the final stage with around 20 others. A final submission will be made by 3 November 2016 and following an expert panel process, we expect a final decision about funding to be made by the end of December 2016.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

5. Catch 22 is a national charity with expertise in care leavers, innovation and and challenging social issues around young people. It runs the National Care Leavers Benchmarking Forum, successful innovation projects around children in need and young people at risk of sexual exploitation as well as having recently published a study on youth violence and book on the future of children's services.
6. Southwark has recently made changes to how its care service is organised to dedicate practice groups to care leavers and late entrants to care (16+). This was the first stage in a process to develop better outcomes with more dedicated focus on this group.

7. Catch22 and Southwark want to create a new way of working, co designing an innovative model of service delivery for young people in and leaving care. Combining our respective experience as providers, innovators, and commissioners, we hope to design a ground breaking new delivery vehicle (NDV – Care Leavers Partnership/Trust) that allows more flexible, creative and inclusive ways of working with young people to achieve improved outcomes.
8. The NDV would be a separate vehicle, owned and run by Catch22 and Southwark. It will allow the freedom to design and implement a flexible and responsive service based on the operational principles of being more relational, unlocking capacity and ensuring local accountability. Young people will be involved both in co-designing the service as well as in the NDV itself; this is a key innovation of the model.
9. The aim is to improve the poor outcomes of children and young people in and leaving care. It is known that they are disproportionately likely to end up in custody, be NEET and have unmet mental health needs. It is recognised that a step change is needed to improve outcomes. In addition to the negative life long impact for many care leavers, there are significant cost implications for Southwark who end up footing the bill as a consequence of these failings at a later date.
10. Service design is usually highly specified, based on traditional delivery models that have not evolved to meet the needs of today's young people. At the same time service users are not given the opportunity to say what they need. There are currently too many transitions, based on specified role rather than who is best placed to meet need, preventing relational continuity.
11. Co-designing a leaving care service as a joint venture owned by young people, Catch22 and Southwark Council and extending the age range to work with older young people in care based on need and who is best placed to provide support, will impact on the priorities of rethinking social care and transitions to adulthood providing the opportunity for significant impact.
12. At this stage we cannot predict what will emerge from the co-design process. Based on initial invitation with young people, share experience and workshop discussions we expect to establish:
 - A flexible, personalised and responsive service (not 9 to 5)
 - Young people's lead social enterprise
 - Innovative solutions to NEET and poor housing e.g. building on Catch 22 peer landlord scheme and care to work models
 - Creative use of volunteers using models developed by catch 22 including job coaches trades people and peer support to develop resilience
 - Intensive fostering to support the most vulnerable in our children
 - Improved health provision and links to CAMHS
 - Use of social media and apps.
13. The plan is to deliver a range of measurable improved outcomes for care leavers based on being and stay safe, having some good and secure to live, something positive to do and being able to do it. This includes getting more people to work, reducing offending and reoffending, cutting the spring and an improved health and well-being. The negative outcomes of caring currently costs, both immediately and in the medium and longer term, both young people

personally and the council financially and in relation to the fairer future it wishes for its residents.

Community impact statement

14. This projects will impact positively on all communities where the young people live enabling them to be able to remain within those communities and be a more positive constructive part of them.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
None		

AUDIT TRAIL

Lead Officer	Alisdair Smith, Director, Children and Families		
Report Author	Alisdair Smith, Director, Children and Families		
Version	Final		
Dated	26 October 2016		
Key Decision?	No		
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER			
Officer Title		Comments sought	Comments included
Director of Law and Democracy		No	No
Strategic Director of Finance and Governance		No	No
Cabinet Member		No	No
Date final report sent to Constitutional Team			26 October 2016

Item No. 8.	Classification: Open	Date: 8 November 2016	Meeting Name: Corporate Parenting Committee
Report title:		Independent Reviewing Officer Annual Report 2015/16	
Ward(s) or groups affected:		All	
From:		Director, Children and Families	

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the corporate parenting committee notes the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) annual report.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

2. An annual report of the independent reviewing officer (IRO) service for looked after children is required in guidance arising from the Adoption and Children Act 2002.
3. This report must be presented to the strategic director of children's and adults services, the lead member for children and the corporate parenting committee. The report contains a summary of work completed by Southwark IRO Service for the period 2015/16.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

4. Independent reviewing officer's are dedicated to improving outcomes for looked after children (LAC). They have a unique insight into every looked after child and are committed to driving improved outcomes for LAC.
5. The IRO service is dedicated to ensuring good outcomes for LAC are achieved and enables the corporate parenting committee to hold services to account.
6. This report contains a summary of work completed by Southwark IRO Service for the period 2015/16 as set out in Appendix 1.

Community impact statement

7. The decision to note this report has been judged to have no or a very small impact on local people and communities.
8. The work of the IROs is intended to improve the outcome for looked after children.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
None		

APPENDICES

No.	Title
Appendix 1	Independent Reviewing Officers Annual Report 2015/16

AUDIT TRAIL

Lead Officer	Alisdair Smith, Director, Children and Families		
Report Author	Jackie Cook, Head Of Social Work Improvement And Quality Assurance		
Version	Final		
Dated	27 October 2016		
Key Decision?	No		
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER			
Officer Title		Comments Sought	Comments included
Director of Law and Democracy		No	No
Strategic Director of Finance and Governance		No	No
Cabinet Member		No	No
Date final report sent to Constitutional Officer			27 October 2016

**London Borough of Southwark
Independent Reviewing Officers
Annual Report
2015-16**

Report by: Jackie Cook

Head of Social Work Improvement and Quality assurance

August 2016

1. Introduction

An Annual Report of the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) Service for Looked After Children is required in accordance with guidance arising from The Adoption and Children Act 2002. The report has to be presented to the Director of Children's Services, the Lead member for Children and the Corporate Parenting Panel.

This report contains a summary of work completed by Southwark IRO Service for the period 1st April 2015 – 31st March 2016.

2. Legal Context

- 2.1 Section 118 of the Adoption and Children Act 2002 introduced the statutory role of the IRO; with a duty to monitor the Local authority's functions by means of regular statutory reviews of the Care Plan of looked after children. The IRO was given the power to refer a case to the Children's and Families Court Advisory Support Service (CAFCASS) if any dispute could not be resolved within the Local Authority.
- 2.2 The Children and Young Persons Act 2008 expanded the role of the IRO from just reviewing the child's Care Plan to monitoring the child's case on an ongoing basis.
- 2.3 New regulations (Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations) were issued in 2010 and these are accompanied by 4 sets of statutory guidance including the 'IRO Handbook', which came into force in April 2011. All children in care including those on Adoption Plans or receiving short breaks are now covered by these regulations.
- 2.4 Every looked after child has a named IRO who has independent oversight of the child's case including:
 - Determining and representing the child's wishes and feelings
 - Ensuring their rights and interests are protected
 - Assessing whether the Local Authorities Care Plan for the child meets the assessed needs of the child within the timescale of the child
 - Negotiating with the social work team and managers on any identified issues arising from the Care Plan or implementation of the Care Plan and where necessary escalating unresolved concerns to an appropriate level in the Local Authority's management structure, and /or if necessary to CAFCASS.
- 2.5 The main forum through which the IRO carries out their monitoring role is the Statutory Looked After Review. These take place regularly at the following times
 - First Review within the first 28 days of the child becoming looked after
 - Second Review within 90 days
 - Subsequent Reviews at 180 day intervals
 - When a child or IRO asks for one
 - When significant events occur
- 2.6 The review should, wherever possible, take place at the child's placement. Parents, residential workers, foster carers and their support workers, social worker and the IRO are the expected attendees. Reports from other professionals such as Health, Education and CAMHS are also received. In some cases, it may be necessary to hold

a series of meetings to facilitate all professionals and views to be heard – for example where a child does not want their parents or another professional to attend a review.

