

Corporate Parenting Committee

Wednesday 1 March 2023

2.00 pm

Ground floor meeting room, 160 Tooley Street, London SE1 2QH

Membership

Councillor Jasmine Ali (Chair)
Councillor Charlie Smith (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Naima Ali
Councillor Rachel Bentley
Councillor Esme Dobson
Councillor Natasha Ennin
Councillor Darren Merrill

Reserves

Councillor Portia Mwangangye
Councillor Sunny Lambe
Councillor Kimberly McIntosh
Councillor Joseph Vambe
Councillor Irina Von Wiese

Non-voting co-opted members

Dr Mark Kerr and Rosamond Marshall

INFORMATION FOR MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

Access to information

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Contact

Email: beverley.olamijulo@southwark.gov.uk or paula.thornton@southwark.gov.uk or beverley.olamijulo@southwark.gov.uk

Members of the committee are summoned to attend this meeting

Althea Loderick

Chief Executive

Date: 21 February 2023



Corporate Parenting Committee

Wednesday 1 March 2023

2.00 pm

Ground floor meeting room, 160 Tooley Street, London SE1 2QH

Order of Business

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MOBILE PHONES

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

PART A - OPEN BUSINESS

1. APOLOGIES

To receive any apologies for absence.

2. CONFIRMATION OF VOTING MEMBERS

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

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

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

4. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS

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

Item No.	Title	Page No.
5.	MINUTES	1 - 9
	To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the open section of the meeting held on 2 November 2022.	
6.	SPEAKERBOX VERBAL UPDATE (2.00PM - 2.30PM)	
	FIRST PART OF THE MEETING	
7.	HOUSING FOR CARE LEAVERS (2.30PM - 3.00PM)	10 - 19
	A report on: How the council's housing department are addressing the issue of the lack of capacity for housing (tenancies) for care leavers which also includes, plans for how the waiting time for tenancies for care leavers can be reduced.	
	SECOND PART OF THE MEETING	
8.	INDEPENDENT REVIEWING OFFICERS (IRO) ANNUAL REPORT 2021-22 (3.00PM - 3.20PM)	20 - 50
9.	CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER AND CARE LEAVER SUFFICIENCY STRATEGY 2023-2026 (3.20PM - 3.50PM)	51 - 104
10.	OFSTED REPORT UPDATE FOR COMMITTEE (3.50 PM - 4.05PM)	
11.	CORPORATE PARENTING COMMITTEE WORKPLAN 2023-24 (4.05PM - 4.10PM)	105 - 111
	ANY OTHER OPEN BUSINESS AS NOTIFIED AT THE START OF THE MEETING AND ACCEPTED BY THE CHAIR AS URGENT.	

Date: 21 February 2023



Corporate Parenting Committee

MINUTES of the OPEN section of the Corporate Parenting Committee held on Wednesday 2 November 2022 at 2.00 pm the Council Offices, 160 Tooley Street, London SE1 2QH

PRESENT: Councillor Jasmine Ali (Chair)
 Councillor Naima Ali
 Councillor Rachel Bentley
 Councillor Esme Dobson
 Councillor Natasha Ennin
 Councillor Darren Merrill
 Councillor Charlie Smith (Vice-chair)

**NON VOTING
 COOPTED
 MEMBER:** Dr Mark Kerr, subject matter expert

**OFFICER
 SUPPORT:** Alasdair Smith, Director of Children Service
 Helen Woolgar, Assistant Director – Safeguarding and Care
 Elaine Reid, Head of Service: Permanence and Resources
 Dr Jenny Taylor, Head of Clinical Service
 Dr Stacy John-Legere, Designated Doctor for Looked after Children
 Joy Edwards, Designated Nurse for Looked after Children
 Dechaun Malcolm, Children’s Rights and Participation Officer
 Young people and representatives from Speakerbox
 Clare Ryan, Service Manager, Looked after Children, Children and Adult’s Services
 Khalida Khan, Interim Service Manager, LCS 16 plus Service
 Jane Tilton, Recruitment Manager, Children’s and Adults Services
 Usha Singh, Virtual Headteacher
 Louise Neilan, Head of External Affairs, Chief Executive’s

Paula Thornton and Beverley Olamijulo, Constitutional Team
Poonam Patel, Departmental Coordinator, Children's and Adults Service.

1. **APOLOGIES**

All members were present.

2. **CONFIRMATION OF VOTING MEMBERS**

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

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

The chair identified an item of late and urgent business as set out below:

- Item 9: Children Looked after and Care Leaver Sufficiency Strategy 2023-25

However, it was agreed that this item should be considered at the next meeting of the committee, so was deferred.

4. **DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS**

None were declared.

5. **MINUTES**

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 6 July 2022 be approved as a correct record and signed by the chair.

6. **FOSTERING WORKSHOP**

The committee heard representations from a front line foster care manager and staff who provided an overview of staying put for the council. In foster care, a staying put arrangement is slightly different to a foster placement in that the young person staying put is no longer a looked after child. They are a young adult and care leaver. Staying put provides support to a care leaver and they are allocated a

personal adviser.

Four case studies were outlined which provided evidence of staying put for Southwark, demonstrating continuity of care in a nurturing and care environment. In addition, some of the key points highlighted in these cases included:

- Young person felt part of their carers family
- Aspirational, many were attending university and other educational courses
- One in full time employment
- Positive sense of identity and heritage and proud of their background
- Close and trusting bond with their carers and feeling family is their own
- Independence and developing positive household routines (cooking and household chores to help with independence)
- Staying put provides a guarantee to support the young person in education.

Questions arising from presentation

- What happens to those not doing so well and how to understand the challenges and barriers that prevail. It was explained that if young person resides outside of Southwark, normal residence applies and they could apply to local housing within Southwark.
- Important to ensure that a pathway and long-term plan is in be place for the young person to overcome any challenges.
- The option of supported lodgings indicated for those young people who would like to stay put but are unable to do so.
- An officer raised the issue of the funding gap for staying put and the challenges for Southwark.

It was agreed that the copies of the case studies should be circulated to members of the committee. The committee heard representations from a front line foster care manager and staff who provided an overview of staying put for the council. In foster care, a staying put arrangement is slightly different to a foster placement in that the young person staying put were no longer a looked after child. They are a young adult and care leaver. Staying put provides support to a care leaver and they are allocated a personal adviser.

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It was agreed that the copies of the case studies should be circulated to members of the committee.

7. FOSTERING SERVICE ANNUAL REPORT 2021-22

Officers presented the report to committee and highlighted key points including the work undertaken by foster carers in the extremely challenging pandemic. A summary of the issues included:

- Challenges facing foster carers in the context of the prevailing cost of living crisis
- Ageing foster carer population
- Therapeutic approach to fostering, backed up with adequate training
- Working closely with placements to identify complex needs and provide support/training
- Emphasis on foster carer being part of a professional network
- View that long-term placements are equivalent to adoption
- Measures in place to deal with issues that may arise. For example, reasons behind a child /or young person persistently going missing
- Social worker and foster carer working in partnership to resolve issues
- Training and development offer outlined with some courses being offered in person.

Councillor Jasmine Ali expressed her thanks on behalf of the committee to foster carers for all their hard work and dedication.

Questions arising from presentation

- Therapeutic support and understanding of childhood adverse experiences and support for teenagers. Link between foster care training and support for these experiences in order to provide love, support and building resilience to empower foster carers to achieve balance. It was explained that twenty-four hour support was also available for foster carers
- Query relating to not completing training, support and development (TSD) in timescale and what this means. The outstanding not completed in timescale were reviewed and subject of a workshop monthly and review by officers
- Special guardianships and whether possible to consider extending the training programme offer. It was stated that this group of people are an essential part of the community and important that they are supported, especially in the challenges of the cost of living crisis currently; concern for young people and the support provided to their families. It was explained that a legislative framework guides foster care and adoption training and support. It was agreed to receive a report on special guardianship to a future corporate parenting committee
- Query relating to the increase in numbers for the 16 years plus age group and if any particular factors contributing, like the cost of living crisis.

Recruitment

The committee received input from the manager of foster care recruitment and the manager of the council's press team about initiatives and efforts in respect of foster care recruitment.

Advertising currently planned with the use of animation and the voices of young people with a launch planned to take to the community. Regular roll out of adverts and newsletters continue.

As soon as queries are received, contact is made immediately but challenges will prevail and the council work with the foster carers to support.

Efforts outlined to try and reach all parts of the community and including leaflet drops and articles in Southwark Life. All ideas and suggestions welcomed.

Issue of housing raised and the need for a spare room and impact on recruitment. Explained that housing allocation policy has limited resources. Councillor Merrill, cabinet member for council homes and homelessness explained that the housing allocation policy was currently being reviewed.

RESOLVED:

1. That the 2021-22 annual report of Southwark fostering service be noted.
2. That a report on special guardianship be received to a future meeting of the committee.

8. SPEAKERBOX VERBAL UPDATE

The children's rights & participation officer was in attendance with a number of young people who were members of Speakerbox to give the committee an update. It was explained that Speakerbox going through a very busy time with an increased participation level at 25% with the following highlighted:

- A poem on identity that was read to the committee by the young person who had written
- Creation of opportunities for those in care and making clear that they are not alone
- Working with the age group 5 – 25 with the idea to get the conversation going, regardless of age.

The young people each presented their achievements and experiences of Speakerbox to the committee including:

- Auditioning for a place on television show
- Writing a poem on identity as described above
- Drama groups and other creative efforts that help young people come together and develop confidence through teamwork
- Participation in a photography workshop, a further example of how involvement provide results, with the young people coming away from the experience positive and upskilled
- One young person explained that they have gone from being a previously 'quiet' person to one that has more confidence and able to have conversations and develop their character and resilience
- New skills learned on a drama project (lighting, camera and leadership) which has lead to the 'best version of 'myself' has quoted by the young person
- Speakerbox has helped her to reach her goals
- Given them freedom, education and goals.

A photography exhibition is planned in the New Year with the prints being on sale at the South London Gallery. All members of the committee are invited to attend, with the proceeds going to investment in the Speakerbox website with the aim of being interactive. Not all young people felt comfortable with making a phone call and the improved website will provide online interaction and support.

The launch of new film is also planned in the New Year from Speakerbox.

