

Corporate Parenting Committee

Wednesday 7 July 2021
2.00 pm
160 Tooley Street, London SE1 2QH

Membership

Councillor Jasmine Ali (Chair)
Councillor Evelyn Akoto
Councillor Maggie Browning
Councillor Stephanie Cryan
Councillor Sunny Lambe
Councillor Eliza Mann
Councillor Charlie Smith

Reserves

Councillor Peter Babudu
Councillor Sunil Chopra
Councillor Nick Dolezal
Councillor Nick Johnson
Councillor Victoria Olisa

Non-voting co-opted members

Florence Emakpose, Francis Turkson
Mark Kerr, Rosamond Marshall, Tracey
Harrison and Nicky Stoupe.

INFORMATION FOR MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

Access to information

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Babysitting/Carers allowances

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Contact

Beverley.olamijulo@southwark.gov.uk or Paula.thornton@southwark.gov.uk

Members of the committee are summoned to attend this meeting

Eleanor Kelly

Chief Executive

Date: 29 June 2021



Corporate Parenting Committee

Wednesday 7 July 2021
2.00 pm
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. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR FOR THE CORPORATE PARENTING COMMITTEE 2021-22

To appoint a vice-chair for the corporate parenting committee for 2021-22.

4. 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.

Item No.	Title	Page No.
5.	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.	
6.	MINUTES	1 - 8
	To approve as a correct record the minutes of the open section of the meeting held on 21 April 2021.	
	FIRST PART OF THE MEETING (2.00PM - 3.15PM)	
	INTRODUCTIONS	
7.	CORPORATE PARENTING STRATEGY - 2021-2024	9 - 31
8.	ANNUAL VIRTUAL HEADTEACHER REPORT JULY 2021	32 - 68
9.	SELF EVALUATION OF SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE WITH CHILDREN IN CARE AND CARE LEAVERS	To follow
10.	SOUTHWARK ADOPTION PERFORMANCE - 2020-2021	69 - 75
11.	CORPORATE PARENTING COMMITTEE - WORK PLAN 2021-22	76 - 82
	SECOND PART OF THE MEETING (3.15PM - 4.00PM)	
12.	WORKSHOP AND THEME: EMOTIONAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING - CARE LEAVERS	
	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: 29 June 2021



Corporate Parenting Committee

MINUTES of the OPEN section of the Corporate Parenting Committee held on Wednesday 21 April 2021 at 2.00 pm. Online/ Virtual meeting.

PRESENT: Councillor Jasmine Ali (Chair)
Councillor Evelyn Akoto
Councillor Maggie Browning
Councillor Stephanie Cryan
Councillor Sunny Lambe
Councillor Charlie Smith

**NON-VOTING
CO-OPTED
MEMBERS:** Dr. Mark Kerr, Subject matter expert
Rosamond Marshall, Foster carer
Tracey Harrison, Critical friend of the local community

YOUNG PEOPLE: Ikesha (chair of Speakerbox) and Ryan

**OFFICER
SUPPORT:** Alasdair Smith, Director of Children and Families
Dr Jenny Taylor, Head of Clinical Service
Dr Stacy John-Legere, Designated Doctor for Looked after Children
Michele Sault, Designated Nurse for Looked after Children
Angela Brown, Nurse, Looked after Children
Andrew Fowler, Head of Service: Children In Care and Careleavers
Steve Chaplin, Service Manager, Children and Adults
Helen Woolgar, Assistant Director - Safeguarding and Care
Kelly Henry, Head of Service Care & Permanence
Michael Crowe, Service Development Manager
Dechaun Malcolm, ReConnect Coordinator
Genette Laws, Director of Commissioning
Kalida Khan, Interim Service Manager LCS 16 plus service
Leval Haughton- James, Experienced Practitioner Youth Worker
Esther Kayode, Intern, Finance and Governance

Department
 Beverley Olamijulo, Constitutional Team
 Poonam Patel, Constitutional Team
 Paula Thornton, Constitutional Team

1. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for lateness was received from Tracey Harrison.

2. **CONFIRMATION OF VOTING MEMBERS**

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

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

The chair gave notice of the following late item:

- Item 8 : Sufficiency Strategy (2018-22) Update

Reasons for urgency and lateness will be specified in the relevant minute.

4. **DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS**

None were declared.

5. **MINUTES**

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 4 November 2020 be approved as a correct record and signed by the chair.

6. **ANNUAL REPORT ON THE HEALTH OF LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN (LAC): 2019-2020**

Dr. Stacy John-Legere, Designated Dr for Looked After Children (LAC), Southwark and Michele Sault, Designated Nurse for Safeguarding Children, Looked After Children & Care Leavers presented their annual report to the committee.

A copy of the slide presentation was included as Appendix 2 to the report.

The committee thanked Dr Stacy John-Legere and Michele Sault for their hard work in difficult circumstances of the pandemic.

The following issues were discussed:

- What the committee could further do to assist?
- Challenges relating to the secure estate and consequent restriction on contact. Dr Stacy John-Legere explained that within the secure estate health professionals would respond to the health issues arising and keep herself and Michele Sault (designated nurse) informed
- The use of video calls to assist contact. It was not always possible to facilitate video calls on secure estates. It was agreed that the chair or the leader should write to those places that were unable to facilitate or offer video links to ensure they were in place for all children and young people in care on secure estates
- In response to a question about the number of children or young people who had been ill with Covid-19, Dr Stacy John-Legere was able to explain that no children or young people had been seriously unwell and all cases had been managed on an individual basis
- Query in respect of knowledge of mental health issues prior to entering care. It was advised that previous mental and physical needs would be known and considered.

RESOLVED:

1. That the report be noted.
2. That updates provided via Southwark Borough Based Board (quarterly) and set out in the committee report be noted.
3. That the chair or the leader write to those places on the secure estate currently unable to facilitate or offer video links for children or young people (to assist contact) so that this option is available to all children and young people in care.

7. MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE PRESENTATION

Dr Jenny Taylor, head of clinical services undertook a presentation to committee on mental health issues for children and young people with the following points highlighted in the presentation:

- Looked after children four times more likely to experience challenges with their mental health problems compared to children living with birth families
- Outlining core challenges – not having their needs met in early years, experiencing trauma and at least one total break in attachment relationship
- Challenges to mental health that included:
 - Innate challenges – temperamental differences and vulnerabilities, neurodiversity
 - No replacement attachment bond formed

- Lack of as a story they can live with about themselves and birth family
- Further changes of placement
- Lack of family home to remain connected to when moving in to adult life
- Access to engaging flexible provision of specialist psychological and pharmacological interventions.
- Identified that there is a lot already being done in Southwark to try to reduce the challenges they face to having good mental health.

Summary of points raised by the committee following the presentation by Dr Jenny Taylor:

- Mental health challenges and what is required in policy terms to address. Explained that preventative work already being undertaken to keep families stronger. A focus of the preventative policy was to make use of and keep birth families connected for ongoing support
- Issues that some of the children and young people are not living in Southwark and concern that these do not fall through the safety net. Dr Jenny Taylor explained that there was desire to achieve a standard child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) service to alleviate differences in provision. Identified issues in respect of placements with significant geographical distance and the resource challenges that prevail. It was suggested that a briefing / paper to address these particular issues and variations that may occur be prepared
- National standards referenced but acknowledged that Southwark would offer over and above this standard.

RESOLVED:

1. That the presentation be noted and a copy be sent to members of the committee.
2. That a briefing / paper be developed in response to challenges of child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) provision for children and young people out of borough.

8. SUFFICIENCY STRATEGY

It was not possible to circulate this report five clear days in advance of the meeting. The chair agreed to consider this report as urgent because corporate parenting committee next meeting was not next meeting until 7 July 2021. In order to progress this strategy for its final year, and ensure that further input was received from the committee, the report needed to be considered at this meeting. The strategy addresses the adequate supply of high quality accommodation and support; and meet the needs of, and improve the outcomes for looked after children, young people, and children on the edge of care and as such needed to be progressed without delay.

Alasdair Smith, director, children and families presented this report to the committee.

Genette Laws, director of commissioning was also present to provide input to this report on current provision, confirming that a report was due to cabinet in July 2021 on a semi-independent offer; continuing to work closely with housing colleagues in respect of affordable housing and other related issues.

Summary of issues discussed on this report:

- Councillor Stephanie Cryan, cabinet member for council housing confirmed that the housing allocations policy was being currently reviewed and provided a link for input to a consultation
- Rent guarantor provision. Confirmed that this was being undertaken informally currently and consideration being given to a more formal process to take further.

RESOLVED:

1. That the progress of the Children Looked After and Care Leavers Sufficiency Strategy 2018-2022 be noted.
2. That the plans for the final year of the strategy and the approach to renewing the strategy from 2022 be noted.
3. That the sufficiency strategy be reviewed again at a future meeting of the corporate parenting committee.

9. CORPORATE PARENTING COMMITTEE - WORK PLAN 2020-21

It was agreed to consider the work plan at the next committee meeting on 2020-21, which would set out a draft programme for the new municipal 2021-22 year.

10. EXPERIENCES OF LOCK DOWN AND COVID-19 FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Leval Haughton-James, youth practitioner opened this part of the meeting by introducing Ikesha and Ryan to hear their experiences of lockdown.

Leval undertook a slide presentation to the committee outlining the practical and emotional support given by Speakerbox. The presentation included the following key points:

- Group participation post and during Covid-19
- Sessions included gym, meals, physical activities, cinema, theatre, work experience opportunities and networking

- Since March 2020 group sessions have been provided by various online platforms (including Christmas and Easter)
- 54 young people have received EiD celebration cards
- Christmas gifts for careleavers
- 20 young people received Easter gift hampers.

Group work activities to support young people during the Covid-19 pandemic included:

- Zumba classes
- Weekly check-ins
- Exercising at home via zoom
- Weekly newsletter and
- Quiz nights plus much more.

Lessons learned – adapting to change

- The transition from face to face activities to online sessions has been challenging
- Decreased number of young people participating over the course of time (Zoom burnout)
- Reducing social isolation by staying connected
- Restrictions beyond Speakerbox's control that limited accessing young people in prisons.

Key points raised by young people via Speakerbox:

- Keen to plan activities and events to relieve stress
- More professional support needed due to poor relationships with family for transition into independent with money management, more encouragement to save, budgeting advice. Help to develop shopping and cooking skills
- Want to be consulted about housing options so their views and experiences could be captured.

Confirmed participation opportunities will continue in various forms (online, newsletters, group and face-to-face contact including also developing a newsletter to increase communication with young people in custody.

Forward plan for group work in place as follows:

- Care leavers parents group, based in a children's centre
- Independent hub group for 21+
- 'My Yard' – managing home, administration and managing within budget
- Mindfulness
- Pride and belonging
- Cooking club
- Unaccompanied young people's drop in

- Walk and running social group.

Ikesha and Ryan were able to provide an insight to their experiences/observation of lockdown highlighting the following issues:

- Speakerbox represented a consistent presence and support for children and young people during lockdown
- Common themes / experiences for children and young people in lockdown relating to employment/training, housing and mental wellbeing
- The emotional impact of lockdown and other events at that time relating to Black Lives Matters and the killing of George Floyd. All these impacts were overwhelming and could compound/contribute to any unresolved trauma for young people
- Housing issues and being confined to a small space at this time to live, work and relax and difficulties arising
- Impact on the lack of one-to-one contact for young people and isolation from family and friends
- Mental health implications
- Leaving care support (housing, grants, emotional support). Housing can be difficult and reference to the invaluable support given by the children participation rights officer throughout this time on such matters
- How accessed and utilised therapies including self-referral
- Talking to young people and how important this has proved to gain information and knowledge on financial and practical matters they are facing.

In conclusion, to this presentation it was explained that many positive plans and events were planned for the future, including a summer barbeque and physical exercise (which was considered vital for mental health wellbeing).

Summary of discussion and points raised in response to this presentation by Leval, Ikesha and Ryan:

- The committee expressed their thanks to Speakerbox and their support to children and young people
- Transitioning to adulthood and what more can be done? Leval responded and addressed issues relating to housing, bills, council tax, paye and managing money. Referenced contact with a former care leaver who needed some support but was unaware was able to still ask for help; advice and support will be offered if approached by a care leaver. Suggested that this be more widely advertised to young people/care leavers so that they are aware
- Importance of information sharing amongst young people and received on a level they can understand and relate to
- Ikesha raised the importance of checking if young people are okay. Focus needs to be on individual and holistic needs and checking up on daily care
- Exploring opportunities for volunteering and other avenues, especially for

those young people not in education, employment or training (NEET)

- Support for young people coming out of lockdown and extra support for those who have been custody (especially with regard to housing). More help getting into work after being in custody
- Suggested further work / letter be written in respect of the point made about young people coming out of custody and challenges faced with housing and other day to day issues
- Secure estate – consideration to putting together an enhanced programme for resettlement with the multiple agencies. Worth exploring, what it needs to look like, beyond basic statutory provisions
- Making a list of what it means to be in care and how this relates to university, housing allocation and semi-independent living and letting young people know the information that can be obtained
- The chair expressed the need for a catch-up/piece of work between now and next meeting on Covid-19 and additional support for young people (including above bullet point).

The committee expressed their thanks for the amazing contribution of these young people and their presentations.

The meeting ended at 5.15 pm.

CHAIR:

DATED:

Item No. 7.	Classification: Open	Date: 7 July 2021	Meeting Name: Corporate Parenting Committee
Report title:		Corporate Parenting Strategy 2021-2024	
Ward(s) or groups affected:		All	
From:		Director, Children and Families	

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The committee notes the final draft children in care and care leavers strategy, the Corporate Parenting Strategy, and plans for the finalisation and adoption of the strategy.
2. The committee members are asked to:
 - Comment on the draft Corporate Parenting Strategy ("the strategy")
 - Agree the priority areas for the delivery of the strategy
 - Agree that the delivery of the strategy is regularly monitored through the work plan of the committee.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

4. The Southwark Council *Children in Care and Care Leavers Strategy 2016-2019*, the corporate parenting strategy, was published in February 2016 following the approval of the council's cabinet. The strategy was drafted in line with the Council Plan 2014-2018, the Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2015-2020 and the Children and Young People's Plan 2013-2016.
5. Building on the foundations of the existing strategies vision, aims and priorities, the council has developed a proposed next iteration of the corporate parenting strategy. The development of the new strategy follows and aligns to the revised Borough Plan 2018-2022, the Fairer Future's commitments, and the changed legislative and national policy context.
7. Progress towards the development of the new strategy began with the initiation of the Bright Spots Survey for children and young people in our care and those who have left our care. The Bright Spots Survey measures the well-being and quality of our children and young people's experience of care and the support they have received whilst in care and beyond. The tool provides a holistic insight in to the views and experiences of our children and young people which is invaluable in the future development

of our services and whole council approach to supporting the life chances of our children.

8. In addition to the work done previously to understand the views and experiences of our children and young people, the development of the new strategy seeks to understand and respond to our intelligence on the significant impact of Covid-19 Pandemic the health, wellbeing, educational and social development of our children and young people. As well as the significant discussions in society on structural inequality and institutional racism, that our children and young people have spoken so passionately to us about.
9. With the pace of change in society increasing and the complexities changing like no other time in recent generations, it is essential that this new strategy remains alive to the changing needs and issues affecting our children and young people, and their changing aspirations and goals.