2.7 The role of the IRO was reviewed by the Family Justice Review which reported in November 2011. Their conclusions in connection with IROs were as follows:

- The role of Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) is important to local authorities and they would very likely recreate it were it removed from them. The priority should be to improve the quality of the function and ensure its effectiveness and visibility.
- We recommend that local authorities should review the operation of their IRO service to ensure that it is effective. In particular they should ensure that they are adhering to guidance regarding case loads.
- We recommend that the Directors of Children's Services / Directors for Social Services and Lead Member for Children receive regular reports from the IRO on the work undertaken and its outcomes. Local Safeguarding Children Boards should also consider such reports.
- Courts would benefit from this information too alongside outcomes of care cases. The pilot recommended earlier (for courts to receive information about the outcomes for children and families on which they have adjudicated) should include information from the IRO.
- The courts and IROs need to develop more effective links. Guardians and IROs should strengthen their working relationship.

2.8 The LASPO Act 2012 came into force on 1/12/12. As a result all young people aged 16 and 17 who are remanded into custody are now regarded as looked after children. This has slightly increased the number of looked after children and has put additional pressure on the IRO service. As at 30/3/16 there were 4 young men on remand who were being reviewed out of a total of 474 looked after young people.

3. The Southwark Context

3.1 The census data in 2011 gave Southwark a population of 288,300.

3.2 Southwark is an extremely diverse borough with over 181 languages spoken in its schools (January 2008). The largest ethnic minority group is black African (mainly Nigerian and West African) which accounts for around 15.6% of the whole population. In 2010 it was estimated that 64.8% of the population was white.

3.3 Southwark has relatively high numbers of looked after children compared to other London boroughs although the number has been steadily reducing since 2013. On 30/3/16 there were 474 Children looked After in Southwark.

3.4 Southwark has an over-representation of black and dual heritage children in care. On 31/3/16 there were:

Asian	3%
Black/Black UK	46%

Dual heritage	16%
White/UK	31%
Other ethnic groups	5%

3.5 Key Challenges for Southwark Looked after Children Services

The key challenges for Southwark Looked After Children Services reflect many of the challenges faced by other Local Authorities and inner city areas.

- Following the Serious Case Review in Rochdale and other CSE cases around the country, there is increasing awareness of the risk of looked after children being targeted for Child Sexual Exploitation. This has meant that we are now reviewing the risks to all young people in care, especially where they are placed out of Southwark and where they are exhibiting other high risk behaviours such as criminal activity, running away or substance misuse.
- How to ensure that all looked after young people are in appropriate education or employment and in particular to ensure that children with Special Educational Needs receive the support and help that they need. This is especially challenging when young people are placed out of Southwark.
- The need to ensure that children are in permanent placements, including adoption, as soon as possible if they are not returning to their family.
- The need to identify sufficient local placements appropriate to the diverse needs of children and young people – especially for young people aged 16 plus.
- How to ensure that young people leaving care are fully equipped for independence and achieve good outcomes

4. Southwark IRO Service

4.1 The Southwark IRO Service is situated within the Quality Assurance Service. The Head of Quality Assurance reports to the Assistant Director, Quality and performance making IROs independent of the operational children's services management structure where allocation of resources lies. The team is based at Tooley Street.

4.2 In addition to the core function of monitoring and reviewing children's care plans, the IRO Service is also involved in:

- Meetings on individual cases
- Planning forums where policy and procedures are developed e.g. Health, Education, Participation and Professional Standards groups,
- Audit work in conjunction with other departments,
- Training and liaison with teams
- Assisting with Complaints
- Working with the commissioning team to monitor the quality of placements.

4.3 During the year IROs have:

- Assisted with development of several policies and procedures

- Provided induction training for new social workers around planning for looked after children.
- IROs have attended Health, Education, Participation and Adoption/Permanency groups.
- One IRO leads on Sexually Harmful Behaviour and chairs the SHB panel.

4.4 IROs highlight good practice by workers as well as reporting evidence of poor practice, poor standards of placements or safeguarding issues.

4.5 Permanent staff are line managed by the QA service managers. Between 2013-14 there was a service transformation and as part of this the job descriptions of chairs were revised. There is now a joint job description for IRO's and CP chairs. This means that some Looked after reviews are chaired by CP C. This is intended to reflect the journey of the child so that if a chair knows a family they can continue as an IRO if a child becomes looked after.

There are currently 13 sessional IROs who have long-arm supervision via telephone contact with the QA managers and regular group meetings.

Administrative support is provided by a full time executive officer managed by the QAU Admin Manager.

4.6 Staffing in 2015-16 consisted of:

- 5 directly employed permanent staff who act predominately as IRO's plus 6 CP conference chairs who carry out occasional LAC reviews
- 9 freelance self employed sessional workers funded by 3 full time equivalent posts. These have varying caseloads of between 14-70 children looked after.

5. PERFORMANCE

5.1 During 2015-16 the IRO team chaired and completed reports for 1235 reviews of children looked after as well as making representations, participating in staff induction and training, undertaking audits and undertaking a range of other tasks.

5.2 The IRO service makes an important contribution to good performance against key performance indicators in the National Indicator Set: C63 (Participation at Reviews) and N166 (timeliness of Reviews). They also contribute to other Performance Indicators through quality assurance and collection of data or raising issues on cases at appropriate levels to minimise poor outcome e.g. drift in care planning, placement stability, educational achievements, health appointments etc.

5.3 Performance data 2012-15

Year	2012-13	2013-4	2014-15	2015-16
Number of LAC Reviews	1599	1548	1377	1235
N166 Reviews in timescales	95.5%	96.5%	92%	87.8% (416)
C63 Participation at Reviews	95.8%	94%	94%	96.4% (1,190)

No of LAC at March 31st	565	550	503	474
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The number of looked after children continued to reduce from 2015 to 2016 and this is reflected in the reduction in looked after reviews held. The recorded performance in relation to reviews held within timescales 2015-16 was significantly worse than in the previous year. This is attributable to the impact of the change over from Carefirst to Mosaic data system in July 2015, which led to large numbers of LAC reviews being recorded on word rather than on the data system and so not included in the performance data.

5.4 PARTICIPATION

The Performance Indicator for child participation is based on the number of reviews where a child over 4 has not participated.

IROs always aim to spend time individually with children and young people prior to a review to determine their wishes and feelings, identify if they have any concerns and find out how they would like to participate in the meeting. If necessary or requested the IRO will ensure an advocate is provided to support the child or young person.

Where a child has not attended their review, the IRO will always arrange to meet children and young people at a different time, or speak to them on the phone to try and gain their views. Children or young people who have English as a second language will have an interpreter available. Children with disabilities or with communication difficulties will be supported to express their views with help of their carers or a specialist worker or advocate.

Southwark performance remains strong in involving young people in their reviews and ensuring that plans reflect their views.

In total, there were 45 reviews held in 2015-16 where a young person over 4 did not contribute to their review.

Participation at reviews 2015-16	Total
PN0 Child under 4 at date of review	159
PN1 Attendance	857
PN2 Attendance - views via advocate / IRO	19
PN3 Attendance - views via symbols	14
PN4 Attendance - without contribution	7
PN5 No attendance - views via advocate / IRO	28
PN6 No attendance - views expressed	106
PN7 No attendance - views not expressed	45
Total	1235

5.5 Distribution of review records

The statutory guidance indicates that decisions should be circulated within 5 working days and the full report within 15 working days. Distribution of Review records is the responsibility of the practice group co-ordinators within the practice groups.

6. REPRESENTATIONS AND ESCALATIONS

- 6.1 IROs seek to ensure good outcomes for children. They do this through their quality assurance role in LAC reviews e.g. by checking diets are healthy and culturally appropriate, medicals take place, foster carers attend parents evenings or read bedtime stories, check contacts with siblings take place.
- 6.2 IRO's will speak to the allocated social worker and review the Personal Education Plans (PEP's) and Health Assessments on file for children prior to reviews.
- 6.3 IROs often pick up on matters which make a difference to a child if they get overlooked for example ensuring sleepovers or school trips take place; passports are obtained so holidays are not missed; ensuring cultural and faith needs are met. They will normally do this through suggestions at reviews and encouraging carers and workers rather than via formal escalation processes and so this cannot always be visibly evident or easily quantified.
- 6.4 Where there are concerns relating to implementation of the Care Plan, resources or poor practice, IROs will initially liaise with the team and seek to resolve things informally – often by bringing reviews forward or participating in professionals meetings.
- 6.5 When a concern cannot be resolved informally each Local Authority must now have a formal 'dispute resolution' process through which an IRO can escalate their concern to the appropriate management level.
- 6.6 During 2015-16 there were 184 recorded representations and escalations to managers from IRO's concerning 178 children. The majority of the escalations were followed up within 24 hours and resolved quickly but in 9 cases the matter had to be escalated to a Head of Service or an Assistant Director to resolve.