Speakerbox have a number of key events happening and would welcome the attendance of members of the committee to support their work. The children's rights & participation officer to provide details and location for members of the committee. The children's rights and participation officer was in attendance with a number of young people who were members of Speakerbox to give the committee an update. It was explained that Speakerbox were going through a very busy time with an increased participation level at 25% with the following highlighted:

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9. CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER AND CARE LEAVER SUFFICIENCY STRATEGY 2023-2026

This item was deferred until the next meeting of the committee.

10. INDEPENDENT REVIEWING OFFICERS (IRO) ANNUAL REPORT 2021-22

This item was deferred until the next meeting of the committee.

11. CORPORATE PARENTING COMMITTEE WORK PLAN 2022-23

RESOLVED:

1. That the work plan as set out in the report be subject to review and agreement with Councillor Jasmine Ali and Alasdair Smith (director of children service) in respect of the March and April 2023 meetings.
2. That the current work plan as set out that will be subject to review (as set out above) be noted as follows:

1 March 2023 – draft subject to review

Children in care

- Children Looked After and Care Leaver Sufficiency Strategy 2023-2026
- IRO report
- Ofsted report update for committee
- Children with disabilities
- Housing issues for young people / semi-independent accommodation
- Speakerbox verbal update.

Care Leavers

Workshop theme – To be agreed

19 April 2023 – draft subject to review*Children in care*

- Speakerbox verbal update
- Annual health report for looked after children
- Virtual head teacher annual report
- Special guardianship

Care Leavers

Workshop theme – To be agreed

The meeting ended at 4.15pm.

CHAIR:

DATED:

Item No. 7.	Classification: Open	Date: 1 March 2023	Meeting Name: Corporate Parenting Committee
Report title:		Housing and care leavers	
Ward(s) or groups affected:		All wards, care leavers	
From:		Director of Resident Services	

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Corporate Parenting Committee:

1. Note the data on care leavers housing presented in the report.
2. Note the proposed policy developments outlined in the report.
3. Note the proposed comments regarding the housing elements of the proposed London Care Leavers Compact.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

4. This report highlights the current position in terms of the approach to responding to the housing needs of former care leavers and the potential changes to approach in the future period.
5. This report also provides some key data on care leaver housing and homelessness which will provide some context.
6. The core legal obligations to care leavers within Housing legislation are outlined in the Housing Act 1996 as amended (part VI – allocations, Part VI homelessness), the Homelessness Act 2002 and the Homelessness Reduction Act 2018. This is supplemented by a Code of Guidance on Homelessness and another Code on Allocations.
7. Fundamentally in terms of homeless duties these confirm that where an eligible person (not subject to certain immigration controls) who is homeless or at risk of homelessness applies they are entitled to assistance to prevent or relieve homelessness. Where this is not possible a homeless main duty exists to provide temporary accommodation, and an offer in discharge of the main duty, whether through the housing register or in the private sector, where the applicant has a priority need for accommodation within the legal definition and is not intentionally homeless.

8. For care leavers and young people the definitions of who has a priority need under the law on homelessness are important. These have three relevant categories:
- (e) a person aged 16 or 17 who is not a 'relevant child' or a child in need to whom a local authority owes a duty under [section 20 of the Children Act 1989](#);
 - (f) a person under 21 who was (but is no longer) looked after, accommodated or fostered between the ages of 16 and 18 (except a person who is a 'relevant student');
 - (g) a person aged 21 or more who is vulnerable as a result of having been looked after, accommodated or fostered (except a person who is a 'relevant student');
9. This means that care leavers between 18-20 years have an automatic priority need when homeless. Care leavers between 21 and 25 years need to be able to demonstrate that they are vulnerable within the definitions in the law on homelessness as a result of their time in care. This involves demonstrating they would be significantly more vulnerable than the ordinary person if homeless, taking into account issues such as the impact, risk of harm or detriment and ability to respond to the consequences. This should also involve a consideration of the support available from a third part, including family and how regular and predictable that support is.
10. In relation to other young people the law states that the primary responsibility for a child in need who requires accommodation, including a 16 and 17 year old who is homeless lies with the relevant children's services authority. The Children Act 1989 (section 20) places a duty on children's services authorities to accommodate a child in need, and in almost all circumstances a homeless 16-17 year old would be a child in need. As both children's services and housing authorities have duties towards this group it is essential that services are underpinned by written joint protocols which set out clear, practical arrangements for providing services that are centred on young people and their families and prevent young people from being passed between housing and children's services authorities.
11. In terms of the allocation of social housing, the law lists groups of applicants for housing who should be given a reasonable preference (some priority) for an allocation – this includes the homeless and overcrowded households. This group does not explicitly include care leavers. Authorities are however empowered to create local preference groups who it decides to allocate priority to as a result of local needs in its area. These groups overall must not dominate allocations and overall, allocations must on balance be mostly to the preference groups.

12. In October 2020 the government issued good practice advice for local authorities on joint housing and children's social care protocols to support the corporate parenting duties on local authorities. A protocol should help children's services and housing authorities deliver the local accommodation offered to care leavers and prevent homelessness. The protocol can be viewed at the following [Joint housing protocols for care leavers: good practice advice - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/joint-housing-protocols-for-care-leavers)
13. This guidance draws on the obligations in the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 and on the Children and Social Work Act 2017 to promote a joint response that embeds gradual transition, joint planning (including with care leavers), support and decision making that prepares young people for the realities of independent living.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

Data

14. The data below provides some perspective on the current picture that illustrates the housing response to care leavers in Southwark.
15. In terms of homeless approaches there are a very small number from care leavers. Table 1 below illustrates this:

	Care leaver aged 18-20 years	Care leaver aged 21+ years	Total homeless approaches, all groups
2020/21	16	62	3883
2021/22	13	40	2855
2022/23	0*	11*	1884

*only includes quarter 1

16. One area where former care leavers can be over-represented is in those sleeping rough. In Southwark the numbers of former care leavers seen rough sleeping are small. Figures over the last 3 months so no on street contacts for former care leavers (from Southwark or elsewhere). Southwark continues to have an active off the street offer for rough sleepers which would see a swift response through outreach and a tailored specialist response to need.
17. Care leavers are in general in band 2 on the housing register, so have an urgent housing priority. This is one of the local priorities built into the housing allocations policy. Table 2 below shows the number of care leaver who were on the housing register at year end during the last 3 years.

Table 2 – care leavers on the housing register

Year end	No's registered
2020/21	116
2021/22	124
2022/23	106*

*As at January 2023

18. Lettings to care leavers can be seen in table 3 below. The table also shows lets allocated to those with move on priority. This contains applicants who are moving on from supported housing options and have priority in band 2 to support their move on. There may be some care leavers in this group, alongside other young people in need and other supported housing clients. In these cases all clients were in band 2 and most successfully bid for their property, with only 1 direct offer.
19. 82% of care leavers were registered for less than 3 years before receiving an offer, but only 2 care leavers waited less than a year before receiving an offer. The longest waiting time was 5 years and 12 care leavers in total waited for 3-5 years to receive an offer.

Table 3 – Lets to care leavers & supported move on Nov 21-Oct 22

	Care leavers	Supported move on
Total no rehoused	66	49
Lets to studio's	57	0
Lets to 1 beds	1	39
Lets to 2 beds	8	10

20. The 66 care leaver offers amounted to 6% of all offers on the register during this 12 months. 81% of all available studios were allocated to care leavers, 0.3% of 1 beds and 2% of available 2 bed homes.
21. Table 4 shows lets to all categories and demonstrates the proportion of lets to care leavers compared to other groups. This is a 12 month snapshot of lettings from November 21 to October 22.

Table 4 – lets November 21-October 22

Priority reason	Number of lets
Accessible housing register	68
Care leaver	66
Emergency landlord transfer	48
Fostering/adoption	2
"Good tenant" award	6
Homelessness	203
Preventing homelessness – discharge	94
Moderate medical	6
Supported housing move on	49

Overcrowding	94
Reduced priority	3
Regeneration	76
Severe medical	26
Social Welfare	120
Sheltered housing	66
Social Services Family Priority	5
Statutory overcrowded	52
Tenant transfer	7
Under occupier	47
Waiting list (b4 no priority)	24
Total	1062

General housing context

22. Overall housing market conditions are currently extremely challenging. Levels of homelessness in London (and more widely) are rising as the private sector market particularly becomes less affordable. In Southwark and in London local housing allowance levels are out of step with market rates for accommodation. 1 in 4 private sector landlords is reported to be exiting the market and the prices for what remains are increasingly expensive.
23. Significant levels of homelessness are coming from the loss of a private sector home and there is less supply available to prevent homelessness and the need for temporary accommodation. Good quality temporary accommodation is also becoming scarcer and costing more to secure. Across London boroughs are having to resort to bed and breakfast provision in much greater volumes than has been seen for many years and standards are challenging. Southwark currently has over 3,600 households in temporary accommodation. Over 2/3rd of provision is procured from the private sector, with the remainder temporary lets on housing estates in Southwark, often areas of longer term regeneration.
24. Unfortunately available social housing supply is also shrinking. Southwark has one of the largest council housing stock levels nationally and has an ambitious affordable housing programme. Despite this, with over 16,000 households on the register and the number of homeless approaches and households in temporary accommodation, demand is very significant. Supply has been diminishing in recent years and there is a growing gap between supply and demand. Table 5 below shows the declining level of lets by bedsize over the last 5 calendar years.

Table 5 – social housing lets by bedsize, last 5 calendar years

Year	Studio	1 bed	2 bed	3 bed	4 bed	5+ bed	other	Total
2022	55	297	321	169	26	2	13	883
2021	49	297	295	149	41	5	3	839
2020	45	350	280	145	28	3	2	853
2019	55	349	375	215	45	3	1	1043
2018	78	480	555	268	67	7	7	1462

25. This context presents a challenging position in terms of meeting housing needs for all groups and across all bedsizes, although larger families present the most difficult need for the council to meet through a social offer and in the private sector where local housing allowance levels are most out of step with market rates.