NATIONAL CONTEXT

The Borough Plan 2018-2022

20. The Borough Plan restates the ambition to build a fairer future for all the people of Southwark. The specific challenge captured in the plan most relevant to children in care and care leavers is that of ensuring we provide the environment and support for our children and young people to have the *best start in life*. The new strategy will be critical to the delivery of this priority.
21. The new strategy has sought to better integrate the seven core values set out in the Borough Plan into our delivery of services for our children, young people and young adults. This is nowhere better emphasized in our aspiration of *treating residents as if they were a valued member of our family*. Aligned to the Corporate Parenting Principles this presents a stark challenge to all areas of the council, our partners, and even our wider residents, and public and private sector community, to recognize their responsibilities for raising our all of our children as if they were our own.

Policy, Legislative & Regulatory Context

23. Since the publication of the last strategy there has been a significant shift in the national policy context in relation to corporate parenting. This has included changes set out within the DfE Strategy *Keep on Caring 2016*, the *Children and Social Work Act 2017*, the 2018 Statutory Guidance *Applying corporate parenting principles to looked-after children and care leavers* and the revised Ofsted Framework *the Inspection of Local Authority Children Services Framework*, the ILACs, published in 2018.
24. *Keep on caring* built on a number of reforms to the care system prior to 2016 such as the publication of the cross-government Care Leaver

Strategy in 2013 and the introduction of the Staying Put duty in 2014. Recognizing the comparatively poor outcomes for care leavers against their peers, the strategy set out a vision and five key outcomes for the continuing reform of support for care leavers.

28. A primary intention of *Keep on Caring* was to “*make corporate parenting everyone’s responsibility*” this was to be delivered by the introduction of corporate parenting principles which require all departments within a local authority to recognise their role as corporate parents, encouraging them to look at the services and support that they provide through the lens of what a reasonable parent would do to support their own children. These principles were subsequently set out in the Children and Social Work Act 2017.
29. The Children and Social Work Act 2017, and the 2018 guidance defines, for the first time in law, the role of corporate parents, in addition to expanding and extending support for care leavers, for example through the publication of a ‘local offer for care leavers’ and making personal advisers available for care leavers up to the age of 25.
30. The corporate parenting principles within the Act as set out are that,

“In order to thrive, children and young people have certain key needs that good parents generally meet. The corporate parenting principles set out seven principles that local authorities must have regard to when exercising their functions in relation to looked after children and young people, as follows:

 - *to act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and wellbeing, of those children and young people*
 - *to encourage those children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings*
 - *to take into account the views, wishes and feelings of those children and young people*
 - *to help those children and young people gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners*
 - *to promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for those children and young people*
 - *for those children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work; and*
 - *to prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living.”*
32. The new strategy sets out to embed these principles within the council and beyond into our partners and broader community.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

Vision & Priorities

33. The new strategy adopts the wider vision of the council for Children that is;

We want all children and young people in Southwark to grow up in a safe, healthy and happy environment where they have the opportunity to reach their potential.

34. To achieve this vision we propose 6 key strategic priorities

- **Supporting More Families to Safely Stay Together** - Ensuring all our children & families get the right help at the right time, and at the earliest possible opportunity. To make sure that every child is supported to safely thrive at home.
- **Growing Up Safe and Independent in Society** - Giving all of our children the tools, skills, resources and support that they need to grow towards independence, and be protected from the threats and risks to them from an increasingly complex world.
- **Health, Wellbeing, Education & Opportunity** - Marshalling the unique resources of the borough to ensure that every one of our children and young adults gets the support and advocacy they deserve and expect from an excellent parent.
- **Happy, Safe and Stable** - Making sure that everyone of our children has a say in where they live and who they live with. That they are safe and in permanent homes earlier, closer to home, and supported to remain there as long as they need to.
- **Identity & Belonging** - Giving all our children and young people the chance to learn about themselves, their history and identity, and to live with carers who understand and reflect their cultural identity. Providing every chance for our children to appropriately engage with their own families and personal history.
- **A Whole Borough That 'Cares to Care'** - Placing delivering for our children and young adults at the heart of everything the Council and its partners do. Broadening the voice and experience of our children across all decision making, and making Southwark a truly Corporate Parenting Borough.

35. At the core of the strategy is our intention to drive the corporate parenting principles and delivery for our children, young people, and young adults into all areas of the Council and its partners, and to unashamedly

leverage all opportunities to improve the life chances of children in care and those who have left care.

Delivery Plan

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

Action	Due By
Corporate Parenting Committee Review & Comments	8 July 2021
Further Consultation & Engagement with children in care and care leavers	30 July 2021
Lead Member Approval	3 August 2021
Publication	6 August 2021
Development of Young People's Version & Action Plan	13 August 2024
Delivery	August 2021 – August 2024
Review and Refresh	February 2022 / August 2024

Policy implications

39. An updated and ambitious corporate parenting strategy that recognises the shift in national policy context and builds capacity across the local public sector system to deliver outcomes for our children in care and care leavers, will increasingly serve the delivery of the fairer future commitments and the Borough Plan.

Community impact statement

40. Successful delivery of a strategy to improve outcomes for children in care and care leavers will have a significantly positive impact on the outcomes of one of the most vulnerable groups.

Resource implications

41. There are no resource implications associated with the development of the strategy.

Legal implications

42. There are no legal implications associated with the development of the strategy.

Financial implications

43. There are no financial implications associated with the development of the strategy.

CONCLUSION

44. Southwark has a significant record of investment in services for our children in care and our care leavers, we have an agile and responsive partnership that is committed to achieving improved outcomes for our children. The draft strategy sets a high ambition for how we can continue to build on that investment and see meaningful transformation in the life chances of the most vulnerable in society.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
Previous corporate parenting strategy – cabinet 9 February 2016 (item 14)	Constitutional Team 160 Tooley Street London SE1 2QH	Paula.thornton@southwark.gov.uk
Web link: http://moderngov.southwark.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=302&MId=5144&Ver=4		

APPENDICES

No.	Title
Appendix 1	Draft Corporate Parenting Strategy 2021-2024

AUDIT TRAIL

Lead Officer	Alasdair Smith, Director, Children and Families		
Report Author	Michael Crowe, Service Development Manager		
Version	Final		
Dated	25 June 2021		
Key Decision?	No		
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER			
Officer Title		Comments Sought	Comments included
Director of Law and Governance		No	No
Strategic Director of Finance and Governance		No	No
Cabinet Member		No	No
Date final report sent to Constitutional Team			25 June 2021

LONDON BOROUGH OF SOUTHWARK

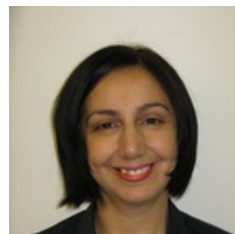
CARING TO CARE: ACHIEVING EXCELLENCE FOR OUR CHILDREN

CORPORATE PARENTING STRATEGY 2021-2024

FOREWORD - A FAIRER FUTURE FOR OUR CHILDREN

A large vertical photograph on the left side of the page. It shows the silhouettes of several children with their arms raised high in the air, reaching towards a large, bright sun that is partially obscured by clouds. The scene is backlit by the sun, creating a warm, golden glow. The children's figures are dark against the bright sky.

Foreword



Councillor Jasmine Ali
Deputy Leader &
Cabinet Lead Member for
Children, Young People &
Schools

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AN EXCELLENT 'CORPORATE' PARENT

The Children and Social Work Act 2017 set out in law the core principles of excellent corporate parenting and a challenge for every authority in the country to be the best parent they can be for our children and young people.

Corporate parenting means the whole local authority, its public and private sector partners, taking collective responsibility to achieve the outcomes for our children in care and young adults that we would want to see for our own children - achieving the age old duty of making sure our children's lives are always better, more successful and happier than our own.

Being an excellent corporate parent means we should be tirelessly ambitious for our children and unashamed at using every lever and tool at our disposal in providing for our children, giving them access to opportunities and offering every ounce of support we can to ensure they grow up to live the lives they choose for themselves.

The Corporate Parenting Principles set out in the Act are:

- 1.** to act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and wellbeing, of those children and young people
- 2.** to encourage those children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings
- 3.** to take into account the views, wishes and feelings of those children and young people
- 4.** to help those children and young people gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners
- 5.** to promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for those children and young people
- 6.** for those children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work; and
- 7.** to prepare children and young people for adulthood and independent living.



PRINCIPLES

CORPORATE PARENTING IS EVERYONES RESPONSIBILITY

There is no bigger responsibility on individuals than to raise our children well, and no more important duty on society than to raise the children in our care just as well. If you live, work, lead an organisation or business, or invest in Southwark, you are every much a part of parenting our children as a foster carer or social worker.

Whether you are a leader or a frontline worker, delivering for children in our care and our young adults is all our responsibility, ask yourselves these questions:

ORGANISATIONS

- Does your organisation recognise the corporate parenting principles, are these embedded in your policies, plans and strategies?
- Does your organisation actively support opportunities for our children and young adults?
- Are your services properly prioritising the needs of our children and young adults?
- Are you championing the voice and experience of our children and young people in your wider communities and sectors?

INDIVIDUALS

- Are you looking for ways you can provide opportunities for our children and young adults?
- Do you know about the issues and needs of our children and young adults?
- Do you know how you can connect with services to offer support and opportunity?
- Are you aspirational and ambitious for our children and young adults?
- Do you share that ambition with your colleagues, teams and communities?



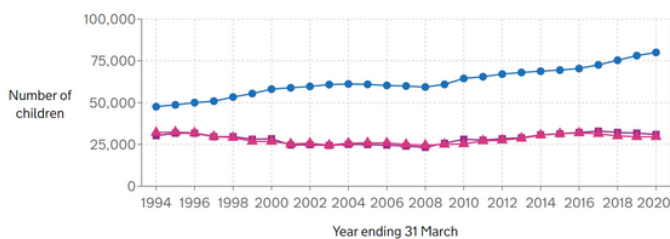
RESPONSIBILITY

CONTEXT: CHILDREN IN CARE

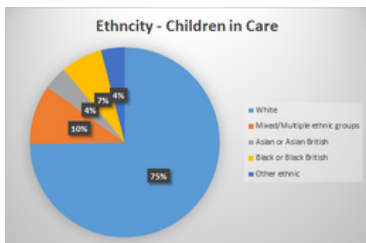
National Context - Children in Care

The number of children in care nationally has risen by approximately 25% in the last 10 years to 80,080.

Children looked after at 31 March, children starting to be looked after during the year and children ceasing to be looked after during the year, in England, 1994 to 2020

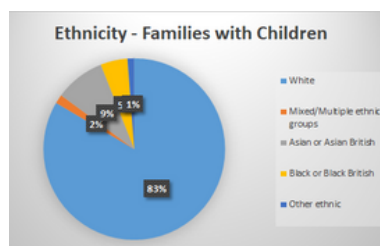


The single largest determining factor for children entering care is where they have experienced abuse or neglect (65%).



The majority of children in care are from a white background.

However, the national care population is disproportionately made up of children from mixed, black or other ethnic backgrounds.

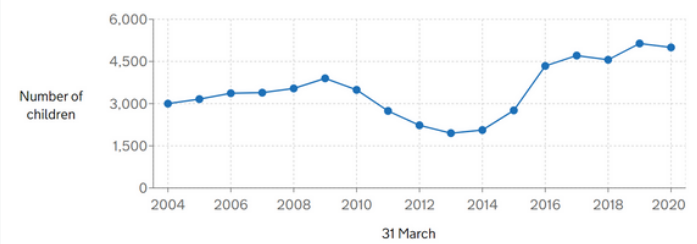


Most children live with foster carers (58%), of those that don't:

- 14% live with relatives or friends
- 13% are in residential accommodation
- 7% are living with their parents
- 3% live independently
- 5% are in other arrangements, such as awaiting adoption or in legal custody.

The majority of children live within 20 miles of home (73%).

Children looked after at 31 March who were unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, 2004 to 2020



In addition, the number of unaccompanied asylum seeking children has increased by 143% since 2014.

National Context - Outcomes

Whilst many children who have been in care lead positive and happy lives, it is undeniable that outcomes for children who have been in care remain significantly poorer than their peers;

- **25%** of the homeless population have been in care at some point in their lives
- Almost **25%** of the adult prison population have previously been in care, and nearly **50%** of under 21-year-olds in contact with the criminal justice system have spent time in care.
- **22%** of female care leavers become teenage parents
- Those who have been in care are between four and five times more likely to self-harm in adulthood.
- **39%** of care leavers aged 19-21 years were known not to be in education, employment, or training (NEET), compared to around 13% of all 19- to 21-year-olds
- Two thirds of all looked after children have at least one physical health complaint
- Almost half (49%) of children looked after had 'normal' emotional and behavioural health, 13% had 'borderline' scores and **38%** had scores which were a cause for concern.

OUR CHILDREN

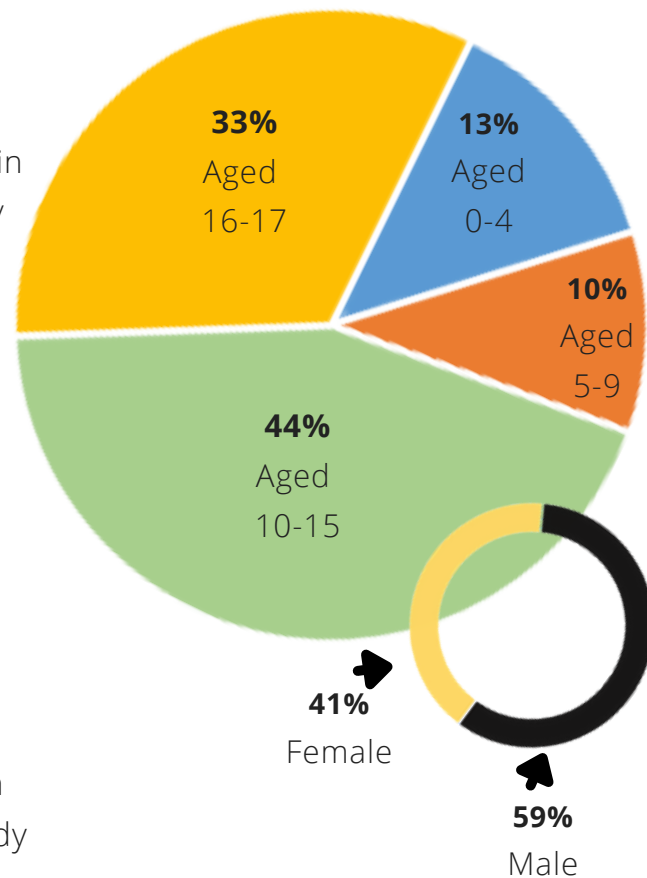


At the end of 2020/21 **449** children were in our care. This means 69 children in every 10,000 in Southwark. **38** of our children came to us as seeking asylum.

In the year **126** children came into our care, and **173** left our care, **47** of those children returned home to live with their families.