A new data system, Mosaic, was introduced in July 2015. A feature of this system is that reporting is ordered into work flows which follow good practice guidance. This means that a LAC review cannot be written up until a Care Plan or Pathway Plan is completed. Also a Care Plan cannot be drawn up until previous documents have been completed and signed off. This has caused severe delay to IRO's and the vast majority of escalations and representations during the year have been linked to this problem. A total of 99 escalations were in connection with failure to complete a care plan or Pathway Plan – 54% of all escalations. Chasing this issue – which was often due to IT issues rather than social work issues took up a considerable amount of IRO time during the year.

The main themes of the representations made were as follows (N.B some escalations were about more than one issue) :

Care plans/pathway plans not completed on the system in good time	99
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Drift in care planning	18
Concerns re young person's safety – Missing/CSE/criminality	15
Infrequent social work visits	9
Issues around contact with family members	9
No allocated worker/sickness	8
Health issues	7
Concerns about the placement	7
Review decisions outstanding	4
Staying put arrangements	3
Life story work	1

There has been intensive work over the Summer 2016 to resolve the issues that have impacted upon LAC reviews and new, more user friendly, Mosaic forms are currently under development. These are due to come on line in Autumn 2016.

Case examples of IRO representation/escalations

- i) Child L, an unaccompanied asylum seeker, told her IRO that her social worker has not visited and she needed help with representation at appointments with the home office. The IRO reported this back and the social worker visited the young person within a day to offer assistance.
- ii) Child C was placed with extended family members. The IRO was concerned that there were multiple repairs required to the house which was undermining the placement. This was escalated up to the Director CSC and repairs were completed.
- iii) Child B has ASD and is placed in a residential unit. IRO was concerned that no life story work had been completed and requested funding to be agreed for this. In the end a social worker with life story work expertise was allocated to complete this work.

7. INVOLVEMENT AND FEEDBACK FROM STAKEHOLDERS

Speakerbox (Southwark children in care council) representatives continued to attend and contribute to the bi-monthly IRO meetings in 2015-16.

The children's rights service reviewed and updated the 'Golden rules' for social workers in 2016. This can be seen in Appendix 1. Copies of these rules will be used in social work training and have been circulated to the different service areas for display and discussion.

The Children's Rights service carried out two major consultations in 2016 – one around emotional health and resilience and another on 'Positive relationships'. These gave enormous insight into the issues that young people in care and care leavers face and were presented to the IRO group for discussion.

St Christopher's fellowship have provided a return interview service in Southwark since November 2014 and the lead workers of this project have met with the IRO group on a number of occasions.

Barnados provide advocacy for children in care and care leavers in Southwark. The advocates meet regularly with the IRO group in order to encourage IRO's to refer children where appropriate.

8. Education of CLA

The educational attainment of Looked after children is priority for the IRO service. Many of the informal and formal representations from IROs concern the provision of appropriate education to looked after children. As part of the Looked after review the IRO will always review the Personal Education Plan for the child or young person.

The CLA education team works closely with IRO's. The team attended a number of IRO meetings in 2015-16 to discuss how IRO's can work together with the education team to improve educational outcomes for children.

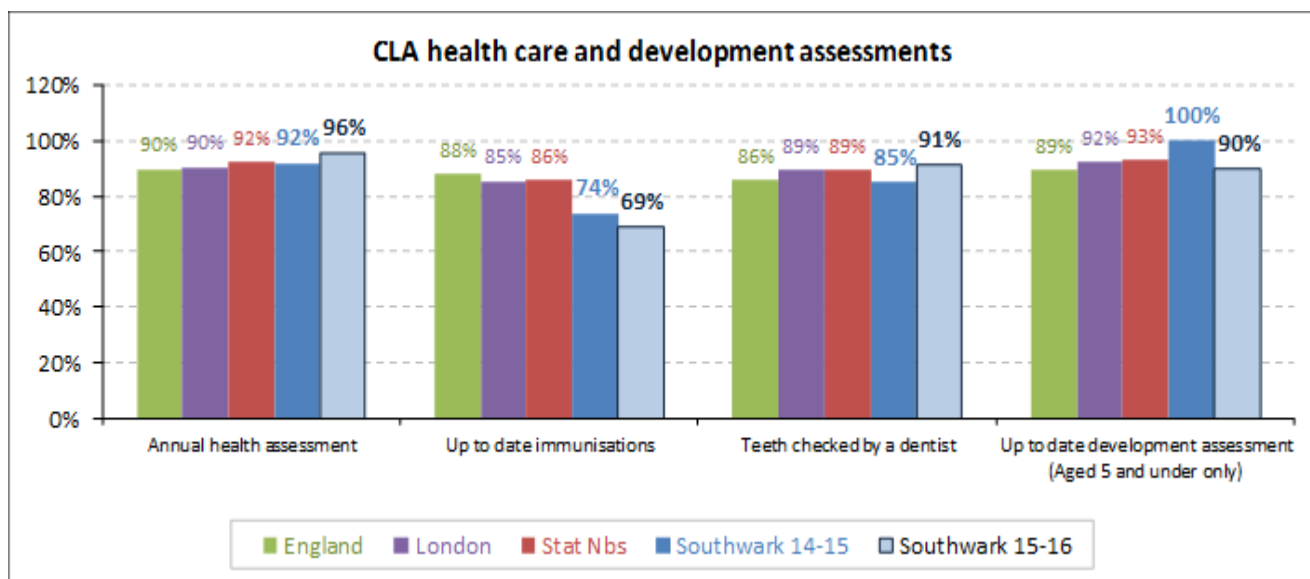
One area that continues to be problematic is the identification of education resources for children with Special Educational Needs where they are placed out of borough. In these situations the IRO's work closely with the CLA education team and the host authority but there is often a delay in identifying appropriate resources.

The completion of Personal Education Plans for children has continued to improve in 2015-16. There is a regular performance report sent out to all IRO's flagging up whether PEP's have been completed so that they can follow this up in reviews.

9. Health of CLA

- 9.1 All Looked after children should have regular assessments of their health. This is monitored by IRO's in LAC reviews.
- 9.2 The LAC community child health service carries out initial and review health assessments and immunisations, where appropriate, to support the health of looked after children.
- 9.3 The children's rights service started to organise a monthly drop in at Talfourd Place in 2014 for looked after children and care leavers. Since Summer 2015 the specialist nurse for looked after children is attending each of these drop ins and offers informal health advice and advocacy for the young people. A number of sessions have also included the Young Minds group to discuss mental health issues.
- 9.4 The table below show performance in Southwark with regards to health in 2015-16 in comparison with England, London and Statistical neighbours. The proportion of looked after children with a health assessment and dental checks has improved significantly in the last two years. However there is still work to be done in connection with immunisations.

	England (%)		London (%)		Stat (%) Nbs		Southwark (no.)					
	13-14	14-15	13-14	14-15	13-14	14-15	13-14	14-15	15-16	13-14	14-15	15-16
Cohort: children looked after at 31 March looked after for at least 12 months											363	340
Annual health assessment	88%	90%	92%	90%	94%	92%	91%	92%	96%	345	335	326
Up to date immunisations	87%	88%	84%	85%	86%	86%	70%	74%	69%	265	270	235
Teeth checked by a dentist	84%	86%	88%	89%	87%	89%	86%	85%	91%	325	310	311
Aged 5 and under											33	29
Up to date development assessment	87%	89%	93%	92%	96%	93%	92%	100%	90%	55	33	26



During 2016 our IRO group participated in a health profiling survey of Looked after children with the lead doctor. The report was submitted to the CCG board for their information. This profile will be developed and used to inform future strategic input to improve the health outcomes for Southwark's looked after children. Further work is planned to focus on those with disabilities as well as mental health disorders.

The findings for the 470 children reviewed are briefly summarised in the table below.

Age group	Autistic spectrum disorders		ADHD		ASTHMA		EPILEPSY		DIABETES		OBESITY/ Overweight	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
0 to 5	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
6 to 11	3	1	3	1	6	4	2	0	1	0	0	1
12 to 15	3	2	9	4	9	1	2	0	1	0	3	3
16 to 17	8	4	3	2	4	2	1	0	0	0	2	2
Total	15	8	15	7	20	8	5	0	2	0	5	7
Both genders	23		22		28		5		2		12	

The most common disorder noted was asthma, with autistic spectrum disorders and ADHD being the next most common disorders. It is hoped to build on this interesting study in the coming year.