Policy development and operational practice

26. In this context, preventing homelessness is particularly important. Joint work between housing and children's social care needs to prioritise avoiding homelessness for care leavers through working together to ensure there is a clear pathway to meet needs whether through supported accommodation, social housing or the private rented sector.
27. What is clear from the data however is that the needs of all those who want social housing cannot necessarily be met given the supply and demand imbalance and a range of options need to be considered. For care leavers however the current housing allocations scheme recognises tangible disadvantages experienced by care leavers and the need to support them through providing high levels of priority on the housing register. This is recognised by the band 2 priority afforded to this group.
28. The council has been in a process of reviewing the housing allocations policy for some time. The existing scheme has been in place since 2013. In early 2020 a draft new policy was presented to Cabinet for permission to launch public consultation. This took place but a new policy did not immediately come forward for approval. A decision has been taken to commence a further redraft to enhance the proposals and take account the changed housing market conditions, supply and affordability challenges, cost of living issues and the impact of covid since the original draft came forward. This redraft will be subject to further consultation before a final draft is brought forward to Cabinet later in 2023/24.
29. It had been proposed to make a number of changes to the existing policy in respect of care leavers. In particular
- Currently former care leavers are put forward only for studio units unless a medical assessment recommends a one bed or the former care leaver has children and therefore requires a family sized home. There are several issues with this approach. The number of

available studio/bedsit units coming up for let each year is increasingly modest and on its own unlikely to meet demand. There is also an anomaly in that those moving on from supported units can register for a studio and one bed. It was therefore proposed to enable care leavers to bid for both bed sizes.

- It was also proposed to enable care leavers moving into the private rented sector to prevent homelessness to retain priority as a care leaver on the register.
30. It is likely these proposals will continue to form a part of the revised scheme that will be consulted on. Any further proposals around supporting care leavers can be considered as part of the consultation.
 31. The Housing Solutions Service also continue to work with Children's Social Care and Commissioning on move on from supported housing provision through the register and support into other housing options.
 32. A protocol and joint working arrangements exist to support this partnership. In light of the 2020 best practice document from Government on joint working protocols it would be beneficial to review protocols and ensure they reflect best practice and can be effectively implemented.

Pan London Care Leavers Compact

33. London Council's Housing Directors and Heads of Housing Needs have entered conversation with the Association of London Directors of Children's Services and the London Innovation and Improvement Alliance about the housing elements of a proposed Pan London Compact.
34. This compact is being developed to create a common agreed offer on a number of fronts from London authorities. The Housing elements focus:
 - Council tax exemption (not a housing area in Southwark)
 - Intentional homelessness exemption
 - Automatic priority need decision up to 25
 - Access to rent deposit schemes
 - Joint Housing and Children's Services protocols in place.
35. Housing and Modernisation is committed to contribute to the London conversation on the compact. In relation to the "asks" Southwark's current position is as follows:
 - There is no exemption from intentional homelessness decisions but few are ever made in practice
 - The law creates a vulnerability test for care leavers 21-25. This test is used in Southwark but few care leavers are ever found

not to meet this test

- Care leavers are furnished with access to rent deposit schemes to support a pathway into the private rented sector
- A protocol is in place but may benefit from review.

Policy framework implications

36. The Housing Allocations policy recognises the importance of enabling access to a proportion of social housing allocation for care leavers, alongside other pathways to meet housing need.
37. The priority afforded is a local priority given there is no legal priority to prioritise care leavers through the reasonable preference categories defined in law.
38. The review of this key council policy is likely to recommend this priority continues and further refinements are made to ensure a suitable level of offer, alongside the other housing options available to meet need.
39. Consultation and equalities analysis of new policy proposals will ensure the impact of proposals on young people and care leavers are considered, assessed and mitigated.
40. During 2023 a proposed new Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy will be brought forward to replace the existing policy. Care leavers will be identified within the Strategy as a vulnerable group to which the Strategy needs to respond.

Community, equalities (including socio-economic) and health impacts

41. This report provides information for the board and flags proposals coming forward in future policy and strategy work during 2023/24. As a result there are no specific equalities, health of community impacts arising for this report.
42. The policy and strategy proposals coming forward in the next year will have substantial equalities, health and community impacts which will need to be dealt with in the reports that support them. The services delivering the services underpinned by these policies and strategies have equalities impact and other community considerations as an integral part of decision making and assessments and day to day operations.

Climate change implications

43. There are no specific climate change implications of this information report.

Resource implications

44. There are no specific financial implications of this information report.

However the costs associated with responding to homelessness and housing need are significant to the council, particularly in relation to the provision of temporary accommodation. Any proposals taken forward in relation to care leaver housing will need to be clearly costed and the financial risks of proposals assessed and evaluated.

- 45. There are no staffing implications of this report.
- 46. There are no direct legal implications of this report.
- 47. Housing duties to care leavers are outlined at point 6-13 of this report.

Consultation

- 48. No direct consultation has taken place related to the content of this report but consultation on the new Housing Allocations Policy and Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy will be undertaken.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
New Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy Web link: The protocol: Joint housing protocols for care leavers: good practice advice - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)	Resident Services Housing and Modernisation London Borough of Southwark 160 Tooley Street, London, SE1 2QH	Cheryl Russell Director of Resident Services/ Karen Shaw Head of Housing Solutions Karen.shaw@southwark.gov.uk

AUDIT TRAIL

Lead Officer	Cheryl Russell, Director of Resident Services	
Report Author	Karen Shaw, Head of Housing Solutions	
Version	Final.	
Dated	31 January 2023	
Key Decision?	No	
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER		
Officer Title	Comments Sought	Comments Included
Assistant Chief Executive – Governance and Assurance	No	No
Strategic Director of Finance	No	No
Cabinet Member	No	No
Date final report sent to Constitutional Team		20 February 2023

Item No. 8.	Classification: Open	Date: 1 March 2023	Meeting Name: Corporate Parenting Committee
Report title:		Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO) Annual Report 2021-22	
Ward(s) or groups affected:		All	
From:		Director, Children & Families	

RECOMMENDATION

1. That the Corporate Parenting Committee note the Independent Review Officers (IRO) Annual Report 2021-22.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

2. The IRO annual report provides relating to the Independent Reviewing Service for children and young people in care within the local authority, as required by statutory guidance arising from the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010.
3. This report contains a summary of work completed by Southwark's IRO service for the period 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022. It identifies the work of the service in fulfilling its statutory remit and highlights areas for development in relation to the IRO function.
4. The report is to be presented to the strategic director of children's and adults' services, the lead cabinet member for children, young people, education and refugees and to the corporate parenting committee.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

5. Independent Reviewing Officers are dedicated to improving outcomes for children and young people in care through the review and challenge aspect of their role. They are often the stable and constant factor for children and young people in care and are committed to driving and improving outcomes for them through working in partnership with young people, their carers and the social work and professional network around children.

6. In the Ofsted Inspection of 2017 the oversight was an area that was felt to need development. Previous focused visits from Ofsted have shown that this area had improved and is continually improving. In considering the IRO report the corporate parenting committee is able to exercise its own scrutiny and challenge function and hold services to account.
7. The report set out in Appendix 1, highlights the work of the service and the areas for development going forward and provides an overview of children in care and services provided to them.

Policy framework implications

8. The Borough Plan has a commitment to a great start in life for all children and young people in the borough. This particularly has in mind those who are in care, for whom Independent Reviewing Officers are a key part of overseeing the Borough Plan commitment.

Community, equalities (including socio-economic) and health impacts

Community impact statement

9. The decision to note this report has been judged to have no or a very small impact on local people and communities.
10. The work of the IROs is intended to improve the outcome for children and young people in care.
11. Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, lays out the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) which requires public bodies to consider all individuals when carrying out their day to day work – in shaping policy, in delivering services and in relation to their own employees. It requires public bodies to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations between different people when carrying out their activities. The council's [Approach to Equality](#) commits the council to ensuring that equality is an integral part of our day to day business.
12. The council's children and families directorate involves working closely with all relevant stakeholders and partners across the sector and collectively we are committed to upholding the responsibilities towards advocating the Public Sector Equality Duty and complying with the Equalities Act 2010.
13. The PSED enables public bodies to consider the diverse needs of groups and have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between different people when carrying out their activities. Due regard is about considering the different needs of protected characteristics in relation to the three parts of the duty.

14. The Equalities Act 2010 define the following as protected characteristics; age; disability, gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; and sexual orientation.

Equalities (including socio-economic) impact statement

15. The report takes account of the ethnicity, age and disabilities of children in care, as well as the racial and ethnic background of current staffing of the IRO Service and addresses these areas in light of commitments set out by Southwark Stands Together (SST).

Health impact statement

16. The report takes account of the impact of the ongoing pandemic (Covid -19) upon children in care and staff, as well as those measures reported regarding the health and wellbeing of children in care.

Climate change implications

17. None.

Resource implications

18. None

Legal implications

19. None.

Financial implications

20. None

Consultation

21. Not applicable.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
Southwark's Approach to Equality	Quality Assurance and Practice Development, Children and Families, Children's and Adults' Services 4 th Floor, Children's and Adults' Services Tooley Street 160 Tooley Street, London, SE1 2QH	Tendai Murowe 020 7525 0654
Web link (please copy and paste into browser): https://www.southwark.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/equality-and-diversity/equality-objectives		
Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010	Quality Assurance and Practice Development, Children and Families, Children's and Adults' Services 4 th Floor, Children's and Adults' Services Tooley Street 160 Tooley Street, London, SE1 2QH	Tendai Murowe 020 7525 0654
Web link: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2010/959/contents/2013-07-01		
Southwark's Borough Plan 2020-22	Quality Assurance and Practice Development, Children and Families, Children's and Adults' Services 4 th Floor, Children's and Adults' Services Tooley Street 160 Tooley Street, London, SE1 2QH	Tendai Murowe 020 7525 0654
Web link: https://www.southwark.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/fairer-future/council-plan		

APPENDICES

No.	Title
Appendix 1	Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO) Annual Report 2021-22

AUDIT TRAIL

Lead Officer	David Quirke-Thornton, Strategic Director, Children's and Adults' Services	
Report Author	Tendai Murowe, Assistant Director, Quality Assurance and Practice Development	
Version	Final	
Dated	7 February 2023	
Key Decision?	No	
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER		
Officer Title	Comments Sought	Comments Included
Assistant Chief Executive – Governance and Assurance	No	No
Strategic Director of Finance	No	No
Cabinet Member	No	No
Date final report sent to Constitutional Team		21 February 2023