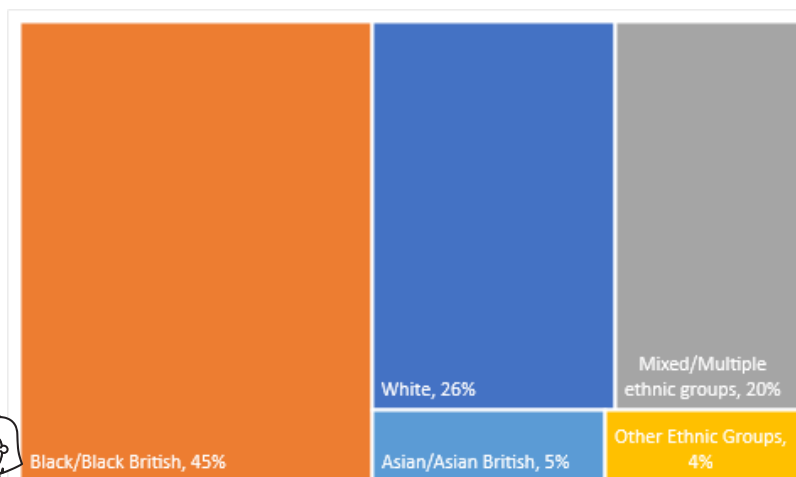


Most of our children are cared for by foster parents (**77%**). Another **10%** live in residential accommodation, **8%** are already living independently.



We are continuing to support **216** children who are cared for by Special Guardians....

....And **545** young adults who have left our care in the last few years.



78% of our children live in or close to Southwark

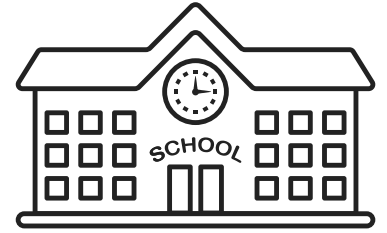


OUR CHILDREN



OUR CHILDREN

In 2019, **33%** of our children reached the expected standard in reading, writing and maths in both Key Stage 1 & Key Stage 2.



28% of all our school age children have a recognised special educational need.

95% of our children attend schools that are rated Good or Better by Ofsted.

The Average & Attainment Score for our children was **24.2** in 2019, against a national average of 19 for all children in care.

5% of our children are recognised as having a substance abuse problem

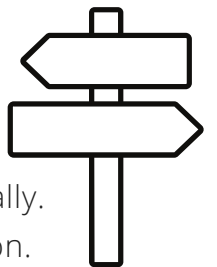


98% of our children have up to date health assessments, **91%** are up to date in their immunisations

36% of our children have SDQ scores that evidence concerns about their emotional wellbeing

89% of our young adults are living in suitable accommodation

65% of our young adults are in Education, Employment or Training. Compared to 53% nationally. **6%** are in Higher Education.



92% of our children who have been assessed by CAMHs Teams have experience 4 or more Adverse Childhood Experiences

93% of our Young Adults are still in regular contact with our services, and **15%** are still living with their former foster carers.



OUR CHILDREN

WHAT YOU'VE TOLD US

"WE WANT TO SEE OUR
SIBLINGS, AND WE WANT TO
GET TO KNOW OUR WIDER
FAMILIES"

"WE WANT TO KNOW WHERE WE
ARE GOING TO LIVE FOR THE
FUTURE, AND WE WANT TO STAY
WHERE WE'RE HAPPY"

"WE WANT TO
MEET OUR
CARERS BEFORE
WE MOVE"

" WE WANT TO
TRUSTED AND HAVE
THE CHANCE TO
SHOW WE CAN BE"

"WE ENJOY HAVING
HOBBIES AND THINGS
TO DO OUTSIDE OF
SCHOOL"

"BEING TAUGHT
SKILLS TO MAKE
US INDEPENDENT
IS IMPORTANT"

"WE CAN EASILY GET IN
TOUCH WITH OUR SOCIAL
WORKERS, WHICH IS
IMPORTANT TO US"

"WE'D LIKE TO BE
MORE INCLUDED IN
DECISIONS ABOUT
OUR LIVES AND TO
KNOW EXACTLY WHATS
GOING ON"

"MOST OF THE TIME WE
UNDERSTAND THE
REASONS WHY WE ARE
IN CARE, BUT NOT
ALWAYS"

"WE DONT ALWAYS
FEEL ABLE TO
TALK TO OUR
CARERS ABOUT
OUR WORRIES"

"SOMETIMES WE'RE WORRIED ABOUT
OUR FEELINGS, THIS ISN'T ALWAYS
NOTICED, BUT WHEN IT IS WE DO
GET HELP TO COPE WITH OUR
WORRIES"

"OUR SOCIAL WORKERS WERE
OFTEN THE SAME, BUT WE'D
LIKE OUR LEAVING CARE
WORKERS TO BE MORE
CONSISTENT"

"SINCE WE LEFT CARE WE
DON'T FEEL AS CLOSE TO
SOMEONE WE TRUST AS WE
USED TO, WI WOULD LOVE TO
HAVE FRIENDS TO TRUST AND
DO ACTIVITIES WITH, IT CAN
BE QUITE LONELY"

"TOO MANY OF US FEEL
QUITE LOW WHEN WE'VE LEFT
CARE, WE SOMETIMES FEEL
UNSAFE AND UNSETTLED AT
HOME AND IN THE
NEIGHBOURHOOD, AND
WORRY ABOUT OUR
FINANCES"

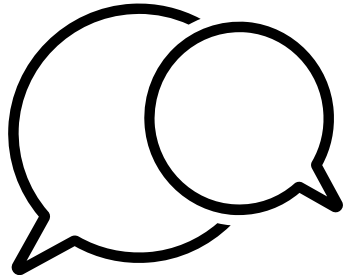
"LOTS OF US HAVE GOOD
PLACES TO LIVE, BUT THAT
NEEDS TO BE THE SAME FOR
EVERYONE"

"MOST OF US GET INVOLVED IN
OUR PLANS, BUT NOT ENOUGH
OF US ARE FULLY INVOLVED,
AND GETTING OUR SAY"



THE VOICE OF OUR CHILDREN

Hearing and responding to the thoughts, feelings and experiences of our children and young people is paramount. We will use this strategy to engage our young people in how best to achieve what they want us to, how we can improve our services and how we develop new approaches, plans and services to better meet their needs, goals and aspirations.



Speaker Box

Speaker Box is our primary forum for engaging our children, young people and young adults. It's a forum where they can meet peers, talk about their experiences and challenge the Council on our delivery and practice. The forum runs a range of different activities, consultations and projects to get involved in.

Our young people regularly attend and hold workshops at the Council's Corporate Parenting Committee.

But we know we need to do more to systematically gather the views and thoughts of our children from the many times and places we talk and engage with them. In their reviews, when we plan with them, and when we plan for their education. All of these opportunities give us valuable insight and we can embed this in our service design and improvement to truly capture and represent the voice of all our children and young adults.

DELIVERING OUR STRATEGY

This strategy has been developed based on the evidence and experiences we have now, we know there is always more to do to understand better and work closer with our children and young people to develop our plans and services. We know that life moves fast and the pandemic and issues in society are changing our children and young adults' stories quicker than ever before. There are new causes for celebration and new challenges every day.

We want this Strategy to live, to evolve and to change alongside and by always learning from our children and young people. We need to be adaptable and we need to be prepared to re-prioritise when our children tell us too.

Our Corporate Parenting Committee is the driving force behind that approach and our strategy. Chaired by the Deputy Leader of the Council, and Lead Member for Children and Young People and attended by a wide range of Elected Members, Partners and most importantly our children and young adults themselves. The committee has a responsibility to ensure that the life chances of looked after children are maximised in every area and to aid the transition to a secure and productive adulthood.

We will report regularly on our activities, our progress and our impact to the Committee and most importantly to all of our children, young people and young adults.

OUR VISION FOR OUR CHILDREN

Southwark Council is committed to its vision of building a ***fairer future for all in Southwark.***

We will do this by delivering on our core values to;

- Treat residents as if they were a valued member of our own family;
- Be open, honest and accountable;
- Work for everyone to realise their own potential;
- Spend money as if it were from our own pocket;
- Make Southwark a place to be proud of;
- Always work to make Southwark more equal and just;
- Stand against all forms of discrimination and racism.

Our vision of a fairer future for our children and young adults is that;

We want all children and young people in Southwark to grow up in a safe, healthy and happy environment where they have the opportunity to reach their potential.

This vision is true for all children and young people in Southwark, and is critical for those children in our care and the young adults who have been in our care.

A FAIRER FUTURE FOR OUR CHILDREN

A ***fairer future*** for our children means;

Safe

- More children being able to remain at home
- Reducing involvement with the criminal justice system
- Reducing the impact of exploitation and extra-familial harm on our children; and our children telling us they feel safe at home and in the community.



Healthy

- All children accessing appropriate mental health support
- All children regularly accessing healthy leisure activities
- All children being up to date on their assessments and checks; and our children telling us they feel and are healthy.



Happy

- All children in a stable home, with a trusted relationship with those who care for them
- Every child accessing an opportunity to learn, train and work that meets their aspirations
- Reducing instances of substance misuse; and our children telling us they feel happy.



This is how we create the opportunity for our children to reach their potential

OUR PRIORITIES

Supporting More Families to Safely Stay

Together - Ensuring all our children & families get the right help at the right time, and at the earliest possible opportunity. To make sure that every child is supported to safely thrive at home.

01

02

Growing Up Safe and Independent in Society -

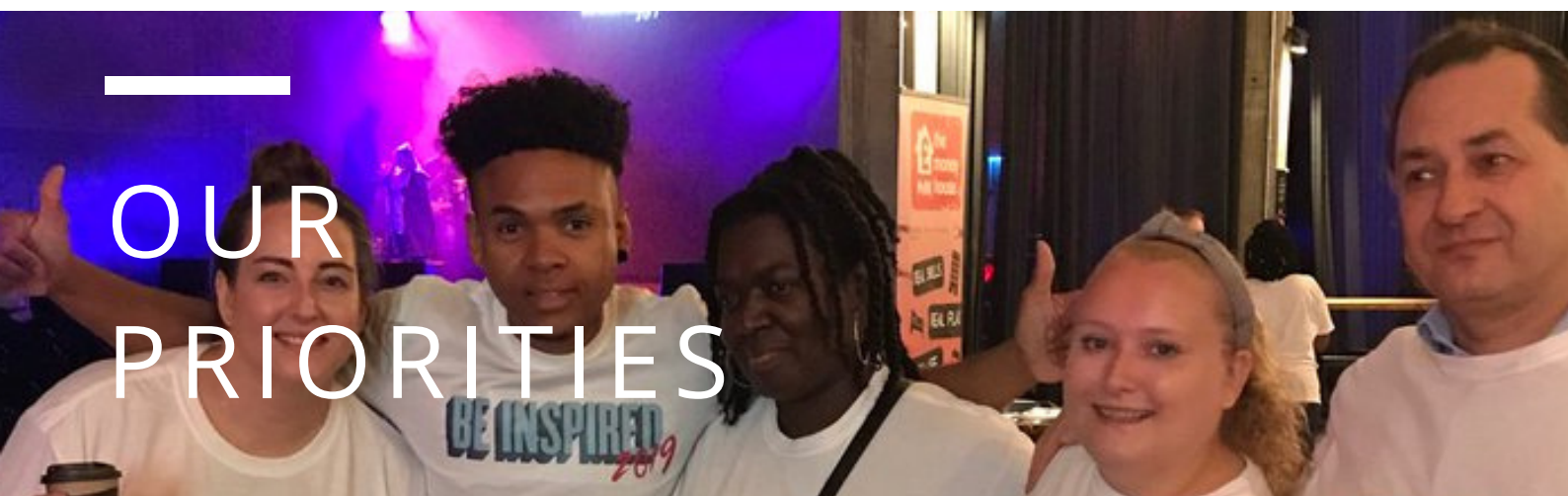
Giving all of our children the tools, skills, resources and support that they need to grow towards independence, and be protected from the threats and risks to them from an increasingly complex world.

Health, Wellbeing, Education & Opportunity -

Marshalling the unique resources of the Borough to ensure that every one of our children and young adults gets the support and advocacy they deserve and expect from an excellent parent.

03

OUR PRIORITIES



OUR PRIORITIES

Happy, Safe and Stable - Making sure that everyone of our children has a say in where they live and who they live with. That they are safe and in permanent homes earlier, closer to home, and supported to remain there as long as they need to.

04

05

Identity & Belonging - Giving all our children and young people the chance to learn about themselves, their history and identity, and to live with carers who understand and reflect their cultural identity. Providing every chance for our children to appropriately engage with their own families and personal history.

A Whole Borough That 'Cares to Care' - Placing delivering for our children and young adults at the heart of everything the Council and its partners do. Broadening the voice and experience of our children across all decision making, and making Southwark a truly Corporate Parenting Borough.

06



OUR
PRIORITIES

DELIVERING OUR PRIORITIES

01

SUPPORTING MORE FAMILIES TO SAFELY STAY TOGETHER

In previous years we have invested heavily in our edge of care services to support children to remain at home where it is safe for them to do so. Since 2016 we have successfully reduced the rate of children in our care from 76 per 10,000 to 66. This means 45 more children have been supported to remain at home. We have also increased the percentage of children who are living with friends and relatives from 7% to 14%.

We will:

- Continue to invest in evidence-based edge of care services and provision
- Further increase the rate of children in connected care arrangements, through investment in our Family Group Conferencing and support offers
- Further develop our reunification support offer to ensure when children return home they are able to do so sustainably and that more children are supported to return home.

02

GROWING UP SAFE AND INDEPENDENT IN SOCIETY

In the UK the average child now leaves home around the age of 25. Our children and young people already face significant challenges in growing to independence. There is rising complexity in our communities, rising risks of exploitation, and increasing difficulty for young people across the country, in housing, employment and managing independence. All of these issues have been exacerbated by one of the most difficult years society has faced in generations. Now more than ever its essential that our children are given all the skills and support they need to thrive independently.

We will:

- Embed transitional safeguarding practice so that care leavers are safeguarded from exploitation and abuse when they turn 18.
- Continue to invest in support for our children to 'stay put' with their carer's when they wish to do so.
- We will work with our Housing teams to ensure our care leavers are given as much help as possible to find not just suitable housing, but housing that is fit for their futures.
- Invest in enhanced life skills programmes for all of our children
- Work with partners to develop deposit support schemes and savings accounts for our children.

DELIVERING OUR PRIORITIES

04

HAPPY, SAFE AND STABLE

03

HEALTH, WELLBEING, EDUCATION & OPPORTUNITY

As a central London Borough, Southwark is rich in connections to some of the best resources in the Country. We have dedicated partners who recognise and prioritise the needs of our children and young people. There is no reason why the gap between health, education and life outcomes for children who have been in care cannot be closed with their peers.

We will:

- Set high aspirations for our children, listen to them and develop every possible opportunity for new experiences that match their aspirations and harness their enthusiasm
- Commit to providing all our children and young adults with the right digital devices and connections so they are not disadvantaged
- Guarantee access to high quality mental health support for all our children
- Strengthen the sporting, leisure and cultural offer
- Deliver a comprehensive educational catch-up offer for our children to mitigate the impact of the pandemic.