10. Safety of CLA

During 2015-16 a total of 128 missing and/or absent episodes were recorded for looked after children – of these 74 were 'missing' episodes and 54 were 'absent episodes' (whereabouts known).

Southwark's recording of missing and absence has significantly improved over the last 2 years which has led to a marked increase in the numbers recorded. (Comparable figures in 14-15 were 50 missing and 20 absent). We have commissioned St Christopher's to provide independent 'return interviews' for children who go missing or absent. There are now accessible risk assessment tools for missing children and children at risk of CSE on Mosaic and this has much improved analysis of risk by social workers.

IRO's are always informed where young people looked after go missing and are invited to contribute to missing from care strategy meetings and planning meetings.

The Children's rights service led on research in 2014 into children who go missing from care. 15 young people were interviewed about their experiences and reasons for running away. One key finding of this review was that none of the young people who went missing recalled having a return interview to find out the reasons for their running away.

Southwark now commission St Christopher's fellowship to provide a return interview service for children missing from home and care. It is expected that this will strengthen the response to children who go missing and enable us to do more work to prevent running episodes.

There are a number of initiatives in Southwark to identify and work effectively with young people looked after who may be at risk of sexual exploitation:

Southwark is currently working with STEPS B on a research project to look at the effectiveness of multi-systemic therapy in working with young people exhibiting sexually harmful behaviour. An IRO sits on the steering group for this and links to the whole IRO group.

A CSE protocol has been rolled out with clear referral pathways. All young people who may be at risk of CSE are now referred into the MASH for full assessment and to ensure that their cases are effectively tracked.

11. Children placed out of borough

There continues to be focus on children who are placed in residential units out of London. Southwark has a high proportion of children who are placed more than 20 miles out of the borough. The Director of Children's Social Care has to sign off these placements and receives a regular report of these children. These placements are subject of careful scrutiny by the children's social workers and IRO's.

IRO's feed into this process by giving their views of the safety of the young people placed out of borough and to ensure that this is factored into the care planning process.

The Children's rights and participation worker visited a large number of children placed in distant residential units in 2014-15 to ensure that their voices are heard in this process.

A 'Young Inspectors project' was started in a partnership between the Commissioning service and the Children's Rights service in 2014. In 2015 a number of young people were interviewed by trained young inspectors about their placement in semi-independent accommodation and a report produced for management.

Following this a 16+ accommodation review was carried out with the assistance of the Children's rights service, looking at how Southwark can improve the commissioning of accommodation for older young people in care and care leavers.

12. Service transformation

Southwark Children's social care transformed the way that it works with children in 2014. The social work teams were re-structured into smaller, more responsive 'practice groups' and a 'systemic' way of working was introduced.

Whilst this does not directly impact on the statutory role of the IRO, we are looking at ways to ensure that the IRO service can be more closely aligned with the Child protection service. This is in order to ensure that CP chairs are more aware of issues around permanency and placements and conversely IRO's are more aware of risk and the history of children who are in care.

Both Child protection chairs and IRO's are encouraged where possible to participate in the regular group discussions that the new social work groups have about children in care.

Monthly systemic group supervision has been set up for all IRO's. This is chaired by a clinical practitioner and attempts to mirror the systemic discussions taking place in practice groups.

There is a joint IRO/CP job description for CP chairs and IRO's. This will mean for example that a CP chair who starts out reviewing a family where a child is on a CP plan will potentially be able to chair the looked after review of the child if s/he moves into care. It is hoped that this new arrangement will mean a better service for children who are in care or on the edge of care.

As part of this process IRO's have routinely met together with the CP chair group in 2015-16.

13. INSPECTION

Children's Services were last inspected in May 2012. Services for looked after children were judged by the inspectors to be 'good with good capacity for improvement'.

Specific findings were that:

'The overall effectiveness of services for looked after children is good. The local authority and its partners present as effective corporate parents.'

'Speaker Box and its range of activities presents the authentic voice of the child in care, is very influential, impacting across a wide range of issues.'

'Reviewing officers prioritise contact with children they are responsible for, seeking to establish a meaningful relationship according to the age and capacity of the child.'

14. Review of the IRO and CP chairing service

An internal review into the IRO and CP service was carried out between March-April 2015. A summary of the findings of this review was presented to the IRO group on 7/7/15 and an action plan has been drawn up to address the issues identified. In summary the review found that there were a number of positives about the service:

- Consistency of IRO service with most IROs working with young people for lengthy periods
- Advocacy available for looked after children and young people

- The percentage of children and young people participating in reviews is consistently high
- Looked after reviews are held regularly and most are held on time
- Some IROs have developed valued specialist expertise e.g. inter-country adoption
- IRO caseloads are varied but overall reasonable,
- There is some effective challenge by some IROs on individual children's cases
- Bi-monthly report produced by the Head of Service on IRO service

Areas where more action was required were:

- IROs need to be evidently more 'present' between statutory reviews – to clearly record escalations and representations as a case record
- IRO's to ensure more active involvement of children and young people in their reviews including chairing their reviews.
- IRO's to demonstrate more challenge of poor practice including escalating issues formally where necessary.
- There is a need to formalise the mechanisms for IROs to feed into brokerage and contract management processes
- There is a need to improve the links between the IRO and Guardians

A separate audit of LAC review records was carried out in July 2016. The audit reviewed the quality of recorded review records and focussed on participation and the voice of the child and the journey of the child in relation to permanence planning. The audit found that the review records were on the whole of good quality with evidence that young people had been spoken to on their own. However the auditors found that the 'young person's voice' did not always come through in the record and recommended increased use of consultation forms by social workers. In addition the audit found that the recording and use of Health assessments needs to be reviewed. At present health assessments are saved in 'Carestore' which is not accessible to many IRO's working from home. We are now recommending that social workers e-mail the health assessments to IRO's in advance of reviews to ensure that health recommendations come through in the review.

15. KEY SUCCESSSES AND FUTURE PRIORITIES

Key successes in 2015-16 have been

- The standard of review reports remains high. Review reports provide a pen picture of the child, synopsis of family history and a good 6 monthly summary of the case, including assessed needs and action plan.
- IRO's have worked with the lead doctor in a profiling exercise of the health of looked after children. We are hoping to build on this work to improve the way in which we monitor and promote the health of Looked after children.
- IRO's have regularly attended the adoption working group to reduce delay in permanency planning and achieve better outcomes for Southwark Children Looked After.

- A standards document for LAC reviews has been developed for consultation in 2016. This outlines the expected standards of practice by IRO, social workers and managers and admin staff and will be used to drive improvements in the service going forward.

15.2 Key Priorities for the IRO Service for 2016-17 are

- To improve the recognition and risk assessment of CSE and ensuring a pro-active response to protect young people including response to running away
- To ensure that children placed in residential units out of London are safe and well cared for with improved plans for transition
- To work with the front line teams to improve the placement stability of children looked after
- To actively promote the health of looked after children and ensure that health assessments are more visible in LAC reviews.
- To continue to work with the Children's Rights Service and the Speaker Box Children in Care Council so that the looked after review process can be made more useful and relevant for young people.
- To continue to improve the IRO overview of the Personal Educational Planning process and co-working with the CLA education team to improve performance and drive up educational performance for looked after children
- To ensure that all children and young people participate in a meaningful way in their LAC reviews and are always spoken to separately by the IRO.
- To continue to improve Permanency Plans for Adoption or Special Guardianships and Long Term Fostering to ensure our children are in their permanent family at as early an age as possible through closer working with operational teams and Adoption and Fostering.

16. SUMMARY

The IRO Service has continued to provide an efficient and effective provision for reviewing and monitoring the Care Plans for Looked After Children during 2015-16.

The IRO service contributes to improved outcomes for Looked After Children through tight monitoring of permanence planning for looked after children in order to improve outcomes. IRO's facilitate the participation of children and young people in the decision making about their care as well as making independent representations to Operational Teams and Management on planning and practice issues.

Communication and relationships with teams are positive with the independent scrutiny valued by social workers and management.