Annual Report Independent Reviewing Service 2021/22

London Borough of Southwark
Children and Families Services

Report of : Clare Ryan, Service Manager, Quality Assurance, Children & Families, Children's and Adults' Services

Accountable Assistant Director: Tendai Murowe, Assistant Director of Quality Assurance and Practice Development, Children & Families, Children's and Adults' Services

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- 1. Introduction**
- 2. Profile of Southwark's Children and Young People**
- 3. Outcomes & Performance**
- 4. Children & Young People's Views**
- 5. Monitoring & Escalation**
- 6. Developmental Work for 2022/23**

Summary to year end 2022

- Numbers of looked after children in Southwark increased from 449 to 457 between 1st April 2021 to 31st March 2022 (1.7% increase)
- There were also increases in children entering and ceasing care in Southwark during the same time period (37% and 20% increases respectively)¹
- There was a decrease in the total number of reviews (of children's care plans) held in the year (n= 1222 vs 1264, meaning 42 less reviews in the year)
- Timeliness of children and young people's reviews decreased by 4% to the year-end 2022.
- 94% of children and young people over 4 years old participated in some way in their review and 6% did not.
- There will be continued focus throughout 2022/23 to ensure that reviews are child centred and children are given every opportunity to participate.
- The number of unaccompanied asylum seeking children increased by 87% to 71 at year-end 2022. This resulted in Southwark being removed from the rota for the latter part of the year.
- The proportion of children who are of Black or Black British ethnicity remains well above inner London (IL) and above statistical neighbours (SN) averages (41% for Southwark vs 28% and 36% for IL and SN respectively), necessitating particular skills from the IROs when reviewing the cultural, emotional and health needs of these children and young people who are likely to be more sociologically and economically disadvantaged.²
- Placement stability for children in care has improved, with 8.5% of children looked after at the end of the year with three or more placements during the year. Short term stability (those with three or more placements) is now in-line with the London and statistical neighbour averages at 71%, whilst long term stability (same placement for 2 or more years) performance is above London and statistical neighbours 72%.
- IROs raised 677 case alerts between 1 April 2021 and the 31 March 2022.³ There were 61 formal escalations in the same time period.⁴ This suggests that 616 formal escalations were avoided through the use of the case alerts.

¹ This is percentage decreases between year end figures 2020/21 vs 2021/22

² See Research in Practice, '[Understanding the lived experiences of black and ethnic minority children and families.](#)'

³ Case alerts are created by IROs on the case management system (Mosaic) to alert the allocated social worker to a care planning concern or issue they wish to draw attention to and have addressed.

⁴ Escalations are governed by the protocol contained in [online policies and procedures](#). Escalations occur when the initial case alert remains unresolved. IROs can refer an escalation to CAF/CASS at any time but must notify the Head of Service for QA who in turn will inform the Assistant Director and the Director for CSC.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of this annual report is to provide an overview of the activity of the Independent Reviewing Service for Looked After Children between 1 April 2021 and 31 March 2022. This report is required by statutory guidance (see 1.3 below and 7.11 of the IRO Handbook, 2010) and seeks to analyse and evaluate practice, plans and arrangements for looked after children. The report is also intended to review the effectiveness of the Independent Reviewing Officer Service in ensuring that the Local Authority discharges its statutory and corporate parenting responsibilities well towards those children who are looked after.
- 1.2 This annual report provides qualitative and quantitative information about the service provided in 2021/22, and also sets-out the priorities for 2022/23 to further improve the effectiveness of the service.

Legal Context and Purpose of Service

- 1.3 The Independent Review Officers Service is set within the framework of the [IRO Handbook \(Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2010\)](#) and reflects statutory regulation, the [Care Planning Regulations and Guidance which were introduced in April 2010](#).
- 1.4 Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs) have a critical and statutory role in relation to the improvement of care planning for looked after children. The responsibility of the IRO is to have an overview of the child's care planning arrangements and of the child's wellbeing in placement. IROs achieve this primarily through chairing multi-agency reviews of children's care plans and will have a strong focus on plans for children's futures, as well as oversight of the child's health and education. The IRO must offer constructive and targeted scrutiny and challenge regarding case management and care planning through regular review and monitoring and follow up between children's reviews as appropriate to the child's needs and circumstances.

Functions & Duties of the IRO Service

- 1.5 The primary task of the IRO is to ensure that the care plan for the child fully reflects the child's current needs and that the actions set out in the plan are consistent with the local authority's legal responsibilities towards the child.⁵ The IRO Service must have strong oversight of all care planning for children and young people throughout their time experiencing care services, notably at the key transition points where children and young people are entering and leaving care. This is in order to ensure that children and young people's needs are well identified and defined, and that the planning of service delivery is proportionate, impactful and effective in a positive way, and without delay.
- 1.6 To achieve the above, the IRO Service is expected to:

⁵ [IRO Handbook, 2.10](#)

- Ensure that **the care plan is based on a detailed and up-to-date assessment of the child's needs**, and sets out realistic and effective actions to meet those needs, within an appropriate timescale for the child;
- **Identify any gaps** in the assessment process or provision of services, and notify the corporate parent about the implications of this for the child;
- Ensure that the **child's voice is heard**, their views, wishes and feelings are given full consideration and weight and, as appropriate, the child fully understands their care plan and the implications of any proposed changes to it;
- Ensure that the **child understands how an advocate could help** and that a referral to an advocate is made if necessary;
- **Consult** with and involve the child's parents, as well as other significant adults in the **family and professional networks**;
- Ensure any **safeguarding issues are identified** and addressed;
- **Challenge robustly any drift or delay** in the progress of the child's care plan, or the delivery of services to them;
- Ensure that **formal statutory reviews are held and recorded** within timescales set out by statutory guidance;
- **Monitor the local authority's actions** in between the review meetings, to make sure that progress is being made to achieve the outcomes for the child as set-out in their care plan, and to act on any concerns about drift or delay;
- **Take appropriate action** if the local authority fails to comply with regulations, or is in breach of its duties to the child in any material way, including making a referral to Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (CAFCASS).

Service Overview



Fig 1

- 1.7 Figure 1 above shows the IRO Service within the wider service structure for Quality Assurance and Practice Improvement. The Service Manager for Quality Assurance (Care) is responsible for the direct line management of the IRO Service provided by IROs and also has management responsibility for the provision of advocacy and children and young people's participation (for those receiving children who are looked after by the local authority).
- 1.8 The Service benefits from close links to Permanency and Care Services (0-15) and 16 plus Service, Safeguarding and Family Support Service, the Virtual School and Head and other services within Quality Assurance and auditing services. There is also collaborative work with the Extra Familial Harm Service and with the QA Safeguarding Service (Child Protection Conferencing). This is to ensure that there is continued IRO oversight at the point that this is required for children and young people's experiences of services provided to them.
- 1.9 Administrative support is provided by a fulltime administrative officer managed by the Quality Assurance Unit (QAU) Administration Manager. IROs are responsible with social workers for arranging looked after review meetings, and also for recording all review meetings. There is administrative capacity for the distribution of care plans and IRO reports to the professional network. Social workers are tasked with sending out consultation documents and sharing plans and IRO reports with children and parents.

- 1.10 The Southwark IRO Service is staffed by permanent and locum staff (5.5 x permanent and 1 x locum). The Service will at times make use of sessional staff and additional capacity via the AidHour Service and freelance IROs whenever there is a need to ensure capacity to function within statutory regulation. For example, when there is an increase in numbers of unaccompanied asylum seeking children requiring a service from the local authority.
- 1.11 The IRO Service (despite use of agency and sessional IROs) has been largely stable over the past 12 months to April 2022. A permanent Service Manager was appointed in September 2021. The new Service Manager had been employed by Southwark within Care and Permanency Services for some years and therefore, is very familiar with our looked after population. The Service Manager has been focussing on recruitment of permanent IROs to enable the service to cease using agency staff.
- 1.12 Approximately 73% of children receiving care services are allocated to the full time IROs and approximately 27% are allocated to those who are sessional IROs. There was an increased use of sessional IROs over 2021/22 due to growing numbers of unaccompanied asylum seeking children entering the care of Southwark, and to afford the Service the flexibility it requires. This ensures immediate IRO oversight for this particularly vulnerable and often traumatised group of children and young people. However, in 2022/23 we will be seeking to reduce the use of sessional staff as 3 more permanent staff have been recruited.
- 1.13 IROs who are male, and of Black or Black British ethnicity continue to be unrepresented in the profile of our IRO service, although there are 3 IROs who are female, and of Black/Black British ethnicity. Habitually and in line with expectations, the IROs consider and promote the specific cultural and identity needs of children and young people through the review of their care plans.
- 1.15 All IROs have at least five years post-qualifying experience as a social worker and are registered with Social Work England. IROs have previously held managerial roles in other services and have had experience of oversight within safeguarding services as well as services to looked after children.
- 1.16 Some of Southwark's IROs have known children on their caseloads for almost the whole of their life (children now in their early teens who came into care as very young children, e.g. under 6mths old). Often, IROs are the consistent professionals in children's lives and as such, hold a wealth of knowledge about them.

Email to IRO from a Supervising Social Worker

Your input into care planning and **delivery** for L has been enormously appreciated. It really demonstrated the value of an effective IRO in holding the team to account and moving things forward so that L's needs were met.'