The messages from our children could not be more unequivocal, what really matters to them is stability, knowing where they will live, and who with, and that they are trusted and respected.

We have made good progress in recent years in improving stability for our children, we have enhanced the offer of our clinical services to support stability and we have invested in our care and leaving care services to provide consistency.

But we can and must always do more and better.

We will:

- Increase the sufficiency, range and quality of opportunities for our children and our young adults, to ensure more are able to live within and close to the Borough
- Listen more to our children and change how we all speak and think about them
- Continue to invest in the support offer for our children and carers, through our clinical services and other partners
- Provide an enhanced training offer to our carers and increase the availability of therapeutic carers.

DELIVERING OUR PRIORITIES

05

IDENTITY & BELONGING

Our children and young people have spoken to us in powerful terms about their desire to be connected to their own personal histories, of the importance of links to their siblings and wider families, and more broadly about the importance of addressing their concerns about their cultural identity and addressing structural inequality across the system.

We will:

- Provide enhanced opportunities for children to 'Re-Connect' with their families, family networks and important people in their lives
- Review our assessment, learning and development for foster carers about the needs of black young people in care.
- Address disproportionality in our carer population, and bring more young people back to live in our Borough, and with their communities
- Deliver a mandatory education program for workers and managers about racism, anti-discriminatory practice, black history and inequality
- Improve our equality data collection and monitoring, address the gaps and understand why certain groups are overrepresented in care
- Ensure that life story work is completed with our children and young people.

06

A WHOLE BOROUGH THAT 'CARES TO CARE'

The council's has plans to invest £1bn over the next ten years, in local development initiatives, has an annual turnover of £1.2bn and spends approximately £650m a year with external contractors. It is home to over 15,000 businesses, including some of the largest and most prominent private and public sector organisations, educational and cultural institutions in the Country. Embedding the corporate parenting principles across the Borough has the potential to be truly transformative for our children and young people.

We will:

- Review the Council's commissioning, planning and licensing arrangements to leverage Social Capital for our children and young adults
- Establish a shadow Children & Young People's Cabinet to hold the whole council to account to include young people with experience of care
- Work with our children and young people to develop their own version of this strategy and develop a new pledge
- Develop a corporate parenting champions network across the Council and our key partners
- Challenge all the major organisations in the Borough to adopt the corporate parenting principles and deliver on a promise to our children
- Improve how we listen to our children and young adults and embed them and their views in our service improvement activity at every stage.

Item No. 8.	Classification: Open	Date: 7 July 2021	Meeting Name: Corporate Parenting Committee
Report title:		Annual Virtual Headteacher's Report	
Ward(s) or groups affected:		All	
From:		Southwark Virtual School Headteacher	

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the Corporate Parenting Committee notes the Virtual Headteacher's Report for Southwark looked after children.
2. To feedback any comments to be provided for the upcoming corporate parenting committee meeting.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

3. As Southwark Council is the Corporate Parent for Southwark's looked after children, the responsibility to ensure that the children within our care have the best possible chance at accomplishing high educational achievements whilst in our care. Through the role of Virtual Headteacher, it is ensured that the best education provision is upheld; along with continuous work to ensure swift action is taken in time of change and crisis to secure prompt change to the child's educational needs that are catered to them individually.
4. The Virtual Headteacher's report outlines the educational progress, attainment and attendance of Southwark's children in care. The report indicates key priorities for the Virtual School and provides an overview of pupil premium looked after children (LAC) spend.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

5. The Virtual Headteacher's report is attached as Appendix 1.

Community impact statement

6. This item will have an impact on the work that the council does with looked after children.
7. The decision to note this report has been judged to have no or a very small impact on local people and communities.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
None		

APPENDICES

No.	Title
Appendix 1	Virtual Headteacher's report

AUDIT TRAIL

Lead Officer	Nina Dohel, Director of Education		
Report Author	Usha Singh, Virtual School Headteacher		
Version	Final		
Dated	24 June 2021		
Key Decision?	No		
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER			
Officer Title		Comments sought	Comments included
Director of Law and Governance		No	No
Strategic Director of Finance and Governance		No	No
Cabinet Member		No	No
Date final report sent to Constitutional Team			24 June 2021

Southwark Virtual School Annual Headteacher's Report 2019-20



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Preface

This report relates to the 2019-2020 academic year which was marked by the global pandemic. This created unprecedented challenges to daily routines in all our lives and traditional ways of living and working ceased globally.

A section of this report is dedicated to Southwark Virtual School's response to the needs of children in care during the pandemic.

The Summer 2020 exam series was cancelled as part of the government's response to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, which included the closure of schools and colleges to all but the children of key workers and vulnerable children from 20 March 2020. The majority of pupils did not return until the beginning of the autumn term in September 2020.

The DfE publication "Outcomes for Children in need, including children looked after by Local Authorities in England - March 2021" offers the following advice when viewing 2019-20 examination data:

"The cancellation of summer 2020 GCSE exams and the new method of awarding grades has led to a set of pupil attainment statistics that are unlike previous years. Each of the pupil level attainment statistics have increased - more than would be expected in a typical year.... This reflects the change to the way GCSE grades were awarded rather than improvements in pupil performance. As a result, the 2019/20 data should not be directly compared to attainment data from previous years for the purposes of measuring changes in student performance."

1. Introduction

- 1.1. This report presents an overview of the activities and impact of Southwark Virtual School. It reflects on the impact of our activities and identifies areas of future development to achieve improved outcomes for Southwark looked after children. We want all looked after children to achieve the best they can and promote success into adulthood, whatever age they came into our care.
- 1.2. The Virtual School supports all children in care and relevant care leavers regardless of their length of time in care. The educational attainment data in the report relates to those who have been in continuous care for more than 12 months.
- 1.3. The data in this report is based on 2020 Children Looked After (CLA) outcomes.
- 1.4. The role of the Virtual School is to promote the educational achievement of children in our care whether educated in Southwark or placed out of the local authority. The Virtual School has high aspirations for and strives to close the attainment gap between our children and their peers.
- 1.5. Looked-after and previously looked-after children start with the disadvantage of their pre-care experiences and, often, have special educational needs. Virtual School Heads have a key role to ensure these children have the maximum opportunity to reach their full educational potential - an important part of why this role was made statutory.
- 1.6. As part of a local authority's corporate parent role, the Virtual School needs to be the educational advocate that parents are for others. For previously looked-after children, the Virtual School will be a source of advice and information to help their parents to advocate for them as effectively as possible.
- 1.7. Southwark Virtual School is aspirational and our mission is to provide support to looked after children so that they can do the very best they can at school. Together with our looked after children, carers, schools, Social Care colleagues and other professionals, we plan with a view to achieve clear academic and vocational pathways into education, employment and training. We aim to minimise disruptions along the way.

2. Cohort

2.1. Southwark's Children in Care population is constantly changing as children move in and out of the Care System.

2.2. In the 2019/2020 academic year, there were approximately 422 children on Southwark Virtual School roll at any point in time. Of these, 300 children had been in Care for more than 12 months.

2.3. The data of the cohort below represents the current picture of Southwark CLA statutory school age cohort.

2.4. Boys remain a larger proportion of the Southwark looked after cohort.

Table 1: Gender		
	Number	Percentage
Female	128	44%
Male	160	56%

2.5. Southwark looked after children with an EHCP is more than twice the percentage of the overall pupil population. **Southwark 33% All pupils 15.3%.**

[Special educational needs and disability: an analysis and summary of data sources - May 2021](#)

Table 2: Special Education Needs - EHCPs			
	Total LAC	EHCP	EHCP
Yr R	5	0	0%
Yr 1	3	0	0%
Yr 2	9	2	22%
Yr 3	16	4	25%
Yr 4	9	1	11%
Yr 5	19	6	32%
Yr 6	20	10	50%
Yr 7	29	11	38%
Yr 8	34	9	26%
Yr 9	38	18	47%
Yr 10	48	13	27%
Yr 11	58	20	34%
Total	288	94	33%

2.6. The Ethnicity of Southwark's Children looked after cohort, while in contrast to the national cohort, remains more or less in line with our closest statistical neighbours and reflects similarities of the demographics of Southwark's resident population and of Inner-City London.

Table 2: Ethnicity						
	White	Mixed	Asian	Black	EOTH	Other
Southwark	30	16	5	44	6	0
Camden	34	13	10	33	11	0
Enfield	55	12	x	27	5	x
Greenwich	52	20	2	23	3	0
Hackney	27	24	x	38	4	x
Hammersmith & Fulham	23	19	x	41	9	x
Haringey	31	10	x	48	7	x
Islington	41	27	x	25	3	x
Lambeth	17	20	3	54	6	0
Lewisham	30	23	5	38	x	x
Waltham Forest	35	22	12	23	x	x

*Source: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/statistics-looked-after-children>

2.6. The geographic spread of Southwark Virtual School pupils remains similar to previous years but has seen a 2% increase of pupils looked after placed within the borough. Currently, 73% of children looked after are placed outside of Southwark. This differs with national figures where 40% are looked after outside the authority.

72% of Southwark statutory school age CLA cohort are in Secondary education compared to 67% last year.

Table 4: IN and OUT of Borough					
	Total - Cohort Numbers	In Borough	%	Out Borough	%
R	5	0	0%	5	100%
1	3	3	100%	0	0%
2	9	3	33%	6	67%
3	16	7	44%	9	56%
4	9	3	33%	6	67%
5	19	3	16%	16	84%
6	20	4	20%	16	80%
7	29	7	24%	22	76%
8	34	8	24%	26	76%
9	38	10	26%	28	74%
10	48	16	33%	32	67%
11	58	13	22%	45	78%
Totals	288	77	27%	211	73%

- 2.7. Southwark Virtual School strives to ensure that CLA are placed in schools that are good or outstanding. Children in schools rated as “Outstanding” by Ofsted are half as likely to experience a mid-year school move compared to children in schools rated “Inadequate”. Children only attend ‘Requires Improvement’ schools in exceptional circumstances, such as when a previously Good school has a poor inspection outcome but it is considered in best interests of the child for them to remain there.
- 2.8. Through dedicated effort of Virtual School Education Advisors and Social Worker, the number of children attending schools less than good has decreased from 6% last year to 3% this year.

Table 5: School Ofsted Ratings		
	Number	%
Outstanding	78	27%
Good	150	52%
Requires Improvement	10	3%
Inadequate	1	0%
No Grade (new schools / academy converters)	49	17%

3. A Changing Education Landscape

- 3.1. “The COVID-19 pandemic has created the largest disruption of education systems in human history, affecting nearly 1.6 billion learners in more than 200 countries. Closures of schools, institutions and other learning spaces have impacted more than 94% of the world’s student population. This has brought far-reaching changes in all aspects of our lives. Social distancing and restrictive movement policies have significantly disturbed traditional educational practices. Reopening of schools after relaxation of restriction is another challenge with many new standard operating procedures put in place.”

“The need of the hour is to innovate and implement alternative educational system and assessment strategies. The COVID-19 pandemic has provided us with an opportunity to pave the way for introducing digital learning. “

Sumitra Pokhrel, Roshan Chhetri. A Literature Review on Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on Teaching and Learning, SAGE Journals, Vol 8, Issue 1, January 2021
<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/2347631120983481>

- 3.2. From September 2021, Virtual School heads will be strategic leaders who promote the educational outcomes of children with a social worker. The LA will receive funding to resource the Virtual School Head to work with early years settings, schools, colleges and
-

social care leaders to create a culture of high aspirations that helps all children with social workers to make educational progress.

[Promoting the education of children with a social worker: Virtual School Head role extension](#)

3.3. The extended Virtual School Head role will;

- make visible the disadvantages that children with a social worker can experience, enhancing partnerships between education settings and local authorities to help all agencies hold high aspirations for these children.
- promote practice that supports children's engagement in education, recognising that attending an education setting can be an important factor in helping to keep children safe from harm.
- level up children's outcomes and narrow the attainment gap so every child can reach their potential. This will include helping to make sure that children with a social worker benefit from support to recover from the impact of COVID-19.

4. Ofsted

4.1. The following quotes are extracted from the findings of a focused visit to Southwark local authority children's services between 29 September and 1 October 2020.

<https://files.ofsted.gov.uk/v1/file/50155795>

- Senior managers and staff have ensured that children and young people continue to be safeguarded. The best possible decisions are being made about children's care and education
- During the pandemic, the virtual school has provided effective oversight of the progress of children in care, including school attendance and the take-up of remote learning during the summer term. Most children reviewed during this visit were making reasonable progress in their education over this period, supported by the provision of laptops and additional tuition through the virtual school.
- Foster carers spoke very positively about the support and help that they are receiving for children's care and education during the pandemic. They said that 'Social workers do what they say they are going to do.' Another carer told inspectors that their child felt 'extra valued and cared for' during lockdown, as a result of all the extra help with their remote learning.

5. Feedback from Stakeholders

5.1. The following email received from a parent of a child in residential care.

Sent: Monday, September 7, 2020 11:29 AM
To: Singh, Usha
Subject: Southwark Virtual School - great work

I just wanted to send an email to express our sincere thanks and gratitude and acknowledge the many hours of hard work done by the excellent Southwark Virtual School over the past two years. There is nobody i can single out for praise as you have all been, without exception, amazing - your good self, John, Alice, Janet, Blossom, Lisa, and everyone else behind the scenes involved in making it happen. Thanks to your input, we avoided a potential PEx, got one-to-one support for [REDACTED], got an EHCP in place and identified a path forward for [REDACTED] where seemingly none was to be found. The education of Southwark's looked after children is championed by the excellent work you guys do.

Best wishes

5.2. **North West Kent Alternative Provision Service** Deputy Head of Service & Lead for Inclusion shared a written testimonial in October 2020 and highlights Southwark's response and support during the Covid-19 period.

Southwark Virtual School have worked with our service on an extremely complex case of a young man in care, who needed an EHCP and was at serious risk of permanent exclusion. They have supported our child-centred approach throughout and been on hand to offer guidance when needed.

This case was made more complex by the delays ...However, Southwark Virtual School have continued with their tenacious support of this young person to ensure that ... the EHCP secured.

Further to this, I think it is also worth noting how useful, user friendly and child-centred the PEP paperwork and processes they work to are. This has been particularly of note during the challenging Covid-19 period, where they were the only Virtual School I work with who updated the paperwork to reflect the new and emerging challenges schools were facing and considered how they could offer further support through the PEP process.

The allocation of a case worker, who already had knowledge of the student and worked to understand our provision was also of huge benefit to this case. It meant we had a dedicated person to contact who wanted to ensure the placement with us worked.

Having worked with a number of virtual schools linked to students in our setting, I have to say the experience with Southwark has meant that we were in the best possible position to offer the best for the student in question.

6. Pupil Premium Plus

6.1. The Pupil Premium Plus (PP+) is grant funding from the DfE to raise the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and to close the gap with their peers.

6.2. **From April 2020, the new rate is £2,345 per eligible pupil.**

6.3. Over the past academic year, Southwark Virtual School was able to target specialist resources to ensure that educational needs were still met even though schools were closed. Pupil Premium Plus (PP+) was devolved to ensure that schools have the right resources to meet pupils' needs. This included purchasing laptops and increasing the tuition offer for online learning.