A new standards document developed in 2016 will enable us to identify areas of challenge and drive service improvement.

Item No. 9.	Classification: Open	Date: 8 November 2016	Meeting Name: Corporate Parenting Committee
Report title:		Fostering Service Annual Report 2015-16	
Ward(s) or groups affected:		All	
From:		Director, Children and Families	

RECOMMENDATION

1. That the corporate parenting committee notes the annual report of Southwark Fostering Service 2015/16.

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.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

3. Southwark fostering service continues to provide good quality care for a significant proportion of children and young people in care to the council.
4. The annual report is attached as Appendix 1 to this report.

Community impact statement

5. 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

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
None		

APPENDICES

No.	Title
Appendix 1	Annual Report – Southwark Fostering Service

AUDIT TRAIL

Lead Officer	Alasdair Smith, Director, Children and Families		
Report Author	Alasdair Smith, Director, Children and Families		
Version	Final		
Dated	26 October 2016		
Key Decision?	No		
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER			
Officer Title	Comments sought	Comments included	
Director of Law and Democracy	No	No	
Strategic Director of Finance and Governance	No	No	
Cabinet Member	No	No	
Date final report sent to Constitutional Team		26 October 2016	

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2015/16

Annual Report

Southwark Fostering Service

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.

2015/16 has been a time for consolidating the changes within the service and further developing high quality, cost effective foster placements.

The recruitment of Foster Carers declined during 2014/15 and led to plans for a renewed approach to increase the capacity of the Fostering Service during 2015/16. The targets set for recruiting new fostering households have been ambitious, however a noted growth area in the number of family and friends foster carer households is significant.

Fostering recruitment across London is a challenge with many council experiencing challenges in recruiting the number of Foster Carers to meet the demand of placements. This has led Southwark to review the recruitment hub model for 2016/17 to consider what changes are required to achieve a more effective demand and supply model.

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 1st April 2015 to 31st March 2016.

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" (Fostering Service January 2015)

CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE ¹

Activity Overview - children	31st March 2014	31st March 2015	31st March 2016
Children in care	550	505	472
Children in foster care	417 (76%)	393 (78%)	369 (78%)
Children with Southwark registered foster carers	252	235	273
Children with Independent Fostering Agency carers	130	129	96
Children with friends & family foster carers	35	29	34

There has been a significant reduction in the overall number of children in care during 2015/16 of around 7%. The proportion of children in foster care at around 78% is the same as 2014/15 year and is higher than the national average of 75%.

The last year has seen an increase in the use of Southwark's internal fostering provision. Staying Put continues to have an impact on the Fostering Service with 40 young people in such arrangements on 31st March 2016.² While it is potentially beneficial for care leavers to have support beyond the age of 18, the challenge for the service is to not only support these arrangements but also to increase capacity to accommodate new referrals.

There has been a noted reduction over the last 12 months on the use of Independent Fostering Agencies. This may in part be due to the establishment of a dedicated Placements Service within the Fostering Service since September 2015 who are successfully working better to place a number of sibling groups with in-house Carers.

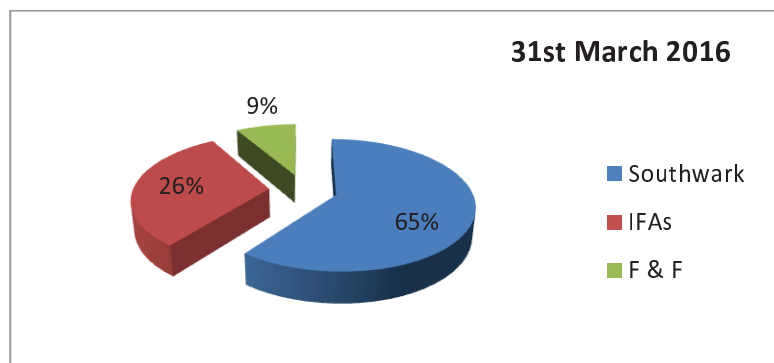
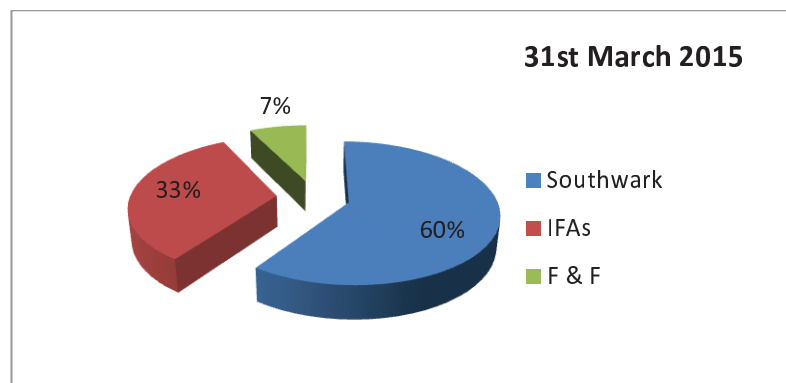
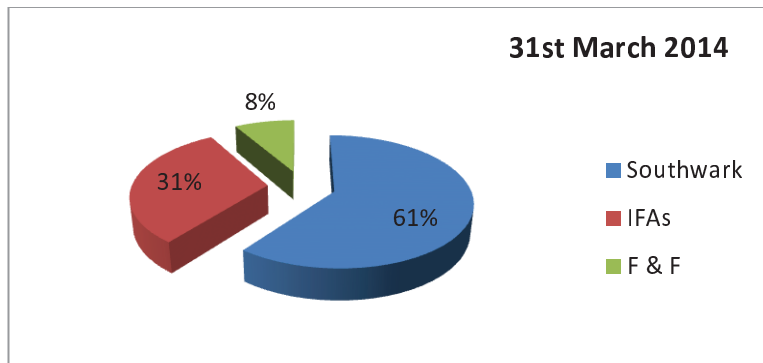
Positive feedback was noted by a judge in a recent case whereby 'Southwark fostering successfully placed a sibling group of 3 together to in a timely and child-centred manner.

Finding placements for teenagers with challenging behaviour, gang affiliation and those at risk of child sexual exploitation are a growing challenge and often require the use of external IFA's.

The use of Friends and Family Foster care is a little higher than previous years at around 9% of the children in foster care. The fostering service has improved its offer to friends and family carers, with dedicated Supervising Social Workers and assessors. A support group specifically for friends and family carers is soon to be established. The fostering services in partnership with Legal have delivered training seminars on the approvals process for family and friends foster carers across children's services. It is anticipated this will improve the experience of families and lead to better outcomes for children.

¹ Data submitted on CLA by Southwark Children's Services as part of the CLA 903 dataset to the DfE 30/06/2016

² Data on Staying Put submitted by Southwark Children's Services as part of the CLA 903 dataset to the DfE 30/06/2016

DISTRIBUTION OF FOSTER PLACEMENT TYPE - OVER LAST 3 YEARS

These figures illustrate a gradual increase in foster placements with Southwark Foster Carers by 4% since last year and a 2% increase with Family and Friends Carers. A reduction in IFA provision is evident over the last 3 years which highlights better use of Southwark internal provision.

SOUTHWARK FOSTER CARERS

Activity Overview – foster carers	2015/16	2014/15
Foster carers approved	9	14
Foster carers ceased approval	4	13
Friends & Family carers approved	9	1
Family Link carers approved	5	5
Matches for Long Term Foster Care	3	4

Recruitment of foster carers

Southwark fostering recruitment and assessment was outsourced to an external agency for a two year period from 2013-2015. The outsourcing contract ended and fostering recruitment resumed in house from 20th May 2015. Recruitment activity within the last year has been developing as the recruitment hub has become established and learning what works effectively. Within 2015/16, a total of 9 new households were approved to foster, in addition to a further nine friends and families carers approved in the same period. The most critical factor in meeting timescales for assessments has been the significant delays with DBS checks hindered at Stage 4. This is a challenge not only to Southwark or indeed London wide, but is national challenge to all Local Authorities. The fostering network is working with the DfE and DBS to resolve these challenges. Receiving completed medicals efficiently has contributed to delays with regular meetings with Southwark medical advisors now underway to manage this better.