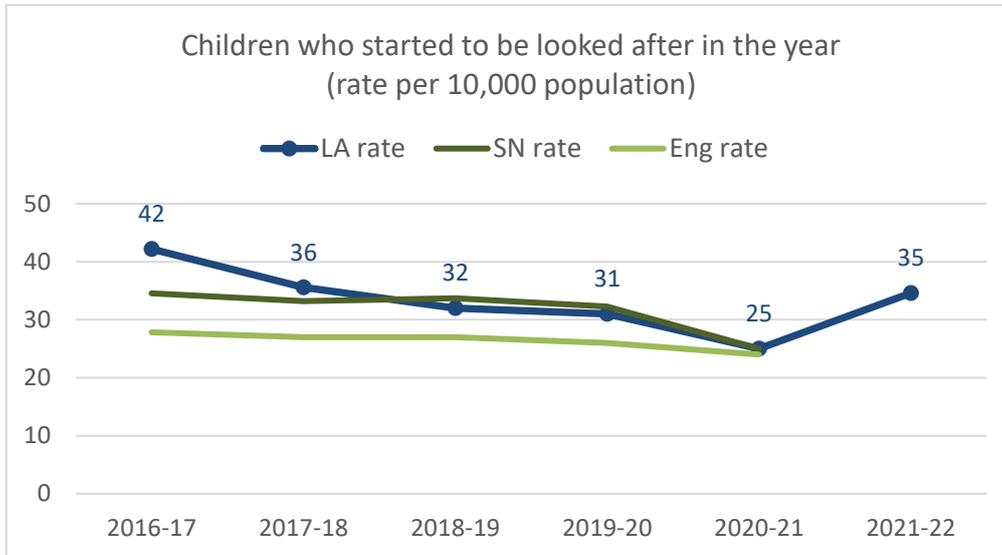
Caseloads

- 1.17 IRO caseloads in Southwark are within those limits recommended in guidance (see 7.13 to 7.15 of the IRO Handbook). The recommended average caseload is between 50 and 70 looked after children. The average caseload an IRO holds in Southwark is approximately 52 to 56 children. Full time and permanent IROs can hold up to 60 cases. The highest currently is 60. The workload for an IRO may also be considered in relation to time taken to travel to placements as well as the complexity of issues for each child. Children and families whose origins are in other countries may need additional time in the care planning and review process to properly explore their cultural needs, as well as additional time for interpretation.
- 1.18 IROs have now mostly moved back to holding in person reviews however, some children and young people prefer virtual methods of interaction. If a review takes place virtually there is an expectation that the IRO will visit the child or young person where they live either before or after the review. All children and young people should be visited by their IRO a minimum of twice per year.

Multi-agency Liaison & Quality Assurance

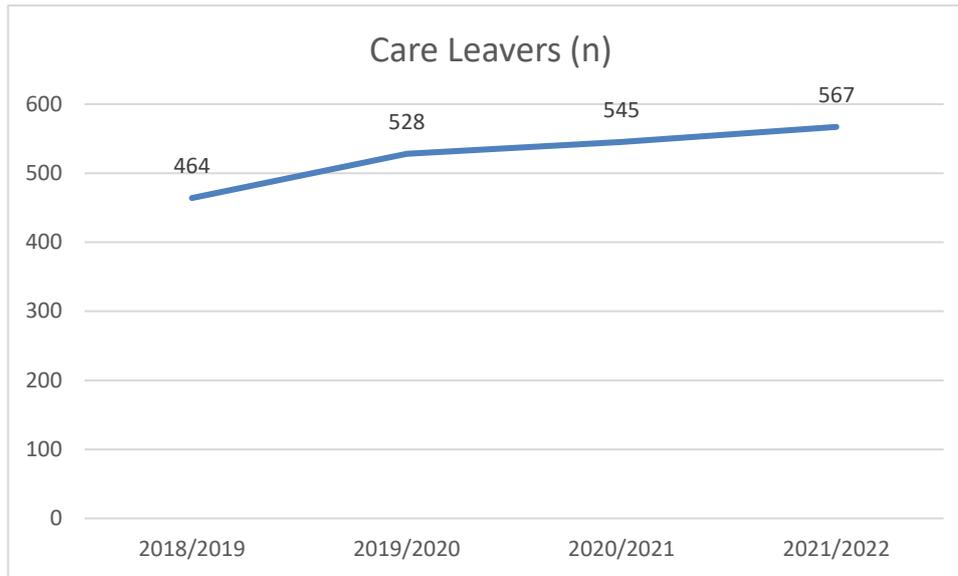
- 1.19 A permanent Assistant Director for Quality Assurance and Practice Improvement has been appointed and commenced their role in July 2022. They directly line manage the Service Manager for the IRO Service.
- 1.20 The Head of Southwark's Virtual School regularly attends IRO team meetings to discuss educational provision, personal education plans (PEPs) for children and how these are monitored through review and to highlight key areas for IRO attention such as achievement at KS5. Health Leads such as the Nurse for children in care also routinely attend IRO team meetings to ensure health outcomes for children in care are actively monitored. The Service Manager also attends a weekly multi-agency meeting which focusses on the timeliness of PEPs, Initial Health Assessments and Review Health Assessments.
- 1.21 CAFCASS liaison has improved and there are quarterly meetings with the Service Manager and CAFCASS. IROs remain in close contact with Guardians and have electronic access to legal bundles to ensure oversight of children's cases where these are in proceedings.
- 1.22 The IRO Service Manager attends the Extra Familial Harm Panel, Complex Needs Panel and the Access to Resources Panel for children entering the care of Southwark Council.
- 1.23 IROs regularly participate in monthly and thematic case audit and the Service Manager attends monthly performance meetings for the All Age Disability, Care and Permanency and 16+ Service

2. Profile of Southwark's Children & Young People



Graph1
Source: SSDA903

- 2.1 The graph above relates to the rates of children starting to be looked after and compares Southwark's rate of children entering care with our statistical neighbours and the national rate. Southwark's rate has increased over 2021/22 and this upturn is as a result of an influx of unaccompanied asylum seeking children.
- 2.2 For IROs, manageable caseloads (as previously evidenced at 1.17) enable improved oversight, allowing time for midway reviews and attendance at other key meetings for children (such as Permanency & Placement Planning Meetings, Stability Meetings and Professionals Meetings). This then means a greater focus on collaborative working across Southwark's services and with other agencies (schools, primary, community and acute health care, CAMHs etc.)



Graph 2
Source: SSDA903

- 2.3 The graph above (Graph 2) shows the numbers of children leaving care by year (2019 to year end 2022). Each year the numbers of young people leaving care has increased, with a 22% increase across the four years shown above (n= 103). IROs have oversight of pathway planning for young people as they approach leaving care age and liaise closely with the 16+ Services. The 16+ Service is in touch with approximately 97% of care leavers aged between 19 and 21 years. Audit work has demonstrated that staying in touch and forming trusted relationships for Care Leavers is a particular strength.

No. & Rate of Children Looked After (CLA)	SNs 2019/20	Southwark 2019/20	Southwark 2020/21	Southwark 2021/22
CLA as at 31 st March (n)	361	458	449	457
CLA as at 31 st March per 10,000	61	70	69	69
CLA starting to 31 st March (n)	179	204	166	228
CLA ceasing to 31 st March (n)	177	222	167	214

Table 1
Source: SSDA903

- 2.4 The table above (Table 1) shows children in care as at the 31st of March by number and rate as well as the numbers starting and ceasing to be looked after in the year. The table below (Table 2) shows the proportions of children in care by ethnicity.

- 2.5 As noted in the summary, children who are of Black or Black British are over represented amongst our children in care (41% for 2021/22). There are no published mid-year population estimates by ethnicity and age for London boroughs. The published comparative data (for whole population) comes from the Office of National Statistics (ONS) estimates for 2019. This shows that for all under 19 year olds in Southwark's population, 40.1% and 13.1% of children and young people were of Black and Mixed ethnicity respectively. Southwark's looked after children population was 41% and 19% respectively by comparison.
- 2.6 The proportion children and young people looked after by Southwark who are Black or Black British ethnicity is almost equal to the proportions of children of White and Mixed ethnicities combined.
- 2.7 The proportion of children who are of White or Asian ethnicity who are looked after by Southwark is lower than both our statistical neighbours and the inner London averages.
- 2.8

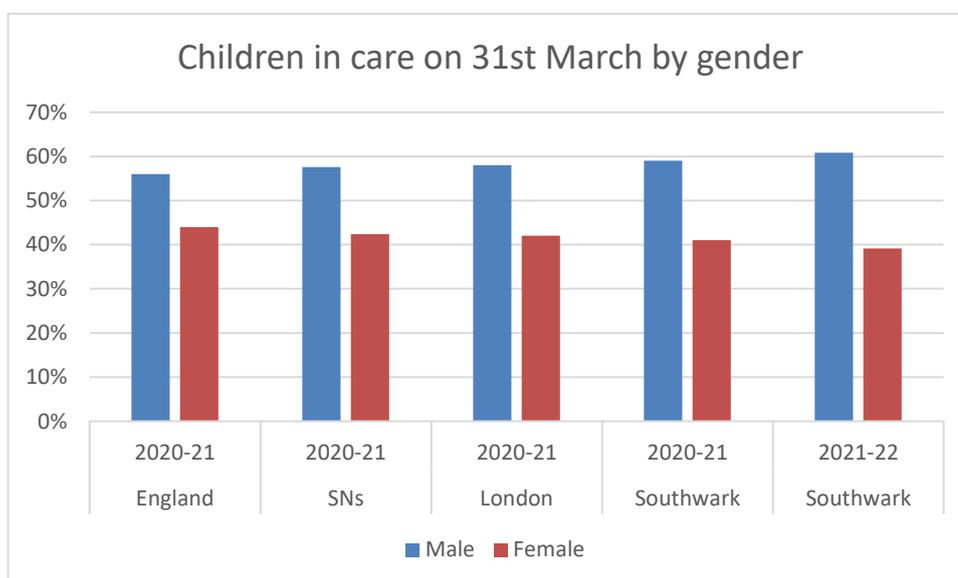
Children by Ethnicity %	England 2019/20	SNs 2019/20	Inner London 2019/20	Southwark 2019/20	Southwark 2020/21	Southwark 2021/22
White	74	33	35	25	26	23
Mixed	10	18	17	17	20	19
Asian or Asian British	4	9	10	5	5	7
Black or Black British	7	37	30	48	45	41
Other ethnic groups	4	6	7	5	4	9

Table 2
Source: SSDA903

Southwark School Census Data (%)				
White	Mixed	Asian	Black	Other
31	13	6	41	9

- 2.9 This is significant for the IRO Service. The professional development, and the profile of the IRO Service, should keep pace with the needs and profile of our children and young people. IROs must be well informed of children's cultural needs and monitoring activities and children's reviews must reflect their needs around health, skin and hair care as well as dietary and identity needs.
- 2.10 Through Southwark Stands Together (SST), the Council has made a commitment to ensuring that Southwark's staffing profile at senior levels is reflective of the local population, and to promote equality and diversity at all levels. Similarly, a commitment is made to make our IRO Service reflective of children and young people's ethnicity, and knowledgeable and responsive to their cultural and emotional needs. Achieving and maintaining a sense of security in care may be more difficult for children and young people of Black, minority ethnic and multiple heritage backgrounds, and for unaccompanied asylum seekers. These children and young people may face racism, discrimination and isolation which can challenge their ability to develop resilience and high self-esteem.