6.4. The Virtual School traditionally utilises retained funding for:

- To support children's attainment and social/mental health well-being by topping up exceptional needs funding allocations as required by schools.
- Education Psychologist support dedicated to the Virtual School to support learning difficulties and early identification of statutory assessments.
- Speech and Language service offers both direct work with our most vulnerable looked after children and training to Southwark networks around children.
- Fixed Term resourcing with the employment of 4 Specialist Education Advisors, 1 Project Officer and 2 Information Advice and Guidance officers.
- Supplementary Home Tuition for pupils in full time education with a focus on English and maths to support academic achievement.
- Exam support to all looked after children taking exams through offer of 30 hours of additional tuition.
- Interim Alternative Provision: home tuition as part of a temporary transition provision for children who are between care placements, persistent absentees (school refusers) and other circumstances where this support is needed.
- Online learning programme to secure swift access to education for pupils without a school place due to care placement changes and those pupils who are placed in remote areas of the country where 1:1 tuition cannot be reserved.
- Digital resource –targeted curriculum related software to complement learning and to mitigate for changes in placements or missed schooling.
- Letterbox Literacy targeted resources for primary aged pupils targeted. Packages delivered to children are equipped with reading and writing material as well as stationery

7. Personal Education Plans (PEPs)

7.1. The Personal Education Plan or PEP is a record of how professionals around the child looked after will support their educational outcomes and achievement. It is developed and reviewed termly with the designated teacher, young person, social worker, carer and Virtual School. A PEP should be started within 10 days of a child becoming looked after, and their plan must be in place by their first review. PEP documents include:

- Strengths and achievements
- Views of the student
- SMART academic targets
- Current and target attainment data

7.2. PEPs are a key driver in ensuring our pupils receive good quality education provision that is suited to their needs. PEPs are a holistic tool to improve attainment and engagement.

7.3. The Virtual School Education Advisors are currently engaged in an audit of completed PEP documents that aims to look at each completed PEP document with a view of rating whether the documents are addressing and meeting the needs of students.

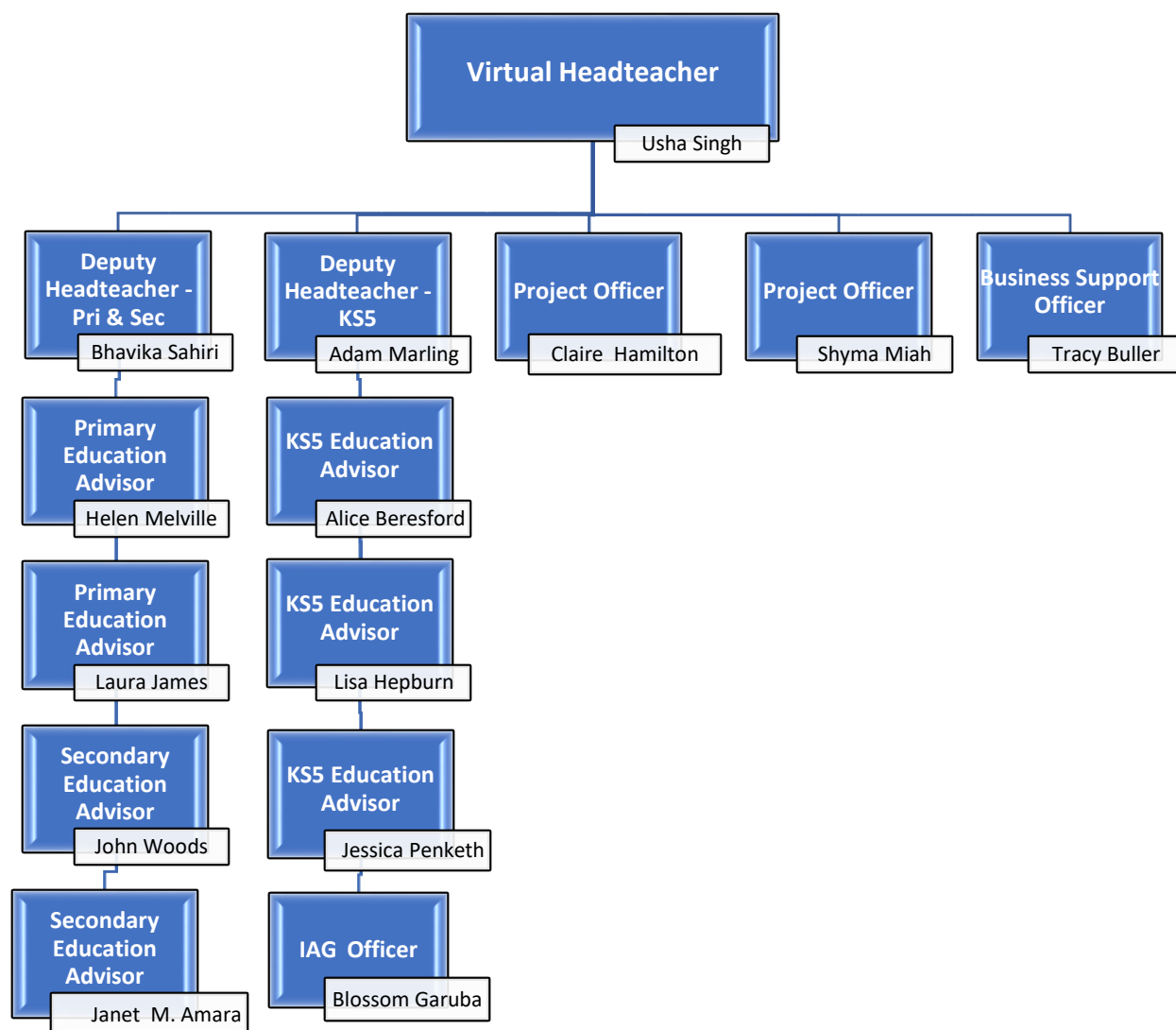
7.4. In the current education climate all Southwark PEPs are taking place remotely. The number of PEP meetings taking place has increased with more professionals within the network able to join meeting remotely.

7.5. Southwark Personal Education Plan (PEP) performance as at December 2020 was reported as 83% up from 70% last year. The target remains 100%.

8. Virtual School – Staff Structure

8.1. The Virtual School in Southwark forms part of the Education Access and Statutory Services division in Children's and Adults' Services. A minor reorganisation of management roles has recently been undertaken to provide a focus on specialist provision at statutory school age and post 16 with more targeted leadership.

8.2. The outcomes achieved in this year are due, in part, to the effort, persistence and expertise of Virtual School officers, working closely with schools, carers, other local authorities and social workers. The work put in by these post holders, such as developing a strong working together ethos with the multi-disciplinary team and both internal and external networks relates to and directly impacts on the good outcomes of the Virtual School.



9. Key stage 4

9.1. Southwark's 2019-2020 Year 11 Cohort Information

Southwark's 2019-2020 Year 11 cohort comprised 55 children.

19-20 Yr11 cohort		
Gender		
Male	39	71%
Female	16	29%
SEN/EHCP		
SEN Support	9	16%
EHCP	20	36%
Total SEN	29	53%
IN/OUT borough		
In borough	11	20%
Out of borough	44	80%
12 miles+	47	85%

- 29% of the cohort was female and 71% male. This is different from London and national data which shows a smaller female population at 42% and 47% female respectively.
- 53% children from the 2020 cohort were recorded as having SEN. 36% had an EHCP and 16% had SEN support.
- 20% were educated in the borough compared to a London figure of 42% and 66% nationally.

9.2. Attainment information

The data below offer a summary of attainment for Southwark Virtual School looked after children (CLA) cohort as well as the SADA903 cohort which are our looked after children who are 12 months or more in care.

12 Months+ in Care

This definition has been used in statutory guidance because 12 months is considered an appropriate length of time to gauge the possible association of being looked after on educational attainment.

Southwark's 2020 KS4 cohort comprised 41 children who had been looked after continuously for at least 12 months as at 31 March.

- 29% were girls and 71% boys.
- 63% of the cohort had SEN with 41% with a statutory EHCP in place.

English and Maths			
Level	2018	2019	2020
English Standard, 9-4	24%	26%	34%
English Strong, 9-5	15%	17%	20%
Maths Standard, 9-4	21%	34%	34%
Maths Strong, 9-5	9%	11%	24%

Southwark's 2020 CLA results for our 12 months plus cohort have improved on the 2019 results and demonstrates a year on year improvement in attainment.

Achieving a pass in both English and Maths			
	2018	2019	2020
Standard, 9-4			34%
Strong, 9-5	6.5	11	17%

Southwark's 2020 CLA for our 12 months plus cohort achieving a strong pass in both English and Maths at grades 9 to 5 have improved on the 2019 results – highlighted in green.

9.3. **Full GCSE Cohort including children who have been in care for less than 12 months**

Southwark's 2019-2020 Year 11 cohort comprised 55 children. 14 children were in Care for 12 months or less.

- 29% of the cohort was female and 71% male. This is different from London and national data which shows a smaller female population at 42% and 47% female respectively.
- 53% children from the 2020 cohort were recorded as having SEN. 36% had an EHCP and 16% had SEN support.
- 20% were educated in the borough compared to a London figure of 42% and 66% nationally.

Groups of the children that were not entered in the exam:

ESOL	5
Missing from care	2
Secure Centre	1

Attainment:

English and Maths		
	2019	2020
English Standard, 9-4	32%	27%
English Strong, 9-5	26%	16%
Maths Standard, 9-4	13%	27%
Maths Strong, 9-5	7%	20%

The results of Southwark's 2020 GCSE cohort shows while they did less well than their 2019 counterparts in English, there was significant increase in Maths outcomes.

Achieving a pass in both English and Maths		
	2019	2020
Standard, 9-4		22%
Strong, 9-5	10%	15%

Southwark's 2020 GCSE cohort achieving a Strong 9-5 was a 5% point increase from outcomes the previous year.

Achieved a Grade 1 - 9		
	Number of children	%
English	25	45%
Maths	25	45%

45% of Southwark's 2020 GCSE cohort achieved a Grade 1-9 in English.

9.4. **Destination of 2020 Year 11 Cohort**

Successful Transitions from KS4 to KS5 are the result of joined up working between Social Workers and Virtual school teams at Key stage 4 and 5. Handover meetings are scheduled for the end of each academic year and detailed information is shared to ensure continuity of support.

Transition arrangements ensure that our students are progressing to a) an appropriate level and b) to subjects that they have a genuine interest in.

Transitions from year 11 to 12:

Secondary phase Virtual School Education Advisors work together with the year 11 Information Advice and Guidance (IAG) officer to plan for life after GCSE. A contingency plan is put in place based on GCSE results.

Special consideration at this early stage is given to students with an Education Health Care Plan (EHCP) so that we are able to share detailed information with prospective colleges and the correct support is put in place. The second group of particular interest is the A' level contingent. The Virtual School put early support plans in place so that these students can make the academic jump from level 2 education to level 3.

The table below offers the destination information of the 2020 Year 11 Cohort:

Destinations				
	Gender	SEN	LA Borough	Year 12 Destination
1	Male	EHCP	Milton Keynes	HMYOI Secure Training Centre Oakhill
2	Male	EHCP	Lewisham	Shooters Hill Sixth Form College
3	Male		Croydon	St Francis Xavier Sixth Form College
4	Male	EHCP	Essex	Castledon Sixth Form
5	Male	SEN Support	Wealden	Uckfield Community Technology College
6	Male		Lambeth	Westminster Kingsway
7	Male	SEN Support	Wirral	Birkenhead Sixth Form
8	Male	EHCP	Southwark	Street Vibes Academy
9	Male		Bromley	John Rustin College
10	Female	EHCP	Croydon	Lewisham College
11	Male	EHCP	Southwark	NEET
12	Female		Croydon	Shooters Hill Sixth Form College
13	Female	EHCP	Kent	Canterbury College
14	Male		Croydon	London South East Colleges (Bromley Campus)
15	Male	EHCP	Southwark	Lambeth College Clapham Centre
16	Male	EHCP	Southwark	The Charter School North Dulwich
17	Male		Burnley	One In A Million Free School
18	Male		Lewisham	Christ The King: Emmanuel
19	Female	EHCP	Reading	Capel Manor
20	Female	EHCP	Southwark	Southwark College
21	Female		Southwark	Sacred Heart Catholic School
22	Female	EHCP	Hastings	Roots and Shoots
23	Female	EHCP	Waltham Forest	Hornbeam Academy William Morris Campus
24	Male	EHCP	Wychavon	NEET
25	Male	EHCP	Bromley	London South East Colleges (Bromley Campus)
26	Male	SEN Support	Croydon	Harris City Academy Crystal Palace
27	Male	EHCP	Blackpool	Blackpool and the Fylde College
28	Male	SEN Support	Lambeth	Dunraven School
29	Male		Lewisham	Christ's Hospital
30	Male		Southwark	St Francis Xavier Sixth Form College
31	Male	SEN Support	Lewisham	Crystal Palace FC Training Ground
32	Female		Southwark	Southwark College
33	Male	EHCP	Croydon	Croydon College
34	Female	SEN Support	Southwark	Christ The King: Emmanuel
35	Male	EHCP	Brent	The Southover Partnership
36	Male	SEN Support	Southwark	NEET
37	Male	EHCP	Greenwich	Shooters Hill Sixth Form College
38	Female		Croydon	John Rustin College
39	Male		Lewisham	ProDirect Football Academy

40	Female	SEN Support	Croydon	Richmond-upon-Thames College
41	Female		Medway	The Robert Napier School
42	Female	EHCP	Warwickshire	North Warwickshire & Hinckley College,
43	Female		Lambeth	No School Place
44	Male		Croydon	Lambeth College Clapham Centre
45	Male		Ealing	Harrow College & Uxbridge College
46	Male	SEN Support	Brent	Holy Trinity Church of England Secondary School
47	Male		Milton Keynes	Oakhill Secure Training Centre
48	Male		Brent	Treehouse School
49	Male		Barking and Dagenham	New City College (Redbridge Campus)
50	Female		Croydon	Croydon College
51	Male		Waltham Forest	Frederick Bremer School
52	Male		Southwark	NEET
53	Male		Croydon	Lewisham College
54	Male		Croydon	Southfields Academy
55	Male		Lewisham	NEET

10. Key Stage 5

10.1. Attainment levels/Outcomes

At the end of academic year 2019/20 the following academic progress is recorded for our students (Previous year in brackets)

Description	Year 12	Year 13	Total
Achieving/exceeding expected level	82% (86%)	85% (88%)	83% (87%)
Not meeting expected level	18% (14%)	15% (12%)	17% (13%)

Analysis:

These figures are based on completed PEPs (where data is gathered), detailed academic feedback and summative assessment/progression to the next level.

- 83% of learners across the key stage are achieving at the expected level for their course against 87% last year. This down turn of 4% could be attributed to the shortened academic year and reduction in teaching hours due to School/College lock down.