Keeping Southwark children as close to their family origin where appropriate is a key measure of positive outcomes for children and young people. Since April 2016, a recruitment incentive to attract Southwark residents to foster is Council Tax relief to all approved Southwark foster carers. Of the 9 newly approved fostering households in 2015/16, 7 are Southwark residents. It is anticipated this offer will attract new foster carers to Southwark for the year ahead.

In January 2016, Southwark engaged an external charity Home for Good to work in partnership with church and faith communities to attract and recruit foster carers to Southwark. This contract generated minimal enquiries of which none were viable and was terminated after 6 months.

There have been considerable challenges for Southwark in recruiting foster carers for the borough and surrounding areas which prompted a review of the hub. It has been accepted that the hub model requires diverse skills and capabilities to lead a customer facing service to manage and compete in a competitive and evolving social care market. A proposed new structure will be implemented in 2016/17.

Retention of foster carers

The fostering service responds promptly and efficiently to issues and concerns raised by foster carers. The last year has demonstrated improved communication channels with carers –via newsletters, telephone and email reminders of forthcoming training and events. The Supervising Social Workers visit carers monthly to support them in their role, assessing the support needed prior to each new placement which contributes to increasing carers' confidence and capabilities in taking children with high needs.

Consistency and continuity in relationships are very important for foster carers. During 2015/16, new permanent members of staff were appointed and the service expanded with the creation of the dedicated Placements Service and the Recruitment Hub. Both these new service developments will enable the service to provide a more efficient and cost effective service, allowing staff to invest time and effort into the creation of an excellent service for foster carers.

In April 2015 a new training program for Southwark Foster Carers was launched which supported the new payment approach more closely with clearer development pathways for Foster Carers. The program was developed to integrate a systemic and therapeutic approach to retain, support and enable foster Carers to look after children who require more than “ordinary” parenting. Much of the training is underpinned by the Secure Base Model as a foundation, and the more advanced Empathic Behaviour Management. The aim of the two models empowers foster Carers to develop confidence and equip them with the right skills and techniques to help children experience safe and secure care.

Feedback from Southwark Independent Reviewing Service confirmed two separate Foster Carers describing the EBM training as “brilliant”. They talked enthusiastically about how they have made the transition from taking on board the theory to applying it effectively to their every day practice. Training and development is important to foster carers and if they value the training on offer, they are less likely to consider moving to another agency.

The revised payment model has been well received by the foster carers with greater transparency and consistency in the way carers are paid. It offers an incentive to support continued professional development and also to improve their financial situation. It has helped to focus carers on the importance of training linked to the quality of care for children and young people. This all contributes to retaining Southwark foster carers and the Councils offer remaining competitive with neighbouring boroughs.

The last 12 months has highlighted key movement in the number of foster carers resigning within Southwark. A total of 18 foster carers have resigned, with 4 foster carers officially deregistered within 2015/16 due to change of circumstances and quality of care. Five households resigned through retirement and age. Other reasons which led to resignation included health reasons change in work commitments, changes within the household and transitioning to Staying Put carers. In the last year, 2 of the 18 foster carers who ceased fostering left to go to another agency.

Support for foster carers

Despite its rewards, foster care can be a demanding vocation. Southwark's fostering service recognises this and understands good outcomes for children can only be achieved when foster carers feel valued, supported and equipped to do this very important job.

Support is a generic term which in a fostering context encompasses the following:

- Allocation and support of a dedicated Supervising Social Worker during the working week and access to out of hours support 7 days a week.
- Foster Carer induction for all newly approved households and as a refresh to existing Foster Carers. A comprehensive post approval training programme that incorporates therapeutic care giving model. The aim of this approach is to help Foster Carers feel confident and equip them with the right skills and techniques to help children experience safe and secure care. Southwark adopted the Secure Base model as its framework for therapeutic care giving by Carers which help children and young people move towards greater security and build resilience. This model was launched in September 2015 and has been incorporated into other training courses, in addition to a more advanced approach to caring – Emphatic Behaviour Management. There has been a renewed interest in training with approximately 40% of Foster Carers benefitting from this approach.
- Training pathway for Foster Carers to enhance professional development and quality of placements linked to a clear payment model.
- Therapeutic intervention and support from a lead clinician, medical advisor, education, and Care link service to support children in placements and the fostering household.
- Regular Carer support groups accessible for all foster caring households.
- Regular communication and information sharing is maintained via emails, quarterly fostering newsletters and occasional coffee mornings. The practice coordinators are office based and offer a central point of contact for all Foster Carers daily.
- Southwark Foster Care Association (SFCA) is an active foster Carers group that brings Southwark foster Carers together to provide a stronger voice to influence and develop services for Southwark. Carers benefit by having an opportunity to come together and share ideas to develop the service for them and the children in their care. The aim is to enhance foster care involvement by empowering Carers to jointly lead social events, recruitment activities and buddy schemes etc.
- An annual foster Carers dinner dance is held to thank Carers for their commitment to improving the lives of looked after children and young people in Southwark.
- Recognising and acknowledging the dedication and commitment of Southwark Foster Carers who make a difference to vulnerable children and young people is evident in the nominations and awards - Southwark Civic Awards, Southwark Life and Fostering Network magazine.
- Membership and advice to Fostering Network which offer independent advice and support with allegations.

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 18th 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 2015/16, 35 young people began staying put arrangements with Southwark Foster Carers on reaching their 18th birthday. On 31st March 2015 there were 19 young people remaining in Staying Put arrangements, while on 31st March 2016 the number had risen to 40. This number is likely to rise and this presents a particular challenge for the fostering service, as the existence of a staying put arrangement in a foster home reduces the Carers capacity to take new placements. A proposal to develop a Supported Lodgings Scheme is being considered for 2016/17. This would provide an alternative to young people remaining with Carers, where a young person is ready to live more independently.

Short Breaks Care

The Fostering Service had 30 short break respite carer households 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; data and performance scrutiny and learning from complaints. Please see below for more detail on the audits undertaken in 2015/16.

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), Director of Children's Social Care. Southwark's Fostering Panel meets once a month.

Fostering and adoption services are undergoing significant changes in the way in which they deliver services and secure permanence for looked after children and young people. In addition to the planned changes of adoption regionalisation, Southwark have agreed to move to a combined panel which reflects the transition to a more integrated permanence service.

The Adoption Panel Advisor is leading the project of implementing a combined permanence panel for Southwark which will take effect from October 2106. Based on panel members' consultation, there is a phased approach to this transition and the adoption panel chair has resigned after a long tenure of 10 years. The combined panel will be chaired by the fostering panel chair that has both personal and professional experience of fostering and adoption. The panel has also successfully transitioned to a paperless panel where all papers are sent electronically in advance to panel members. This has greatly assisted administrative efficiencies and is timely and well organised. The panel is supported by a well organised panel coordinator and has a diverse panel membership.

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

Results from a recent Foster Carer Survey found:

92% considered the support they receive from their SSW to be good or excellent.

75% considered the overall support they receive from the service as good or excellent.

50% considered the support from the child's Social Worker as good or excellent.

Positive feedback.

Many carers who completed the questionnaire wrote about their positive experiences of being foster carers for Southwark. For example:

'We have received training in Empathic Behaviour Management from the Fostering Service. This has been very effective in helping us to grow C as a young adult, helping him to develop self management and self awareness skills. Over the past 18 months we have seen a cessation of violent outbursts and a reduction in abusive behaviour from C.'

We always felt that there was a disconnect between the support services given to A (foster child) and his mum (who he doesn't live with). A's social worker has developed a more relationships based, whole family approach and has built up a rapport with A's mum. This has helped him gain credibility with A and made A and his mum much happier.'

All respondents said they had benefited from the training provided to them as foster carers, especially Empathic Behaviour Management, Secure Base, Challenging Behaviour, CSE and Safeguarding.

Management overview and audit activity

The Quality Assurance Lead for Permanence and the Fostering managers have completed three audits of the Fostering Service in 2015/16. The audits were: Foster Carer Annual Reviews, Foster Carer records, and Safeguarding. Improvement plans with a timescale and actions were written following the analysis of each audit, for example resolving out of date DBS forms and increasing the availability of safeguarding training sessions are currently in progress.

Complaints

Complaints made against the fostering service are taken very seriously and investigated thoroughly by the complaints team and by fostering managers. The learning from complaints is shared amongst the whole team, and changes are made where appropriate to the practice and processes of the team.