- 2.11 A bespoke and mandatory training programme has been developed and commenced in September 2022 for all social work staff, inclusive of IROs which covers racism, anti-discriminatory practice, black history and reducing inequalities. Southwark also run a mandatory inverse mentoring scheme where white senior managers are matched with a black, Asian or ethnic minority member of staff as their mentor.
- 2.12 There is continued developmental work on Life Long Links and ReConnect programmes to safely support children in care to establish meaningful links with people who are important to them and offer them insight into their history, culture and identity.⁶
- 2.13 The graph below (Graph 3) shows the gender of children and young people which remains comparable to statistical neighbours, inner London. As with our statistical neighbours, more male children than female receive care services.



Graph 3
Source: SSSA903

- 2.14 Southwark's looked after children are proportionately older than our statistical neighbours and the inner London averages. The highest proportion are aged between 10 to 15 years (43% at end of 2021/22). The proportion of children who are aged under 10 years old is more or less comparable to both our statistical neighbours and the inner London averages.
- 2.15 Strong IRO oversight of care plans for very young children coming into care is crucial if the plan is to return children home where this is assessed as a realistic possibility. Many of our young children's parents and carers are affected by issues such as domestic abuse and violence, substance and alcohol use, and or mental health issues. Often, these issues are not resolved for children and

⁶ Lifelong Links aims to ensure that children in care have positive support networks around them to help them during their time in care and into adulthood.

they remain in care, therefore, securing permanency early on at the initial and second reviews for these children becomes critical.

- 2.16 Permanency for children can be achieved in a number of ways. Children can be matched for adoption or matched for long term foster care. Children can also be placed with someone who is connected or related to the child or children (Connected Carers).

Children by age %	England 2019/20	SNs 2019/20	Inner London 2019/20	Southwark 2019/20	Southwark 2020/21	Southwark 2021/22
Under 1	5	4	4	4	4	2
1 to 4	14	9	9	6	9	6
5 to 9	18	12	12	13	11	10
10 to 15	39	38	38	45	44	43
16 and over	24	36	37	32	32	39

Table 3
Source: SSDA903

3. Outcomes & Performance

Stability of Care

- 3.1 IROs have a significant role in supporting children to remain in placement and in ensuring that they are in the right type of placement to meet their needs (stability of care). Stability of children's placements has improved over the last year with fewer children experiencing three or more placement moves (a decrease of 1.5% compared with the previous year, and now comparable with other boroughs) and more children remaining in the same placement for longer (see Table 4 below).
- 3.2 Where children were living (by placement type) as at the end of year 2022 is shown in the table below (Table 4). Some comparative information on placement type is unavailable, for example, permanent foster placement information. Southwark has a higher proportion of children in foster care than our statistical neighbours and inner London averages, and a good proportion of placements for children are with permanent foster carers. It is deemed preferable for children to be placed with families rather than in a residential setting. However, for some children and young people, a residential setting may be more conducive to their needs.
- 3.3 Audit work completed with the Care and Permanency Service has shown that children in long term stable placements with committed carers do very well at school and socially. This was also the case for another young person in a very effective residential placement.
- 3.4 During the focused visit by HM Inspector (Ofsted) in September 2020, sufficiency of placements for older children with complex and high needs was highlighted as an area for improvement. Southwark has joined the [Commissioning Alliance](#) to support work on sufficiency of placements and

developing capacity within and in the proximity of the Borough is a high priority. Placement sufficiency remains a national issue.

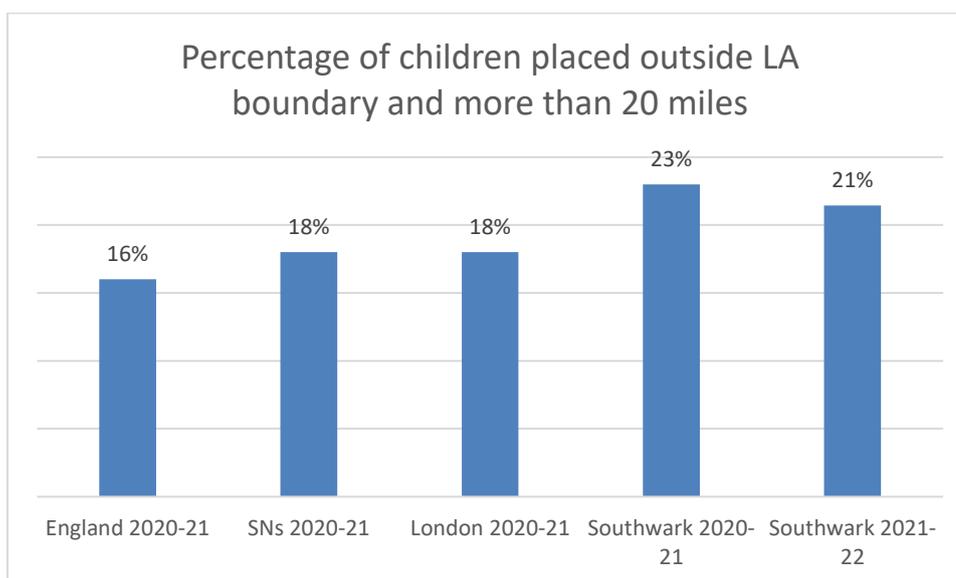
Children by Placement Type	England	SNs	London	Southwark	Southwark
	2020-21	2020-21	2020-21	2020-21	2021-22
Foster placements	71%	75%	71%		76%
Concurrent planning foster placements	-	-	-	-	1%
Foster placements with relative(s) or friends(s)	-	-	-	-	20%
Foster placements confirmed as permanent (long term)	-	-	-	-	42%
Placed for adoption	3%	2%	2%	1%	1%
Placement with parents	7%	4%	3%	2%	1%
Other placement in the community	2%	2%	2%	-	0%
Children's homes, secure units and hostels	14%	16%	20%		18%
Other residential settings	1%	2%	2%	2%	2%
Residential schools	-	0%	-	-	0%
Other placements	1%	0%	-	-	0%

Table 4 Source: SSDA903

Stability of Care	SNs 2020/21	Inner London 2020/21	Southwark 2020/21	Southwark 2020/22
% of children with 3+ placements	9%	9%	10%	8.5%
% of children in care for 2.5 years in placement for 2 years +	70%	72%	71%	76.4%

Table 5 Source: SSDA903

- 3.5 Wherever possible, children and young people should be placed to live close to their families for obvious reasons. The graph below (Graph 7) shows the proportion of children in care at the end of the year placed more than 20 miles from their home. For Southwark's children and young people, this is above both the England, inner London and statistical neighbours' average, although it has reduced by 2% in 2021/22. This can also impact on IROs' time to perform other key duties and tasks if they have to travel extensively to where children are living to conduct reviews.
- 3.7 To monitor this and to support children and young people better, the IRO Service will be looking at ways to identify earlier where placements are becoming unstable and to improve how this information is collated to provide improved quality assurance of all children's placements.

Graph 7
Source: SSDA903

- 3.8 As stated, IROs have a statutory role in seeking to improve outcomes for children in Southwark's care. This includes ensuring that children have an initial health assessment in good time, and that they then have an up to date annual

health assessment and developmental checks, and that their mental health and wellbeing is monitored and addressed.

- 3.9 Whilst the majority of children and young people have an up to date annual health assessment (95% as at the end of year 2022), the timeliness of initial health assessments requires improvement. There is a weekly meeting to address this which is chaired by the Assistant Director and the timeliness of initial health assessments is increasing.
- 3.10 Children's access to timely dental checks has been and remains an area significantly impacted by the pandemic and had dropped significantly in 2021 to 30%. This outcome is improving and children are now accessing dental services more readily with performance for 2022 at 57%. The vast majority of children in care have a contemporary SDQ score (81%), but these indicators of emotional and behavioural health need should be consistently evident in children's care plans. However, there is embedded clinical capacity (for children's mental health needs) available to Southwark's children as well as a Virtual Mental Health Lead exclusive to children and young people in care.
- 3.11 Audits continue to show that IROs are addressing health assessments in reviews to inform review recommendations. SDQ results need to be used better to inform care plans and reviews. Audits indicate that SDQs are completed, but social workers and IROs must relate the findings more explicitly to the child's care plan.

Outcomes for Children Looked After	England 2020-21	SNs 2020-21	London 2020-21	Southwark 2020-21	Southwark 2021-22
Number of children whose immunisations were up to date	86%	69%	75%	86%	82%
Number of children who had their teeth checked by a dentist	40%	36%	38%	30%	57%
Number of children who had their annual health assessment	91%	92%	94%	97%	95%
Children looked after for at least 12 months aged 4 to 16 with an SDQ score	80%	84%	85%	94%	81%
Average score per child	14%	12%	12%	14%	13%

Table 8
Source: SSDA903

Educational Achievement & Attainment

3.12 The IRO Service is instrumental in supporting and improving the completion and quality of Personal Education Plans for children and young people, and in monitoring and tracking attainment and achievement outcomes. 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

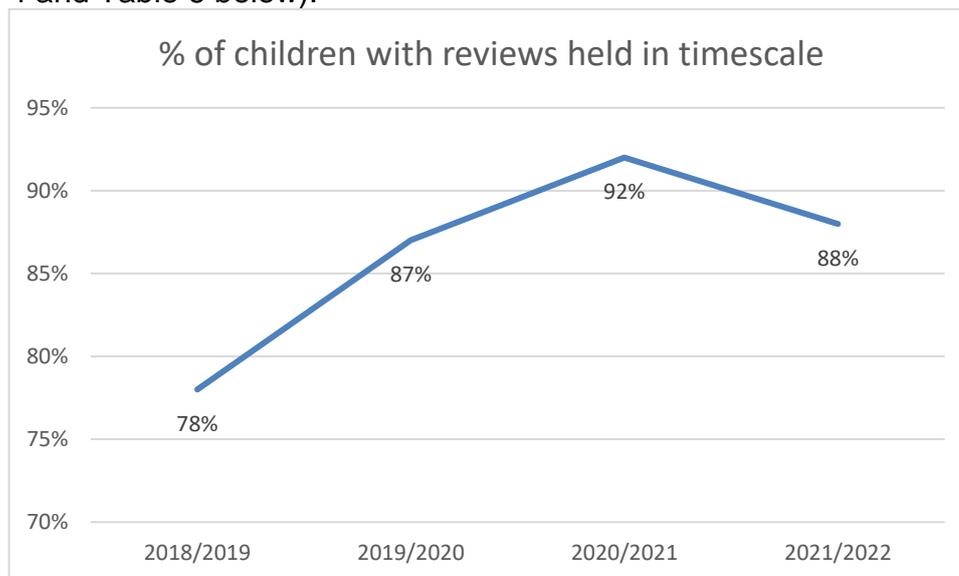
3.13 The Virtual Head reported that 42% of Southwark's 2021 GCSE cohort achieved a Grade 1-9 in English and Maths. 19% of our looked after children achieved a 9-4 pass in English and Maths in 2021. Due to the pandemic there were no formal exams. Instead, teacher assessed grades were given so comparisons could not be made regarding the previous year or national statistics.