10.2. August 2020 Outcomes

Progression into Higher Education from year 13

Student	School/College	H/E Destination/Subject
1	Walworth Academy (A' Levels: A,B,B)	East Anglia University (BA Politics and History)
2	Sydenham School (A levels: A,C,C)	Birmingham University (BSc Psychology)
3	Harris Academy South Norwood L3 Dipl (Distinction, Merit)	Kingston University (BA Media studies)
4	LSEC Bromley (L3 Dip:Distinction,Distinction)	Newman University (BA Education with QTS-Teacher training Primary)

10.3. Destinations of year 13 A' level/Level 3 students

Destination	Number of students
Higher Education	4
Progressing to year 2 of course	4
Change of course	2
Entering/remaining in apprenticeship	2
Seeking employment	1
Total	13

In the academic year 2019/20 we had 29 students across KS5 studying at Level 3/A' level (16 in year 12 and 13 in year 13).

- Of year 13 group, 4 progressed to higher education, 4 had started their A level course a year late and progress to year two whilst 2 changed course and 2 are entering/remaining in apprenticeships.

Year 12 destinations

Education provision type/destination	Number of YP	Percentage of yr 12 cohort
6 th form college	14	16%
FE college	28	31%
Alternative provision	15	17%
Vocational training/employment	3	3%
Specialist provision	5	6%
Education in custody/secure	4	4%
NEET	21	23%
Total	90	100%

Year 13 destinations

Education provision type/Destination	Number of YP	Percentage of yr 13 cohort
6 th form college	9	10%
FE college	35	37%
Alternative provision	8	9%
Vocational training/employment	8	9%
Specialist provision	4	4%
In custody	1	1%
NEET	26	28%
Total	91	100%

- The majority of our looked after children attend Further education college; 35% of the KS5 EET cohort (31% in year 12 and 37% in year 13). Factors contributing to this figure include the availability of vocational courses offered by the FE syllabus (L1, 2 & 3 B'Tec diplomas) and ESOL provision.
- 13% of the KS5 cohort choose to stay in school/ 6th form college. This decision is driven by factors that include; continuity, greater pastoral support and the wide choice of A' levels and GCSE retakes on offer.
- 13% attend alternative provision/independent college. This figure is influenced by the increase of UASC accessing ESOL provision.
- We have a small number (6%) of LAC in apprenticeships/ traineeships/ employment. Our retention rate on these schemes is low. This is an area of concern and reflects that many of our young people are not yet 'work ready' or do not meet entry requirements (typically five GCSE's)
- 26% of the cohort are NEET compared to 33% at this stage last year. This is examined in more detail in the next section.

11. Response to COVID-19 Pandemic

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the emergency response that followed has required a significant and urgent shift in practice to protect children at this time. Note the update of Southwark Virtual School's response to the COVID-19 pandemic and its support of Southwark's looked after children both in and out of borough.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. Between 20 March 2020 and 1 June 2020, education and childcare settings were open to priority groups ([children of critical workers](#) and [vulnerable children](#)) as part of national social distancing measures so that pupils and staff attending could do so safely.
2. From week commencing 1 June, primary schools welcomed back children in nursery, reception, year 1 and year 6, alongside priority groups.
3. From 15 June, secondary schools, sixth form, further education colleges and Alternative provision settings offer some face-to-face support to supplement the remote education of year 10, year 12, and 16 to 19 students who are due to take key exams next year.
4. Special schools, special post-16 institutions and hospital schools are working towards a phased return of more children and young people without a focus on specific year groups.

VIRTUAL SCHOOL STAFFING

5. Since the outbreak of coronavirus COVID-19, Southwark Virtual School has ensured that our services remain accessible and operating at a heightened level of vigilance and flexibility to accommodate for the changing face of education and child safeguarding at this time. All Virtual School staff have been working remotely during this time.
6. All VS, KS5 Staff were trained in the use of Social Media (Zoom, Team, Skype and Conference calls) to ensure that all communications options are available.

ATTENDANCE

7. Southwark Virtual School recognises that schools offer a safe place for children and that school attendance is a significant protective factor. Virtual School Education Advisors make regular contact with education settings to monitor school attendance and welfare of Children in Care. This will continue throughout the period of school closure.

8. As attendance will remain fluid throughout this period, the Virtual School monitors changes with regards to Children in Care who do not take up their place at school, or discontinues attendance. This supplements the ongoing arrangement with Welfare Call who are also monitoring attendance of Southwark's looked after cohort.
9. 65 Southwark looked after children were recorded as attending school at the start of the pandemic. This attendance figure dropped to 20 children in the week commencing 13 April. With new priority groups set after Easter holidays 2020, attendance figures indicated that 59 children were attending education provisions. This represented 20% of Southwark's current looked after cohort. The main reason provided for these attendance rates at the time was that carers opted to keep children at home.
10. Where children are not attending school for any reason, the Virtual School offers additional tuition to support learning

ATTAINMENT

11. **EYFS and Key Stages 1 and 2:** The Virtual School continues to work closely with schools to monitor the attainment of those children who have missed out on statutory assessments and intervene early where any gaps in learning are identified.
12. **Current Year 10 cohort:** The Virtual School are working with schools to closely monitor progress and attainment Education Advisors are working proactively with schools to mitigate against the impact of missed schooling on pupil achievement at the end of Key Stage 4.
13. **End of Key Stage 4:** The Virtual School is liaising with Head teachers to ensure that all Southwark looked after children who are not sitting exams achieve results that are a true reflection of their ability.
14. **Children in Care with an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP):** The Virtual School is working with school/education setting in consultation with the local authority and parents/carers, to decide whether this cohort can safely have their needs met at home or whether they need the additional support that an educational setting can provide.
15. **GCSE and A-Level Results:** Students who were due to sit A level, AS level or GCSE exams this summer will receive a calculated grade. This process will take into account a range of evidence including, but not limited to, non-exam assessment and mock results. The Virtual School is working closely with education settings to ensure that Children in Care are not adversely affected by school closures and the cancellation of formal assessments.

16. **Further Education (FE):** The Virtual School is working closely with FE providers and Care Leavers teams to identify and support Post-16 Children in Care who are educationally vulnerable and at risk of disengaging entirely. This offer extends to those students who are likely to be hard to reengage once provisions reopen. The Virtual School advocate for and ensure that all Children in Care who are not sitting end of course assessments achieve results that are a true reflection of their ability.

PERSONAL EDUCATION PLANNING (PEPS)

17. On week beginning 23 March 2020, as schools became partially open to children of critical workers and vulnerable children, Southwark Virtual School took a decision to temporarily suspend PEPs and focus attention on the impact of the unprecedented changes in education and the impact on Southwark's Children in Care. The Virtual School team focused on attendance, safeguarding and wellbeing as individual decisions were made in respect of Southwark's looked after cohort.
18. The Virtual School developed revised COVID-19 PEP documents that focused on the current education guidance and the impact on education with specific focus on children in transition years, children who were due to take public examinations.
19. The Virtual School have agreed with the Children's Social Care to take temporary responsibility in completing the recording of specially designed COVID-19 PEPs to allow for Social Care colleagues to focus on the additional impact of COVID-19 on the Care Service.
20. PEP meetings resumed mid-May in the form of online meetings. With the PEP window significantly reduced and further into the academic year as traditionally held, Virtual School Education Advisors and Social Workers are making every effort to secure education planning for all children in care before the end of the academic year.

PUPIL PREMIUM PLUS GRANT (PPG)

21. Greater autonomy has been afforded by providing access to the Pupil Premium Plus Grant to mitigate against emerging attainment and wellbeing issues as well as concerns arising from children being educated in the home through online learning. This offer has been extended to cover wellbeing and physical wellbeing. Virtual school staff are striving to use PPG to promote attendance, motivation and engagement in education.
22. As pupil premium funding for the academic year was already devolved to school before the start of the pandemic, the Virtual School has tapped into pupil premium funding for the 20-21 academic year. Under exceptional circumstances, this strategy aims to

ensure that there is no drift in education at a time when this is most likely to occur and offers valuable support to children and education networks. To mitigate against loss of funding to schools, the Virtual school has increased the amount of devolved funding that schools can access from £1500 to £1800.

23. Southwark Virtual School has negotiated with current tuition providers to convert their face to face delivery of lessons to an online format and has offered additional tuition to all Southwark looked after children. This is to supplement the work done by schools at this time. The Virtual School tuition offer has been taken up by 75 Southwark children in care including 17 children in Key Stage 5.
24. Prior to the government offer of technology support, the Virtual school recognised that students did not have access to vital technology devices to access education. The Virtual School secured a purchase of 50 laptops and these were delivered to Southwark looked after children in and out of borough within a week. A further 125 requests for devices were provided through the government technology scheme.

SUPPORT FOR SCHOOLS

25. Southwark Virtual School has remained open and continues to operate as a key point of contact between the education sector and Children's Social Care.
26. The Virtual School supports provision to enhance the learning of those Children in Care who are attending school wherever possible.
27. The Virtual School is working with schools and other providers to identify those pupils who are at risk of disengaging from education altogether following the indefinite period of school closure and commission additional support as appropriate. This will include the identification of those Year 11 pupils who are now at risk of becoming NEET.
28. The Virtual School continues to provide a full service of its advice and guidance role with regard to those children who are subject to Adoption, Child Arrangement and Special Guardianship Orders.
29. Southwark Virtual School continues to offer an Education Psychology and Speech and language Service to the Southwark looked after children cohort on a remote basis.

SUPPORT FOR HOME LEARNING

30. Where a decision has been made for a Child in Care to remain at home, the Virtual School has offered additional support home learning. The Virtual School has developed a resource pack of online resources and supplementary materials that has been made

available to all pupils in the cohort, to facilitate home learning.

31. As children are expected to use online learning platforms as a means of accessing education, online safety has been a high priority. The Virtual School has developed a pack of information on online guidance on how to keep children safe online.
32. The Virtual School traditionally invested in Nimbl, an online resource tool to support academic attainment. Nimbl offers age and curriculum related online resources. Details of the offer can be found at: <https://www.anspear.com/uploads/emergency-planning-pri.pdf> for primary school pupils and <https://www.anspear.com/uploads/emergency-planning-sec.pdf> for secondary school pupils.
33. The Virtual School have worked with schools to provide printed resources for those children who have limited internet access or who would benefit from reduced screen time in the home.
34. The Virtual School will conduct PEPs for Children in Care during the summer term and these will be in a revised format in response to the current situation. All Summer PEP meetings will be conducted remotely until such a time as restrictions on movement are lifted. As schools reopen, target setting will prioritise the need for successful re-engagement with education and filling any gaps in learning that have emerged.

CHILDREN MISSING EDUCATION

35. There are several factors that contribute to looked after children missing education. The most significant of these is change of care placements and children who are new to care. From 23 March to 18 May, Virtual School Education Advisors have successfully placed 6 children in a suitable education provision reducing the number of children missing education at the start of the pandemic from 9 to 3. This is a significant achievement against a backdrop of closed education provisions and local authority admissions teams all remote working.
36. Between 23 March 2020 and September 2020, there were currently 9 children missing education due to mobility of Children in Care and Education Advisors and Social workers worked together to actively seek education placements for children who were not in a school place. Care is always taken to ensure that Southwark looked after children are placed in provisions where they will thrive. Currently there are 6 children on the Virtual School Missing Education list with 5 children new to Care w/c 21 June 2021.
37. The Virtual School works together with Children's Social Care to identify emerging cases of placement instability and endeavour to inform schools in good time so that provision to sustain education placement can be made.

TRANSITIONS AND DESTINATIONS

38. Virtual School Education Advisors are tracking children who are in transition phases or years to ensure that Southwark looked after children are equipped for the changes that do not have the levels of planning and support that is usually in place for this change.
39. The Primary and Secondary teams are working with school to ensure that children who are transitioning to secondary education have secure endings to their experience of primary education and that beginnings to secondary education is secure and supported.
40. The Virtual School Secondary team and the Virtual School IAG officer are tracking destinations of children at the end of KS4 to ensure that children remain in education
41. The Key Stage 5 and Secondary team have brought forward transition work relating to student destinations 2020/21 to ensure that students remain in education, employment and training.

LOCAL AUTHORITY

42. The Virtual School contributes to the Local authority response to COVID-9 through participation in the COVID-19 Risk Assessment Panel, local authority Government laptop scheme and Vulnerable Pupils forums.
43. The Virtual School Headteacher has presented the Virtual School Headteacher's Report at Social Care DMT, Children's and Adult's Board and at Corporating Parenting Committee. A Covid 19 update of the Virtual School response was shared at these forums.

TRAINING/CPD

44. The Virtual School is in the process of putting together a package of training material and Continuous Professional Development materials that covers emerging areas of concerns and development needs. Training will be targeted at Foster Carers, Designated Teachers, Social Workers and Virtual school staff.
45. Two Education Advisors from KS5 are working towards completing a level 5 Careers Information, Advice and Guidance (CIAG) qualifications.

CASE STUDY 1 – Securing Education during COVID-19

Student A is a 16 years old Year 11 pupil who before the pandemic was being educated in a secure unit. During Covid-19, a placement change occurred and Student A became accommodated in a Semi-independent living placement. This led to Student A becoming a Child Missing from Education with no school place. The Local Authority in which Student A was accommodated was not taking any in-year admissions during Covid-19 whilst schools were partially closed.

The Virtual School Secondary Team worked collaboratively with the social worker, family support worker and home authority admissions team and appropriate education provision was secured for Student A despite the limitations of the current climate.

Alternative Provision tuition was funded by Southwark Virtual School for Student A whilst the Local Authority secured appropriate education provision. Student A has been engaging well with tuition and has now secured an appropriate education provision. Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) advice has also been provided and applications have also been made for a post-16 college placement for a Level 1 course to commence in September 2020. An interview is imminent.

CASE STUDY 2 – Securing SEN Statutory Assessment (EHCP) during COVID-19

Student B is 16 years of age and accommodated as a Southwark looked after child. Following extensive health and placement concerns Student B had a Care placement change in January 2020 and was placed in temporary accommodation. This disrupted the educational placement which was also not secure at the time of placement change due largely to challenging behaviour brought about from Student B's identified medical condition.

As a young person outside of formalised education arrangements and between Care placement, the Virtual School, Social Care colleagues and the SEN team collaborated to ensure the EHCP would be awarded prior to Student B competing Year 11.

Despite complications in Education and Care placements and the added complexity of access to local authority services in the home borough, Southwark Virtual School secured a statutory assessment of SEN during the pandemic through engaging the network.

COVID-19 RESPONSE – KEY STAGE 5

46. The closure of schools and colleges between March and July 2020 represented a significant change of working practice to the Virtual School. A list of priorities was drawn up which included safeguarding of students, continuation of education delivery and monitoring levels of engagement.
47. In support of these the following actions were implemented in response to the closure of schools and colleges between March and June 2020.

INFORMATION GATHERING/DATA COLLECTION

48. Education providers were contacted directly relating to their closing down schedule and a C-19 action sheet was drawn up and populated with data collected.
49. A second database was created to log which LAC were working remotely and which were still attending school/college
50. Data was collected from Schools and colleges on methods of remote education delivery and attendance recording.
51. All data gathered was shared with Care Services, Safeguarding, A&I.