There have been four complaints made against the fostering service in 2015/16. Two of the complaints were upheld, and two were partially upheld. Two of the complaints concerned late payments, and were a result of administrative errors and a lack of planning. New systems have now been put in place to ensure that all payments are made in a timely fashion.

The other two complaints were about breaches of confidentiality, that the carers felt unsupported by their supervising social worker and the length of time it took to investigate allegations. Procedures, standards and staff training have been improved as a result.

DEVELOPMENTS DURING 2015/16

The following significant developments were made in the Fostering Service during 2015/16

The foundations for the renewal of the Fostering Service were set in 2014/15. Activity during the period 2015/16 was aimed at building on these and had the following focus:

- Recruiting to team vacancies and strengthening the effectiveness of the fostering managers' group
- Developing the role of the practice coordinators
- Developing the recruitment hub to increase the number of good quality foster Carers
- Creating a dedicated placements service to ensure better planning and matching and increasing placement stability
- Regular practice audits in order to identify key areas for improvement
- Embedding the therapeutic care giving models introduced in 2014/15 – Emphatic Behaviour Management, Reflective Practice, Theraplay and Secure Base
- Extending and developing the training offer to foster Carers and increasing training participation
- Updating the foster carers handbook
- Improving placement stability
- Developing a model for achieving permanence in foster care
- Developing an explicit set of practice standards and expectations for all staff in the service in relation to allegations, payments to Carers, supervisory visits, responding to complaints and safeguarding concerns.

REVIEW OF DEVELOPMENT PLANS FOR 2015/16

Quality and stability of placements – to improve the offer of therapeutically informed and supported care. The Placements Service makes use of the Secure Base Model to consider potential matches between children and available carers. This allows an honest appraisal of carers' strengths and areas where support will be needed if a placement is made. The clinician can provide initial advice to carers regarding suitable approaches to caring for a child with particular needs. Three further six-day training programmes on EBM have been delivered during 2015/16 which equates to approximately 40% of carers now using this approach.

Capacity of Service – to increase the number of active fostering households by 25% The recruitment hub had been operating for ten months and during that time nine new fostering households were approved, (with another two expected the following month) and a further nine friends and family carers. This figure is significant in increasing the capacity of the fostering service.

This is a 3-year objective to dramatically shift the balance of care giving for Southwark children towards our own Fostering Service, with carers living in or near to Southwark. The Council Tax scheme was implemented in 2016 and is monitoring the effectiveness of this as an incentive to foster for Southwark. The recruitment hub is working closer with Southwark's Communications Team to develop a more modern approach to recruitment, using all forms of modern media to deliver effective fostering recruitment.

The recruitment co-ordinator is involved in achieving permanence for looked after children through building up expertise in producing profiles of children so that these can be circulated to in-house carers, used in advertising and other forms of family finding.

In addition, the placements service has developed better systems to accurately identify carers available to take placements that maximise. The fostering service are developing their carers to accept more difficult placements and establishing identified placement support from the outset. Better deployment of resources has been a significant factor in the reduction of placements made with independent agencies in 2015/16.

Friends and Family Carers – to increase this resource, support and learning offer

The fostering service has improved its offer to friends and family carers, now providing dedicated supervising social workers and assessors, with the development of a support group specifically for friends and family carers.

A time limited working group was established to map out the approval process and decision making for Family and Friends Foster Carers with representatives from across children's social care. This led to a schedule of training seminars being delivered across the services by representatives from Southwark Fostering and Legal service. The aim is to improve the quality of decision making and lead to better outcomes for children.

Family and friends carers are invited to all training provided by the fostering service, including preparation training, post-approval induction training, Training Support and Development standards, and all other training relevant to their placement.

Long Term Foster Care – to have a clear policy, practice and scheme with more internal placements Members of the fostering service have been involved in department wide conversations about improving permanence outcomes for children and have helped to shape the policy. The service has also developed a template for recording plans for achieving permanence, which is currently under consultation.

The Placements Service and Recruitment Hub are both actively involved in achieving permanence meetings where the plan for a child may not be adoption. There is the need to continue recruiting families for older children and sibling groups, while maintaining an appropriate balance between promoting permanence with suitable existing carers and utilising the pool of available temporary carers.

Workers have the knowledge and expertise to make a real difference to children's wellbeing. The service has continued to develop its workforce to improve the skills and abilities, through reflective practice groups, team training events and individual personal development plans. During 2015/16, vacancies have been replaced with permanent staff appointments and continuation to train all advanced practitioners in systemic practice. In addition all practice groups now have a supervising social worker trained in Theraplay Level 1. The knowledge and skills statements for social workers have been used as the basis of each worker's individual work plan for the year.

DEVELOPMENT PLANS FOR 2016/17

Quality and stability of placements – Making Placements Better

- Develop and implement an Access to Resource Service to offer an integrated and coordinated service to manage resources effectively to make placements better. This will maximise placement choice, strengthen matching and support placements from the outset.
- Review and amend the permanence structure to realign the teams within the appropriate function.
- Recruit to vacancies to achieve a competent and motivated permanent fostering workforce.
- Review and evaluate the Advanced Practitioner role to strengthen and develop leadership and management support in the fostering service.
- Embed the Secure Base framework as the care giving model across the permanence service.

Permanent Fostering – policy and practice guidance with a scheme for more internal placements

- Develop a permanence consultation approach and offer to ensure early permanence planning for fostering or kinship is considered at the earliest opportunity for children and young people.
- Review and streamline the long term fostering process for children whose care plan is permanent fostering. This will include a refresh of the policy and practice guidance to comply with statutory changes.
- Supportive Lodgings Scheme to be developed to support young people's transition to independence and balance the demand and requirements of "Staying Put" arrangements.

Capacity of Service – to increase the number of active fostering households by 25%

- Review and evaluate the effectiveness of the fostering recruitment hub and implement developments for 2016/17.
- Implement the fostering recruitment strategy with a much greater focus on utilising digital and social media.
- Develop a recruitment group that incorporates foster cares and Speaker box representatives to support recruitment activities for 2016/17.
- Refresh and maintain a foster carer register to ascertain actual vacancies. Carers who have routinely been vacant need to be resolved to either increase their scope to foster or cease approval.
- Friends and Family Carers – analyse and review service need to respond to increase in demand and efficiencies.

Item No. 10.	Classification: Open	Date: 8 November 2016	Meeting Name: Corporate Parenting Committee
Report title:		Foster Carer Training	
Ward(s) or groups affected:		All	
From:		Director, Children and Families	

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the corporate parenting committee notes this report, which sets out a response to queries raised at the 12 July 2016 committee.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

2. In July 2016 the corporate parenting committee considered in detail training for foster carers. The committee had the following questions:
 - That the committee receives an update report to its March 2017 meeting, including progress on the workshops planned with Southwark virtual schools on the secure base model and involvement of wider family members.
 - That in reference to the on-going evaluation and surveys that are sent to Carers 9 months following interviews, that the committee receive a report to its November meeting on the results produced from this next data gathering exercise.
3. This report sets out the response to these requests.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

Update on the workshops with Southwark virtual schools on the secure base model and involvement of wider family members

4. Initial discussions have commenced with the new virtual school head, with provision for an introductory workshop for virtual school staff in January 2017. Members of the virtual school team have developed an interest in the model and the fostering service is keen to look at how this approach could be adapted for use in Southwark schools. The aim would be to support all looked after children, who may be anxious and find it difficult to manage learning and relationships.
5. Over the past two years the fostering service has adopted the secure base model as an approach to care giving which is based on attachment theory. Attachment theory can also explain some of the difficulties a looked after child may have at school - insecure children are also anxious children. Anxiety makes it difficult to concentrate and learn and a lack of basic trust makes relating to others difficult.
6. Key to helping children to learn, relate to others and to enjoy school, is reducing their anxiety. Parents and staff need to be aware of how a child's different

behaviours may be a sign of anxiety. This can help pinpoint actions which may reassure and calm a child so that she or he can settle in the classroom.

7. Professor Gillian Schofield who developed the model is currently working with Southwark to extend its scope and is interested in developing resources for schools and education staff. Her guidance and expertise will be invaluable in enabling Southwark shape the approach to integrate education partners.