Children & Young People's Reviews

- 3.14 A child's initial review should be conducted within 20 working days of the child becoming looked after; and the second review should be conducted within three months of the initial review of the child's care plan. Subsequent reviews should be held not more than six months after this. A review should be held in a venue which is comfortable for the child or young person, usually where the child or young person is living. IROs are now seeing children and young people where they live either before the review, as part of the review, or afterwards, depending on the wishes of the child or young person.

The Care Plan and IRO minutes were reviewed in 2022 and following a consultation with children, young people and social work staff the Care Plans are now being written in the first person and co-produced with children and young people. The IROs are writing their minutes as a letter to the child or young person. Initial feedback from social workers, IROs and children and young people has highlighted how much more meaningful this style of co-production and writing is and that it can be used as a piece of life story work now or in the future.

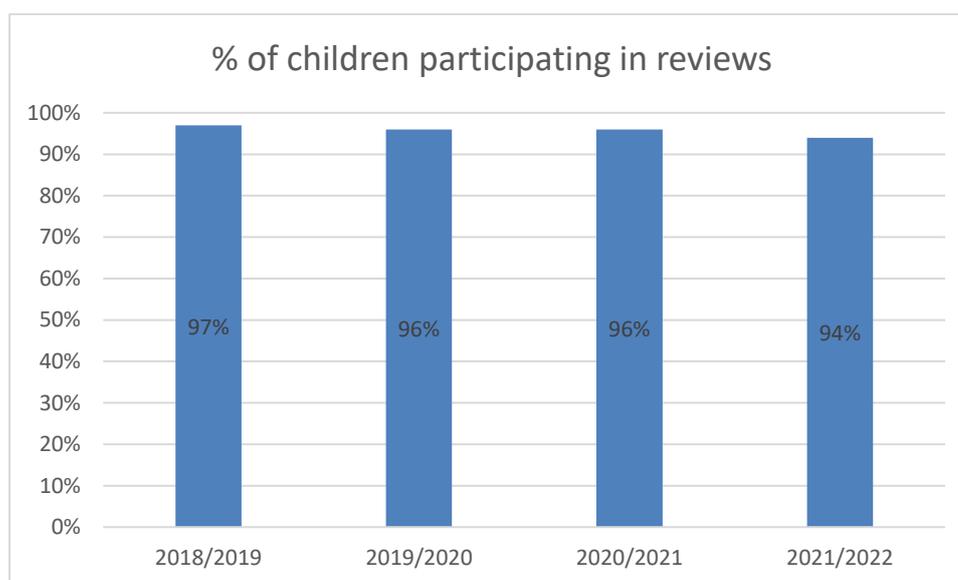
- 3.15 The timeliness of children's reviews has decreased slightly. The proportion of reviews held in timescale was 88% at the end of the year (2021/22) (see Graph 4 and Table 6 below).



Graph 4
Source: SSDA903

Reviews for Children Looked After	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
No. of children looked after for 20+ working days at 31st March	437	441	444	439
(of the above) No. of children with reviews held in timescale	343	385	407	394
% of children with reviews held in timescale	78	87	92	88
Total no. of reviews held in the year for all children & young people	1267	1278	1264	1222

Table 6
Source: SSDA903



Graph 5
Source: SSDA903

Children & Young People's Views

- 3.16 The above graph shows the proportion of children and young people looked after (at the end of year) aged 4 years and above who had participated in their review in some way. There is no published comparative information available for participation. Various methodology is used to encourage children's participation, notably if they do not wish to physically attend their review. Children and young people often meet with their named IRO face to face before their review to give their views. They can also use texting, emailing and online methods to share their views about where they live, their education, their social life and their health care. There are plans to develop an 'App' and website for children and young people and this will be an additional medium where they can share their views.
- 3.17 Family time with birth families and carers remains a high priority for children and the frequency with which they can see their parents and or their siblings.

- 3.18 IROs will consult with children and young people before, during and after their reviews to hear their views, wishes and feelings and to monitor their needs whilst in care. The Service has moved from recording consultations on paper to an electronic format which is overseen administratively by the Quality Assurance Service and with greater involvement from the Children's Rights Officer. How we gather and report upon what children and young people are saying about the services they receive and the quality of their care is an area for greater focus in 2022/23.

4. Children and Young People's Views

Bright Spots Survey

- 4.1 The Bright Spots Survey was conducted with children and young people in care from January to April 2020. Children and young people gave their views on a series of wellbeing indicators. The IRO Service, including the Children's Rights Officer, was very actively involved in the planning and implementation of the this survey.
- 4.2 A substantial proportion of children who participated in the survey aged 11 to 18 years indicated that they did not speak regularly to the adults that they live with (40%). In response, the IRO Service has offered to hold focus groups with Carers to understand what further help and support can be offered to ensure children and young people feel confident and able to talk regularly with the adults with whom they live about their wishes and feelings.
- 4.3 The vast majority of those who participated stated that they liked their living accommodation and their bedrooms (95%). As stated previously, a good number of children (1 in 5 surveyed) stated that they were unhappy with contact arrangements with their parents. The obvious restrictions in place during the pandemic has impacted children and young people's level of contact with birth families. To address this, IROs are placing greater focus on improving contact arrangements during reviews and ensuring appropriate referral to ReConnect.
- 4.4 Ninety one percent of children and young people participating in the survey felt that they had a good understanding of why they were in care, but a significant proportion of under 5s didn't have such an understanding. IROs are focusing on explaining to very young children as they enter care why these arrangements are in place for them. A stronger focus on life story work will support very young children in achieving an understanding.
- 4.5 Eleven percent of 11-18 year olds were identified as having low well-being. Most of were young people aged over 16. They also had in common:
- No adult in their life they could trust
 - Didn't like how they looked
 - Felt they were not given opportunities to be trusted
 - Didn't get to spend time outdoors

- 4.6 The above relates to the issue previously noted of improved use of SDQ information in care planning to assist with directing services to young people through the Clinical Care Service.
- 4.7 Support provided by the Children's Rights Officer has also highlighted that throughout the pandemic the mental health and the general wellbeing of young people remained a concern due to limited contact or poor relationships with family and friends and professionals.

A further Brightspots survey will be commissioned to take place in 2022/23.

Children's Rights Officer & Speakerbox

- 4.8 Speakerbox⁷, our Children in Care Council is chaired by designated young people supported by the Children's Rights Officer (CRO) and is divided into Speakerbox Junior and Speakerbox Senior. It continues to shape practice and influence decision making, and has developed effective conversations with the Corporate Parenting Committee. Workshop sessions with senior managers, focussing on specific topics, such as housing for young people leaving care, have been powerful and effective ways to communicate and to influence plans and services for young people. Children, young people and parents are actively involved in the recruitment of social workers and managers of all levels, there is an expectation that all recruitment will include a panel of young people and parents. Panel chairs and members frequently feedback how much children and young people bring to the process and how insightful they are. Children and young people have also been involved in developing and delivering training packages for staff and there have been focus group with children and young people to inform changes to statutory forms and processes.
- 4.9 Speakerbox have been planning activities and events throughout 2021/22 to take place each holiday period to provide new opportunities and experiences for children in care and care leavers. These activities have included a project on identity for different age groups, a film making project, well-being and pampering sessions, a sports mentoring programme, a young parents group to build connections and confidence using children's centres and trips to Thorpe Park and Legoland.
- 4.10 The virtual school are collaborating with Speakerbox in 2022/23 and providing financial support to fund activities to inspire children and young people.

⁷ SpeakerBox is a forum for Southwark children and young people in care and care leavers up to the age of 25.

Advocacy and Independent Visitors

- 4.11 IROs are proactive in making referrals and encourage children and young people to make referrals for an advocate if they feel they are not being heard or specific issues are not resolved in a timely or satisfactory way. Social workers and Personal Advisors are also proactive with making referrals or promoting advocacy for children and young people.
- 4.12 Southwark commissions Coram Voice to provide advocacy and Independent Visiting services to children and young. In respect of advocacy, in 2021/22, Coram Voice provided advocacy to 135 children and young people. This is an increase by 15 from the previous year.
- 4.13 Coram received 103 new referrals and completed 98 closures (ceasing advocacy). In addition, 8 children and young people were provided with advocacy funded by Coram Voice Outreach and Always Heard.
- 4.14 The advocacy service is designed to be as accessible as possible, via a freephone helpline, text and website, outreach, referrals from professionals and carers, and promoted with age specific and translated promotional materials. All Southwark young people have access to telephone interpretation where English is not their first language.⁸
- 4.15 The total number of cases has risen but the hours provided to children has dropped over the 2021/22 period (total number of cases = 131 vs 150, total number of hours =1677.6 vs 1647.91).
- 4.16 A high proportion of children who have a disability accessed advocacy services in 2021/22. Sixty-five children or young people used the service throughout the period who identified as having a disability, which equates to 48.1% of the young people worked with.
- 4.17 Access to advocacy services seems not to be reflective of children and young people in care's ages or ethnicity (see profile at Section 2). Advocacy is more likely to be accessed by those who are much older (16 to 21 years of age) and who are either of Black or Black British African, Black or Black British Caribbean or White ethnicity. It could be argued that it is always desirable that children and young people with a disability are over represented in this cohort, which they currently are.