ACTIONS AROUND DEVELOPING SITUATIONS

52. Working with Social care and colleges to ensure that all students are enabled to learn through the purchase of IT equipment.
53. Explanatory letters sent to all students in KS5 taking exams detailing the new arrangements regarding assessment and appeal processes.
54. The VS Home tuition offer was extended for students in remote learning.
55. KS5 staff performed an important role in information sharing between schools and colleges

CASE STUDY 3 - Support Offered to/ESOL Student

Young person A is an Unaccompanied minor who lives in a semi-independent placement in London. He arrived from Eritrea in January 2020.

- *A PEP was convened within 10 days at which it was revealed that A had little experience of education. He was keen to learn English and to start studying with students of his own age.*
- *Applications were made for ESOL courses at two local colleges and for the key worker to help A adjust to living in the UK by taking him out into the community.*
- *In preparation for College, Virtual School KS5 Education Advisor provided A and his keyworker with links to on- line ESOL learning resources.*
- *The new college was contacted prior to the agreed start date to arrange for the Learning support team to carry out academic and cognitive assessments.*
- *Virtual School KS5 Education Advisor requested that a 'buddy' be assigned to ensure that A settled in.*
- *The Virtual School put in extra support of 2 hours per week of ESOL 1-1 tuition targeting specific areas of development highlighted by the tests.*

Outcome:

Young person A started college and was assessed to have no cognitive learning barriers. Initially learning at Pre entry level English, Maths and IT. Within 6 months A had moved up two levels to EL2 in all subjects and now speaks English using past, present and future tenses. The Virtual School has liaised with Care to provide A with a laptop so he can access additional on-line learning materials. A is popular with his classmates and hope to progress to business studies. He has been granted ILR and it is expected that he will make appositve contribution to society.

12. VIRTUAL SCHOOL PUPIL ACTIVITY

Southwark Virtual School launched a project in November 2020 with the aim of keeping Southwark looked after children engaged in Education and keep our children motivated during a time when the pandemic was causing significant disruption.

The Virtual school also extended this offer to children in Southwark Alternative Provision.

We removed the competition element choosing to reward every child that participated.

Although the take up was not as high as we would have like, we are looking forward to receiving more examples of work from our looked after children

Please see below some entries received. Well done to all pupils who participated.

Learning From Home



Southwark Virtual School Activity Time

Southwark Virtual School has organised an activity for all our young people.

To enter all you have to do is choose a topic and send us your entry. You can send

- Drawings
- Painting
- Poems
- Essays
- Short stories
- You can also do some baking and send us pictures of the treats

Choose one of the following topics below:

- My Experience of Lockdown
- About Me
- Halloween

Every entry will receive a £20 voucher

Send your entries to LACeducation@southwark.gov.uk

We look forward to receiving all of your responses

As soon as we receive your entry, we will send you a £20 Love to shop Voucher

**Closing date:
30 November 2020**

Southwark Virtual School

Learning new Cooking Skills



Dreaming Big



THE TERRIFYING YEARS OF 2020

(LOCKDOWN)

By: [REDACTED]

In the years of 2020, or hopefully the only years of coronavirus, we as human beings have gone through some difficult times but it is important that we never give up and persevere. What makes us human is that we go through tough times, everyone in this world or the universe has gone through some difficult times.

WEARING A MASK

During these times it is absolutely imperative to wear a mask when you are out and about to keep yourself and others safe. When in shops, schools or anywhere you would be in close contact with a group (that now has to have 6 or less people) it is important to wear a mask.

And to kill two birds with one stone you can get a reusable mask then you don't have to keep buying single use masks and that helps on the global warming crisis as well. I have a reusable mask so I can just wash it at the weekends, that way I don't need to keep looking for a single time use one on the day I need it.



SOCIAL DISTANCING

Social distancing, we all at least have heard these words by now, it's probably the phrase you hear your teachers repeat over and over again. Well as much I hate to say this, they're right. It is important

we do it because it prevents the spread of coronavirus. When you really don't want to do it remember it doesn't just benefit others but it also helps to protect you and your family back home. As you might have heard the elderly and the adults are more likely to contract the virus than us children. SO, REMEMBER CONSIDERATE!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

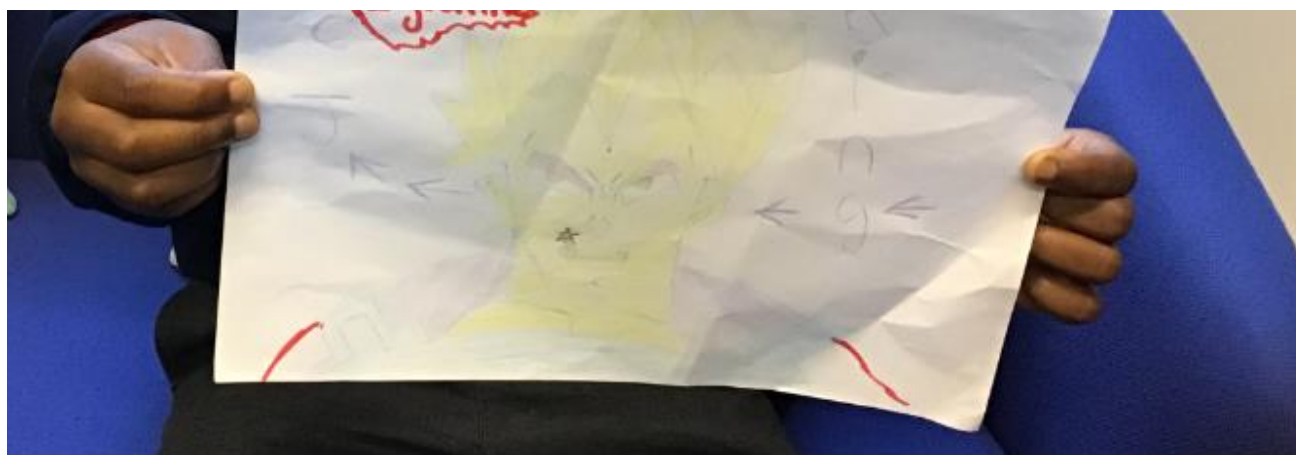
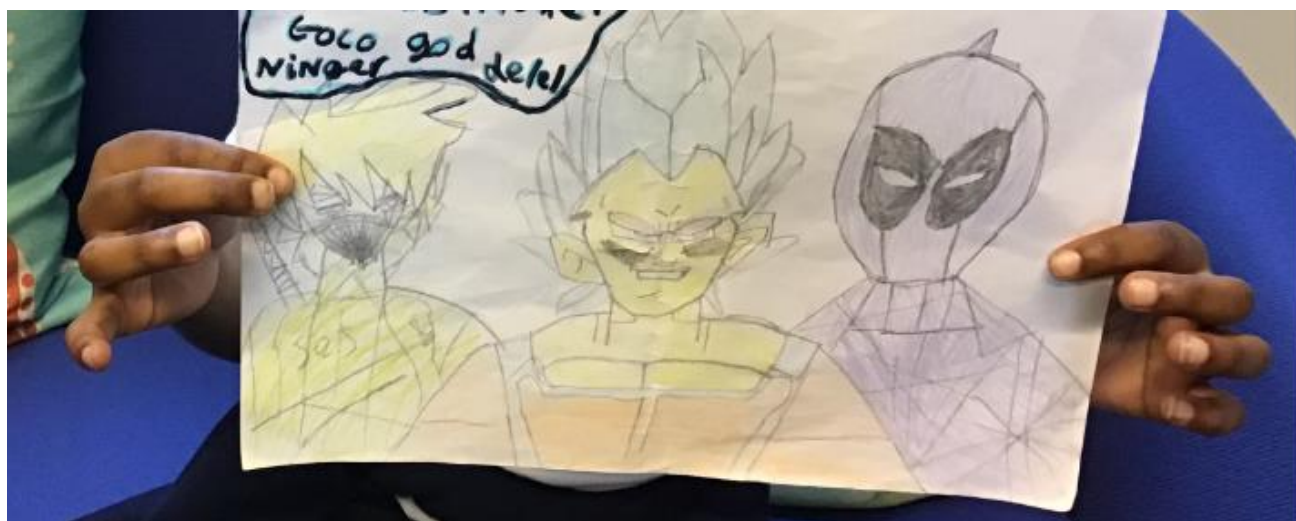


HAND SANITIZER

Using hand sanitiser benefits everyone around you and yourself it is a quick and easy way of washing hands. When you enter buildings, you have to use it to cleanse your hands so you don't spread covid 19 or a sickness.



Superheroes



13. Virtual School Priorities

- 13.1. In relation to Covid-19 – Narrow the attainment gap, lost learning and mental health support. Continue to provide support and interventions for schools and children to improve outcomes and attendance, evaluating the impact of the intervention and use of Pupil Premium.
- 13.2. To promote the educational outcomes of children with a social worker. The work with early years settings, schools, colleges and social care leaders to create a culture of high aspirations that helps all children with social workers to make educational progress.
[Promoting the education of children with a social worker: Virtual School Head role extension](#)
- 13.3. Support the development of attachment aware and trauma informed schools in Southwark by delivering a flexible and diverse virtual training programme for Designated Teachers and school leaders.

Southwark Virtual School

Highlights from Virtual School Headteacher's Report from 2020 CLA outcomes

1. In the 2019/2020 academic year, there were approximately 422 children on Southwark Virtual School roll at any point in time. Of these, 300 children had been in Care for more than 12 months.
2. 56% of the cohort are male, 44% female and 72% of the cohort are of **secondary school age**.
3. 3% of Southwark Looked after children are educated in schools graded less than Good by **Ofsted**. This decreased from 6% reported last year. Children only attend 'Requires Improvement' schools in exceptional circumstances, such as when a previously Good school has a poor inspection outcome but it is considered in best interests of the child for them to remain there.
4. Over £800k of **Pupil Premium** grant has been received by the team to support its work with school aged learners.
5. **Southwark Personal Education Plan (PEP)** performance as at December 2020 was reported as 83% up from 70% last year. The target remains 100%.
6. This report relates to the 2019-2020 academic year which was marked by **the global pandemic**. **The Summer 2020 exam series** was cancelled as part of the government's response to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, which included the closure of schools and colleges to all but the children of key workers and vulnerable children from 20 March 2020. The majority of pupils did not return until the beginning of the autumn term in September 2020.
7. **Ofsted Local authority focused inspection** September 2021 noted 'Senior managers and staff have ensured that children and young people continue to be safeguarded. The best possible decisions are being made about children's care and education'. Virtual School Pandemic response was also noted.
8. **KS4 GCSE outcomes:** Southwark's 2020 CLA for the 12 months plus cohort achieved a strong pass in both English and Maths at grades 9 to 5. This is an improvement of 6 percentage points on the 2019 results. Southwark's 2020 full GCSE cohort achieved a Strong 9-5 which was a 5 percentage point increase from outcomes the previous year.
9. **KS5 Outcomes:** 83% of learners across the key stage are achieving at the expected level for their course against 87% last year. This down turn of 4% could be attributed to the shortened academic year and reduction in teaching hours due to School/College lock down. 26% of the cohort are NEET compared to 33% at this stage last year.
10. **Destinations:** continues to be a strength of the Virtual school with vast the majority of children choosing to continue in education.
11. **Children Missing Education:** Through very focussed advocacy work the number of children out of education is currently 6 with 5 of the children in this group new to care this week.. This is a significant achievement when considering that the rate of mobility of looked after children in this cohort as well as the challenges created through school and local authorities closures this year.
12. **Virtual School Priorities:**
 - In relation to Covid-19 – Narrow the attainment gap, lost learning and mental health support.
 - To respond effectively to the changing education landscape and ensure that Southwark Children have the best opportunities to achieve.
 - Support the development of attachment aware and trauma informed schools in Southwark by delivering a flexible and diverse virtual training programme for Designated Teachers and school leaders.

Item No. 10.	Classification: Open	Date: 7 July 2021	Meeting Name: Corporate Parenting Committee
Report title:		Southwark Adoption Performance in 2020-2021	
Ward(s) or groups affected:		All	
From:		Helen Woolgar, Assistant Director, Safeguarding and Care	

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The committee notes the progress of the children in Southwark with a care plan of adoption during 2020/21.
2. The committee notes the activity of the local authority working in partnership with Adopt London South (ALS) during 2020/21.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

3. This report sets out how Southwark children in care with a permanence¹ plan for adoption have progressed during 2020/21. It gives an overview of all the key performance measures to achieve permanence for every child in the timescale that is right for them.
4. Southwark is the host to Adopt London South (ALS) providing adoption services to nine south London boroughs. ALS is one the largest regional adoption agencies (RAA) in the country in terms of numbers of local authorities in a partnership. It is hosted by Southwark Council. ALS is part of [Adopt London](#), a group of 4 RAAs covering 23 London local authorities. Adopt London combines a wealth of expertise in the capital, bringing together children with safe, secure, loving and permanent adoptive families.

¹ Permanence means making a long-term plan for how a child will be cared for which lasts throughout their childhood. There are a range of options for permanence, inside and outside of the care system. [Knowledge and Skills Statement: Achieving Permanence](#)

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

Southwark Data – Children’s Activity

5. The chart below shows the key adoption activity for Children in Southwark in 2020 -2021 and the comparison data in Southwark over the last four years.

Activity Overview - children	20 - 21	19- 20	18-19	18-19
Decision that a plan for adoption is in child’s best interests (called <i>Best Interests Decision or Agency Decision Maker (ADM) decision</i>)	11	9	8	14
Children with a Placement Order made (plan for adoption agreed by Court)	8	9	5	11
Children matched with adopters at panel and agreed by Agency Decision Maker (ADM)	11	2	4	12
Children with an Adoption Order granted	4	5	12	14

6. Positively the data shows that in 2020/21 eleven children were matched to adoptive families and this is significant increase from 2019/20 when only two children were matched.
7. There is a clear correlation between the number of Best Interest / ADM decisions and the number of Placement Orders granted. In 2020/21 the Covid-19 pandemic led to severe delays in court hearings for children in court proceedings and this delayed many final court hearings and thus decisions being made. There is in the data a correlation with numbers of Placement Orders granted in 2019/21, and the numbers of children being matched with adoptive families during 2020/21.
8. The number of Adoption Orders granted was very low with only four orders made. This is again a reflection of court delays. Four children had adoption applications submitted in good time and we would have expected those Adoption Orders to have been in place now. These children remain in care until the Adoption Order is made.

Early Permanence Planning

9. During 2020/21 Southwark have embedded across all services a strengthened approach to permanence planning meetings for all children in care, with a dedicated workflow on the electronic recording system for all children in care and those subject to pre proceedings. This has been achieved by practitioners and managers thinking permanence as early as possible before children becoming entering care through a dedicated legal planning panel that includes consideration of some children pre-birth as well as all those in a formal pre-proceedings process as part of the Public Law Outline, with robust fortnightly

tracking.

10. Excellent collaborative working together arrangements are in place with the Family Finding Team from Adopt London South (ALS) tracking children where adoption may be a possibility and attending permanence planning meetings, the effectiveness of which has been enhanced by virtual working during the pandemic. Permanence planning meetings ensure effective parallel planning always considering if an early permanence placement may be appropriate and avoid disruption and unnecessary moves for children.
11. Early permanence placements enable children to be placed with prospective adopters approved as foster carers who can, if the court agree an adoption plan, go on to adopt the children they are caring for. Early permanence shifts the uncertainty away from children enabling them to achieve permanence more swiftly. It is a really positive achievement that in 2020/21 five Southwark children were placed in early permanence placements which was the most for any of the 9 local authorities part of ALS.