On-going evaluation of empathic behaviour management

8. There have now been three separate cohorts of carers who have undertaken the training and participated in follow up reflective practice sessions. In order to evaluate the impact of training on foster carers abilities to respond empathically; the first cohort of participants were asked to fill in a survey and to take part in one-to-one interviews, before and after the training. Unfortunately, none of the surveys were returned by carers after they had completed the training. However seven carers from the first cohort were interviewed in September/October 2015, and interviewed again in October 2016, giving in-depth qualitative feedback. These interviews were analysed to produce the findings below.
9. The evaluation shows that the skills of carers who participated in the training were enhanced. Specifically, EBM helped them to change their parenting styles to become more empathic. Carers were able to put themselves in the shoes of their child, to understand why they might feel sad, angry or lash out at other children.
10. They also spoke about how the training allowed them to personalise the child's behaviour; that often challenging behavior exhibited towards them was a reflection of the child's developmental trauma, not their feelings about their carer. A carer said she had learned through EBM that her child's behavior was not about her, that it was about what had happened to him previously, and the fact that he did not choose to become looked after, or be removed from his birth family. The two most extreme outbursts he had which included physical violence to the carer were when his father did not turn up for contact.
11. Carers said that they were able to be reflective and understand the root causes of a child's challenging behavior. One carer said she realised that her child was very anxious about where he would be living permanently. It took a long time for the court processes to decide that he would be moving to his grandparents. The move was well planned and as soon as the child knew what was happening, his behaviour improved. The carer said: *'Before EBM I might not have realised that it was a great weight off his mind. It allowed me to be reflective and look at the bigger picture.'*
12. Carers said that EBM helped them to communicate more effectively with their children. An example of this was a carer explaining to a child why he had to do things that he did not want to do and recognizing how the child visibly relaxed. This was because he had never really had any boundaries when he was with his birth parent. Another carer spoke about giving her child a voice, which he had never had before. She said, *'Initially he was trying to please us, then he trusted us enough to voice his dissent. There was a permission there to have a dialogue.'*
13. Carers were encouraged to allow children to express and explore sad or difficult emotions. Pre EBM training, a carer reflected on how she would try to move her child gently onto happier subjects; acknowledging how EBM training gave a different perspective and insight in to the value of letting him talk about his

sadness. She encouraged him to write a letter to his stepfather who had died, where he expressed the emotions he felt about him.

14. Carers were also encouraged to make the children in their care feel secure and valued. Several carers spoke about consistently reassuring their children that they were safe from harm and that they loved and cared for them. A carer explained: *'You have to reach out and comfort the child, to go back to them even if they have been screaming at you to go away. Even if you feel that it is getting you nowhere, by going back to the child you are showing them that you still love them and you are going to keep them safe.'* Another said: *'I say to her I care for you so much, I'm here for you. You have to reinstall things into their mind; you have to repeat things over and over.'*
15. All seven of the carers interviewed said that they liked the way the EBM training was delivered. Having two full days learning in a classroom setting was enhanced by the reflective practice sessions which took place over the next three months. Being in a group of other foster carers was beneficial in that it allowed participants to speak honestly about their experiences. They shared the impact that using EBM techniques and strategies had on the children in their care, making the learning tangible.
16. Very few suggestions for improvements were given. One carer said that maybe the groups needed to be mixed up a bit, to allow carers who were enthusiastic about EBM to encourage those carers who were less sure about it. Another carer said that social workers should be required to do the training, to enhance their practice. There was also a suggestion that the training should be extended to three days.
17. It is clear from the interviews that all carers who participated in the full EBM programme benefitted enormously from doing so. It is also evident that the impact was felt by the children in their care. As well as changes in their behavior, many of the children's academic progress improved, they were able to make and sustain more friendships with their peers, attend after school activities independently and also found it easier to cope with significant life events such as moving home or changing schools.

Conclusions

18. Early discussions are currently in progress with how the secure base model can be extended and implemented with education. Workshops for virtual school are scheduled for January 2017 with a view to evaluating the impact and implementation phase of this model for virtual schools.
19. Feedback from foster carers highlights the successful impact of EBM training for Southwark Foster Carers and empowers Carers to promote and instill emphatic care giving for children and young people in their care. Analysis and application of this approach highlights the positive impact it is making for children and young peoples well being, by noted improvements in behaviours, social, emotional and educational development.
20. Professor Scholfield is facilitating a workshop with Southwark permanence service on 21 October to explore how the secure base model can be extended in social workers supervisory relationship with foster carers and their families.
21. Representatives from across children's services are invited to develop an awareness of the model and how it may be implemented across other service areas.

Community impact statement

22. Foster care training is an important aspect of Southwark fostering provision both as a recruitment incentive to attract prospective foster carers but also to equip our carers with the right skills and experience to foster children in the borough. Where appropriate children who require fostering are best placed to remain in their borough or within a 20 miles radius of their home where they have an identity and sense of belonging, of which contributes to placement stability. It is hoped that a good training and support offer for foster carers makes an important impact on the community enabling more children and young people to be cared for within or near those communities.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
None		

APPENDICES

No.	Title
None	

AUDIT TRAIL

Lead Officer	Alasdair Smith, Director, Children and Families		
Report Author	Vanessa White Head of Service, Permanence		
Version	Final		
Dated	27 October 2016		
Key Decision?	No		
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER			
Officer Title	Comments Sought	Comments Included	
Director of Law and Democracy	No	No	
Strategic Director of Finance and Governance	No	No	
Cabinet Member	No	No	
Date final report sent to Constitutional Team		27 October 2016	

Item No. 11.	Classification: Open	Date: 8 November 2016	Meeting Name: Corporate Parenting Committee
Report title:		Corporate Parenting Committee – Work Plan 2016/17	
Ward(s) or groups affected:		All	
From:		Director, Children and Families	

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the corporate parenting committee review the work plan for 2016/17 as set out in paragraph 4 of the report.
2. That the committee identify any further items for consideration in the work plan for 2016/17.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Role and function of the corporate parenting committee

3. The constitution for the municipal year 2016/2017 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

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

8 November 2016

- Annual Report from the Fostering Service
- Update on Foster Care Training
- Annual report of the Independent Reviewing Officer
- Deep dive report (autistic spectrum) and audit of the number of looked after children with autism. Way forward from the social and educational perspective
- Innovation Projects: evaluation feedback

1 March 2017

- A readiness for school evaluation and the clarification at the point at which the child/young people enter care
- Virtual Headteacher report (including comparative data (statistical neighbours and progress for looked after children in Southwark schools over a five year period)
- Corporate parenting principles resulting from legislative principles
- Placement stability; draft or final version of the front loaded / early intervention offer
- Speakerbox. Feedback to the young people and individuals
- Update on referrals on sexual health and care link. Update to set out numbers involved, reasons and some commentary.

Items to be scheduled

- Transition from care to independent living – report back on outcome of review of semi-independent living / supported housing.

Corporate parenting committee meetings with SpeakerBox

5. 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.

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

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

AUDIT TRAIL

Lead Officer	Alasdair Smith, Director of Children and Families		
Report Author	Paula Thornton, Constitutional Officer		
Version	Final		
Dated	26 October 2016		
Key Decision?	No		
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER			
Officer Title	Comments Sought	Comments included	
Director of Law and Democracy	No	No	
Strategic Director of Finance and Governance	No	No	
Cabinet Member	No	No	
Date final report sent to Constitutional Team		26 October 2016	

CORPORATE PARENTING DISTRIBUTION LIST (OPEN)**MUNICIPAL YEAR 2016-17**

NOTE: Original held by Constitutional Team; all amendments/queries to
Paula Thornton Tel: 020 7525 4395

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Membership		Constitutional Team	
Councillor Victoria Mills (Chair)	1	Paula Thornton	10
Councillor Evelyn Akoto	1		
Councillor Jasmine Ali	1		
Councillor Helen Dennis	1		
Councillor Kath Whittam	1	Total:	26
Councillor Kieron Williams	1		
Councillor Eliza Mann	1	Dated: 16 May 2016	
Electronic versions (No hard copy)			
Councillor Adele Morris (reserve)			
Co-opted members			
Barbara Hills (external)	1		
Florence Emakpose (external)	1		
Children's Services			
David Quirke-Thornton	1		
Alasdair Smith	1		
Jennifer Denton	1		
Legal			
Sarah Feasey	1		