Matches of children in care with adopters

12. Eleven Southwark children have been matched with prospective adopters during 2020/21. This is a significant increase from only two matched at the panel in 2019/20 and five matches in for children 2018/19.
13. The age range of children matched at panel in 2020/21 is under one to aged four. Three out of the eleven children are female and eight are male.
14. Eight children matched at panel were single children and three were siblings with two children together with adopters and a sibling with a separate adopter but a plan of high levels of direct contact. Of the eleven children who were matched at panel in 2020/21, eight benefitted from being matched with ALS approved families. Seven of the children are White British, one child has Black African heritage and three children are of dual heritage.
15. Of all the Southwark children being tracked at all stages by ALS, 76% are Black and of dual heritage and it is very clear that more needs to be done to actively recruit adopters able to meet the needs of children from a Black and ethnic minority background. Recruiting to meet the needs of Black and ethnic Minority children is a key priority for ALS.

Adoption scorecard and timescales for Southwark children

16. Adoption Scorecards have been published by the Department for Education annually since 2012. They measure local authority performance against many adoption indicators but two are regarded as key indicators and these are set out in the table below.

Measure	20-21	18-21	15-18	14-17
A10: Average time (days) between a child entering care and moving in with its adoptive family, adjusted for foster carer adoptions	340	326	540	572
A2: Average time (days) between Placement Order and the LA deciding on a match to an adoptive family	111	162	231	265

17. The chart above shows continuing improvement in these measures since 2014 this means overall children are waiting less time to be matched with their adoptive families.
18. For children where adoption is the right care plan, ensuring they move without delay is essential to give them the best possible opportunity for stability and to enjoy family life. For 2020/21 Southwark performance shows continuous improvement, at A10 (adjusted A1 scorecard measures to include children adopted by their foster carers) is at 340 days. This is partly due to the higher ratio of early permanence placements, reducing the days from Placement Order to match.
19. For 2020/21 the A2 figure is 111 days. Although the performance in this area does not meet the Government threshold of 91 days, this is an improving measure.
20. For every child with a plan of adoption from the point of this plan being agreed by the Agency Decision Maker (ADM) there is monthly scrutiny at the Permanence Taskforce on the family finding activity by ALS and progression to finding a match for every child. The taskforce has a culture of learning and for every child the reasons for any delay are well understood and there is healthy challenge as well as support to consider what more can be done to overcome the barriers to every child achieving permanence in the timescale that is right for them.
21. In 2021/22 the impact of Covid-19 causing significant delays in the court process and thus duration of court proceedings is very likely to negatively impact the A10, measuring the length of time between children entering care and being placed with their adoptive family.

Changes of care plan from adoption to long term foster care

22. In 2020/21 Southwark applied to court for four children to seek to change the care plan from adoption to long term fostering. The children for whom the change plan was agreed by the court were aged from three to ten years and for all four children there had been extensive family finding for over 18 months and a prospective adoptive family had not been found.

23. Three children with a change of care plan are from a Black and ethnic minority background and one child is from a White British background. Three of the children with a change of care plan are male and one child is female.
24. It is not possible to share further detail for individual children in this report as it would risk identifying those children but there are good outcomes for children within this, for example two of the children have remained with their foster carers matched as long term foster carers so their plans for family life have continued undisrupted, it is the intended legal status that has changed to a care rather than an adoptive placement. In the Care Service there is very robust tracking on achieving permanence via long term fostering and being matched modelled on best practice in adoption.

Siblings

25. In Southwark our care planning practice is highly committed that whenever possible siblings should be placed together and where this is not possible it is crucial that placements are found that enable brothers and sisters to stay in touch. Sometimes the needs of each sibling are too great for one carer to be able to meet them all. Siblings are considered more difficult to find the right placement for because of their greater needs and the smaller pool of adopters who wish to care for them. All sibling groups for whom there is a plan of adoption are assessed using the Together or Apart Assessment Model (BAAF 2008)
26. In 2020/21 there have been four children adopted (Adoption Orders granted), all of them single children. Of the 11 matches agreed at that Adoption Panel during 2020/21 eight were single children, and there was a sibling group of three with two children matched together and a sibling matched with a separate adopter but with a plan of a high level of contact for all three children. One of the single children matched at panel was moving to an adoptive placement where he would be joining his older brother who had been adopted several years previously.

Children adopted

27. In 2020/21 there were four children adopted (Adoption Order made) this was a decrease from the previous year when five children were adopted. The decrease does not fit with the practice that there was a significant increase in the numbers of children matched and placed for adoption with prospective adopters in 2020/21. For an additional four children adoption applications had been lodged with the court but significant delays impacted by Covid 19 meant the court set the final Adoption Court Hearings for after the 31 March 2021.
28. The age range of the children adopted was from aged under one to three years old. Two children adopted were of mixed heritage, one child was White British and one child was Black African. Two children adopted were female and two children were male.
29. As at June 2021 when writing this report there has been one Adoption Order

granted in April 2021, one child placed in a foster to adopt placement and there are ten children placed for adoption and one child just about to start introductions with their prospective adoptive family and so even with delays in Court Hearings the current data is indicative that it is likely that at least 10-12 children will be adopted in 2021/22.

Plan for 2021- 2022

30. The biggest challenge in adoption remains the racial disparity in finding adoptive families for Black children and this is a key priority for Southwark and ALS. It remains very evident nationally and for children in Southwark that Black children and those from an ethnic minority wait longer to find an adoptive family and they are statistically more likely for their plan to be reversed and adopters not found. This requires robust action and challenge to ensure the life chances of these children is not disadvantaged.
31. A focus group in ALS with Black adopters and staff have been meeting looking at how to improve the adopter journey and overcome barriers to identifying more Black adopters and adopters able to meet the needs of Black children. A strategic plan is being developed for all four London Regional Adoption agencies to address this and take positive action on this critical issue. ALS are actively prioritising adoption assessments of Black adopters and adopters able to meet the needs of Black children and are offering all prospective adopters transracial training to be able to meet the needs of more children waiting for families.
32. In 2021/22 a review will take place with ALS to consider how children are profiled to ensure for Southwark children it is clear that there are excellent bespoke packages of support available to ensure support packages and finance is not a barrier to families coming forward to adopt Southwark children.
33. Currently the Coram BAAF Together and Apart Assessment tool is used to inform decision making on children being placed together with their brothers and sisters. This guidance has been updated into a sibling assessment tool that can be more regularly updated and embedded into ongoing assessments. In 2021/22 there is a plan for a working group to embed across services the new sibling assessments and ensure they are embedded in practice and in our electronic recording system (MOSAIC) workflow.

Community impact statement

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

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
None		

APPENDICES

No.	Title
None	

AUDIT TRAIL

Lead Officer	Alasdair Smith, Director, Children and Families		
Report Author	Helen Woolgar, Assistant Director, Safeguarding and Care		
Version	Final		
Dated	24 June 2021		
Key Decision?	No		
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER			
Officer Title		Comments sought	Comments included
Director of Law and Governance		No	No
Strategic Director of Finance and Governance		No	No
Cabinet Member		No	No
Date final report sent to Constitutional Team			25 June 2021

Item No. 11.	Classification: Open	Date: 7 July 2021	Meeting Name: Corporate Parenting Committee
Report title:		Corporate Parenting Committee – Work Plan 2021-22	
Ward(s) or groups affected:		All	
From:		Director, Children and Families	

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the corporate parenting committee agree the approach and work plan as set out in the report.
2. That the committee review and identify any further items for consideration in the work plan.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Role and function of the corporate parenting committee

3. The constitution for the municipal year 2021-2022 records the corporate parenting committee's role and functions as follows:
 - a. To secure real and sustained improvements in the life chances of looked after children, and to work within an annual programme to that end.
 - b. To develop, monitor and review a corporate parenting strategy and work plan.
 - c. 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.
 - d. To develop and co-ordinate a life chances strategy and work plan to improve the life chances of Southwark looked after children.
 - e. 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.
 - f. 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.

- g. To ensure performance monitoring systems are in place, and regularly review performance data to ensure sustained performance improvements in outcomes for looked after children.
- h. 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.
- i. To report to the council's cabinet on a twice yearly basis.
- j. To make recommendations to the relevant cabinet decision maker where responsibility for that particular function rests with the cabinet.
- k. To report to the scrutiny sub-committee with responsibility for children's services after each meeting.
- l. To appoint non-voting co-opted members.

National and local context for care leavers

- 4. There is national momentum towards improving outcomes for care leavers. The government introduced 'Keep on Caring' strategy in 2016, increased council statutory duties to care leavers in the Children and Social Work Act in 2017, appointed a national Adviser for Care Leavers who produced a report in 2018, alongside the national launch of the Care Covenant. The council has responded to the various recommendations, for example by prioritising education, employment and training outcomes for care leavers in the Council Plan and developing the care leaver local offer as well as increasing service capacity for the extended personal adviser duties to 25.
- 5. Although much has been done to improve services and outcomes for care leavers, the council has an ambition to go above and beyond, by creating the best Leaving Care Service possible, by co-designing this with young people, learning from other organisations and trialling new ideas to test what works best.
- 6. In 2017 the council and Catch22 received funding from the DfE Social Care Innovation Programme to work in partnership to design and test new ways of working to support care leavers. The Care Leavers Partnership (CLP) works to improve outcomes for young people in Southwark by working across boundaries, reshaping the service delivery model, unlocking capacity in the community, and co-designing solutions. There are a number of strands that the CLP is working on to achieve our goals.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

- 7. The corporate parenting committee review and update the work plan each

meeting. Following the beginning of the municipal year 2019-20, and reflecting on the momentum towards improving outcomes for care leavers, the opportunity has been taken to review how the committee works and present proposals to refresh this in relation to: non-voting co-opted members; committee approach; and work plan and suggested agenda items.

Non-voting co-opted members

8. It is recommended that the committee is supported and enhanced by adding a number of non-voting co-opted members. By bringing perspectives, knowledge and experience from young people, practitioners, subject matter experts, council and local community representatives together with elected members, there will be more opportunity to add value to the committee in its work to improve outcomes for children in care and care leavers. This will promote wider ownership of the important work of the service and enhance plans developed to improve its work.
9. A **representative of Speakerbox**, Southwark's Children in Care Council, should be formally designated a non-voting co-opted member. This person would help the committee perform its role and function by bringing expertise by experience about how the system of support works around children in care and care leavers (3f above). The committee would recognise the person would preferably be consistent through the year, but may change. The council would support this person in that role, as well as Speakerbox, through its Children's Rights and Participation function, to enable as far as possible the Speakerbox member to be representative of the voice of children in care and care leavers.
10. A **representative from Southwark's frontline workforce**, who works face to face with children in care and care leavers, should be formally designated a non-voting co-opted member. This person would help the committee perform its role and function by giving a sense of the reality of work on the frontline to enable it to better seek to ensure that the life chances of looked after children are maximised (3c above). This committee member would be supported by the Children and Families Principal Social Worker to enable them to be a representative voice for those that work everyday with children in care and care leavers.
11. A **subject matter expert** who has undertaken extensive research and/or improvement work in the area of children in care and care leavers, should be formally designated a non-voting co-opted member. This person would help the committee perform its role and function by adding knowledge and experience that is outside the day to day ambit of those working within the Southwark system to help the council better secure real and sustained improvements in the life chances of looked after children (3a above). The committee member would be supported by the Quality Assurance Unit to ensure they provide a valuable and relevant contribution to every committee.
12. A **critical friend** from an area of the council outside children and adults

service, should be formally designated a non-voting co-opted member. This person would help the committee perform its role and function by adding knowledge and experience of the council outside social care and education areas to aid the development of a cross council approach to corporate parenting (3e above). The committee member would be supported by the quality assurance unit to ensure they provide a valuable and relevant contribution to every committee.

13. A **critical friend** from the local community, should be formally designated a non-voting co-opted member. This person would help the committee perform its role and function by adding knowledge and experience of the community and its assets and to aid the development of a wider community ownership of outcomes for children in care and care leavers. (3e above). The committee member would be supported by the Quality Assurance Unit to ensure they provide a valuable and relevant contribution to every committee.

Corporate Parenting Committee approach

14. The traditional way of managing the committee has been for officers to prepare reports and then members to scrutinise this at committee meetings. It is proposed that the agenda is split into two halves: children in care and care leavers. The children in care section would continue in a more traditional way as described.
15. The care leaver section could be managed differently with a thematic approach where officers responsible for those areas would attend. A presentation would be made about the area, and then a workshop approach would be taken whereby committee members would be invited to question and discuss, with an aim of developing recommendations for improvement. The workshops will produce targeted actions that thematic groups can take away to put into practice to make lasting change for care leavers.
16. The suggested main themes would be housing; education, employment and training; health and wellbeing. Others could be developed depending on the areas that might be considered important at the beginning of the year "kick off" meeting (see 17 below), and capacity of the committee. It would be expected that those attending for the themed areas would be at Director level within the council, and at a most senior level from other organisations.
17. The municipal year would start with a 'kick-off' meeting. This will present performance data about the outcomes for care leavers and plans for improvement. This will help the committee look at what is happening in Southwark, in comparison to neighbours and nationally. Quality and performance analysts could be available at the meeting to respond to detailed questions to deepen understanding. The whole approach would help the committee develop its plan for the year with areas of focus for the year ahead as well as being a place to question the whole approach to improvement.
18. The committee may develop, as part of its agenda, engagement with some

areas between committee meetings. For example historically the committee has sometimes taken the opportunity to meet with SpeakerBox during some school holidays at focused events. These engagement opportunities could still be planned as an important aspect of the work of the committee that builds their knowledge and understanding, and thus the committee's capacity to deliver its role and function

Corporate Parenting Committee work plan

19. 3 November 2021

Children in care

- Independent Review Officers (IRO) Annual Report
- Sufficiency strategy update
- Annual Fostering report 2019-20.

Care Leavers

Workshop theme – To be agreed

20. 2 March 2022

Children in care

- Children in Care Annual Health Report 2020-21
- Item to be agreed.

Care Leavers

Workshop theme – to be agreed

21. 20 April 2022

Children in care

Agenda to be agreed.

Care Leavers

Workshop theme – to be agreed.

SpeakerBox

22. 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 particularly service planning and design. 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 and councillors.

Community impact statement

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

Resource implications

24. 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@southwark.gov.uk
Web link: http://moderngov.southwark.gov.uk/ieListMeetings.aspx?CId=129&Year=0		

APPENDICES

No.	Title
None	

AUDIT TRAIL

Lead Officer	Alasdair Smith, Director, Children and Families		
Report Author	Alasdair Smith, Director, Children and Families		
Version	Final		
Dated	18 June 2021		
Key Decision?	No		
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER			
Officer Title	Comments Sought	Comments included	
Director of Law and Governance	No	No	
Strategic Director of Finance and Governance	No	No	
Cabinet Member	No	No	
Date final report sent to Constitutional Team		18 June 2021	

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NOTE: Original held by Constitutional Team; all amendments/queries to
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