⁸ Coram Voice Annual Report into the provision of Advocacy Services to Southwark 1st April 2021 – 31st March 2022

4.18 The predominant issues raised via advocacy are shown below.

ISSUE	No.
Housing	74
Finance, benefits and debt	51
Concerns about social worker/Personal Advisor	45
Request to move placement	43
Complaint	42
Support at meetings	37
Pathway Planning	34
Education, training and employment	33
Legal	24
Homelessness	33

4.20 Children and young people were concerned about getting the right support at the right time with educational and housing needs, and about the level of finances received as well as support to manage these. IROs bring these issues raised via advocacy to bear during children's reviews and via monitoring and oversight of cases.

4.21 More active monitoring of the work done by Coram is taking place, and the Service Manager for the IRO Service and Children's Rights Officer has established regular meetings with Coram and the wider Social Work Services (All Age Disability, Care and 16+) to track children through the process to speedy resolution of issues where practicable.

In respect of Independent Visitors, Coram Voice provided 33 children and young people with an independent visiting service with 250 recorded visits between young people and their independent visitors across the year. There were a broad range of different age groups accessing the independent visiting service with 14 children aged under 13 years (42%) and 19 children aged 14-19 years (58%). 42% of the young people matched a reported to have a disability, have an Education and Health Care Plan (EHCP) or have mental health needs.

Feedback from young people about Independent Visitors

'S is an independent person I can always talk to – it's always easy to get hold of her. She's always there. I think of her as a friend and not another service.'

'What's been positive is that I've been able to do stuff that I wouldn't have done otherwise, especially going to new places that I wouldn't have seen without my IV.'

5. Monitoring & Escalation

- 5.1 As stated, IROs have a statutory responsibility to raise concerns about the arrangements or services being provided for and to children and young people, and ensure that Southwark Council addresses issues raised in a prompt manner to prevent delay in service provision or decision making affecting children's care.
- 5.2 It is usual that issues raised for children can be resolved at an early stage by talking to or meeting with the social worker or Team Manager directly. IROs will seek to resolve issues informally, and this is evidenced by data which shows that from 1st April 2021 to 30th March 2022 there were 677 case alerts (on Mosaic) by IROs resulting in resolution at an earlier stage necessitating far fewer higher level escalations. The main focus is improving services for children and pursuing any alerts through to resolution.
- 5.3 IROs may not always pursue escalations assertively enough if they perceive that services are under pressure. However, IROs need to maintain their independence as befits their statutory function.
- 5.4 The IRO Service has mechanisms in place to scrutinise the practice of IROs and make sure that the focus remains entirely on the needs of the child. Managerial oversight of midway reviews and escalations are the checks and balances in place to monitor IROs' effectiveness in responding to concerns and achieving improved outcomes for children.
- 5.5 The table below (Table 7) shows escalations made to year end 2021/22 by type of issue raised by the IRO Service. As can be seen, the predominant issues centre on the quality of care planning and care plan delays as well as health and education. **Please note that numbers will not tally as IROs will select multiple choices from Mosaic when recording alerts and escalations.**

Issue raised	Issues number
LAC Inadequate care plan	14
LAC Drift in implementing plan	17
LAC Safeguarding concerns	3
LAC Social work provision concerns	8
LAC Placement concerns	10
LAC Education concerns	15
LAC Health concerns	15
LAC 18+ planning concerns	2
LAC Incomplete review decisions	12
LAC Other	10

Table 7
Source: Mosaic

- 5.6 From April 1st 2021 to March 31st 2022 IROs have made 61 formal escalations to managers. Two escalations (4%) were escalated to stage 2 to Head of Service to be resolved, with none escalated to Stage 3 (Assistant Director). No issues were referred to CAFCASS, although as stated, IROs work in close liaison with Guardians for independent oversight of care planning.
- 5.7 Monitoring, alerts and escalation is an area which requires ongoing review to ensure the IRO Service is as effective as possible in the interests of children. Evidence of the IRO 'footprint' is becoming more evident, and this work will continue through 2022/23 to improve how well children's views, wants, needs and wishes are monitored and promoted.

6. Developmental Work for 2022/23

- 6.1 Work is ongoing continually to improve the effectiveness and quality of the work done by IROs and the wider Service. A Service Plan was developed at the start of 2021/22 to guide this work and is currently under review to ensure it is driven by performance information, audit outcomes and any learning gained via case review.
- 6.2 We will be seeking to ensure that the Service meets the Practice Standards for Children & Families that was launched in 2021, ensuring that further developmental work is done to achieve this. The following priorities have been identified for 2022/23;
- Working across all services, improvements to the timeliness of allocation of a named IRO to every child entering the care of Southwark Council
 - Increasing the timeliness of children's looked after reviews
 - More face to face time between IROs and children and young people where they live and in the community

- Training provided to the social work teams by the Quality Assurance Unit and young people, to ensure Care Plans are co-produced with children and young people and written in the first person
- Continued improvement in making reviews child centred (writing letters directly to children following reviews about decisions made that affect them) and increasing participation in reviews.
- Collating and reporting on issues and themes arising from consultation with children and young people before and during their reviews and ensuring these are evident on children's case files
- Training to be rolled out in 2022/23 for parent advocates who are supporting parents at Child Protection Conferences to extend this offer to parents attending LAC reviews to increase parental participation
- Greater contact and collaboration with Speakerbox and proactively responding to children and young people about their wants and needs and how to promote meaningful young person centred reviews (young people chairing their own review, for example)
- Speakerbox reaching a wider group of children and young people, particularly those with additional needs or a disability, living out of borough, in custodial settings and unaccompanied asylum seeking children
- Responding to learning from audit and case review and reflecting this in service provision
- Ensuring advocacy access is reflective of children and young people's profile and ensuring themes are used to inform and improve service delivery
- Improving monitoring and escalation processes in the interests of children and young people's care planning and evidencing the IRO's 'footprint'

Item No. 9.	Classification: Open	Date: 1 March 2023	Meeting Name: Corporate Parenting Committee
Report title:		Children Looked After and Care Leaver Sufficiency Strategy 2023-2026	
Ward(s) or groups affected:		All	
From:		Director of Commissioning, Children's and Adults' Services	

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the Corporate Parenting Committee note the Children in Care and Care Leavers Placement Sufficiency Strategy as set out in Appendix One.
2. That the Corporate Parenting Committee provide comments to the Children in Care and Care Leavers Placement Sufficiency Strategy.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

3. The Council has a duty under the Children Act 1989 (Section 22) to provide sufficient placements within the local authority's area, so far as is reasonably practical, to meet the accommodation needs of our children looked after and care leavers.
4. This Strategy has been developed as part of our statutory duty to ensure sufficiency of placements for children and young people in our care. It pulls together the available data and recent analyses in one place to identify themes and trends that enables us to identify gaps in our provision and informs our priorities for the upcoming period.
5. This Strategy covers the period 2023-2026 and builds on the work completed in the current Strategy that ends this year.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

6. The number of children in care is reducing from its peak of 489 in 2017 and current projections show that this is expected to continue. Current data shows that there has been a drop from 76 to 68 per 10,000 children under 18 and whilst still higher than comparators we are narrowing the gap.
7. 82% of children looked after are aged over 10 years old making the development of care placements for this cohort, including provision for unaccompanied asylum seeking children and young people, a key focus of the strategy.

8. Nationally approximately 21% of children looked after are placed further than 20 miles from their home. Although Southwark has a higher rate of children placed at a distance to comparators at 23% it has undertaken a significant amount of work to address the situation. This includes the development of a Residential Strategy as the proportion of those placed over 20 miles away from home in residential provision is significantly higher than when compared with all children who are looked after (60% of children in residential provision).
9. Southwark has shown a strong and consistent trend in improving the percentage of children in long term stable placements over the last four years from 62% to 71% and when compared to other Inner London Boroughs, Southwark has narrowed the gap.
10. The strategy sets out a range of data and trends and from the analysis of this we have identified further work is needed in the following areas as set out in full in the strategy:
 - (i) Fostering
 - (ii) Residential provision
 - (iii) 16+ accommodation
 - (iv) Children at risk of custody
 - (v) All placements to minimize the number of placement moves a child may experience
11. The following priorities are identified in the strategy for the period 2023-2026:
 - To work to prevent the need for care through a strong preventative offer.
 - To build a resilient and expert foster care community able to support and care for the older cohort of young people.
 - To improve the experience of care including ensuring a strong voice of our young people is threaded through all services.
 - To continue to improve the numbers of adoptive families available to our children, particularly those that are able to meet the needs of older children and Black children.
 - To ensure that we improve our ability to continuously assess both placement sufficiency and inequity in the system
12. The strategy sets out a series of success measures that will evidence the positive impact of the strategy in four years' time, these will be monitored throughout the life of the strategy by the Sufficiency Steering Group. These are:

- we improved the choice of placement options we were able to offer children in care;
 - more of our children were able to be in homes in or near the borough;
 - there is increased placement stability and children experience less placement moves; and
 - we reduced the numbers of children, especially older ones, coming into care as they and their families were better supported in the community.
13. To deliver the Strategy, as well as a number of linked projects, the Children & Families Division has established a Southwark Homes for Southwark Children Programme, with an associated programme Board chaired by the Assistant Director for Safeguarding and Corporate Parenting.
14. The Southwark Homes for Southwark Children Programme's primary aim is to deliver the Strategy's goal of ensuring that more children in our care and those who have left our care are able to live in or close to Southwark. To deliver on that goal a range of projects are contained within the programme that will be pivotal in delivering our Strategy, these include:
- Establishing and developing children's residential care provision in Southwark
 - Ensuring access to London regional provision for secure accommodation through the Pan London Vehicle (PLV)
 - Improving and sustaining the recruitment of in-house foster care capacity
 - Maximising utilisation of in-house foster care capacity
 - Developing the foster care resource to meet the needs of children in our care, reducing the need for institutional care or specialist IFAs
 - Unlocking current and developing new housing pathways for older children in care and care leavers,
 - Developing more local and regionally owned semi-independent accommodation
 - Maximising the efficient use of contracted provision of semi-independent accommodation
 - Develop a viable offer of supported lodgings for care leavers
15. The Programme and Board will act as the delivery body for the Strategy and will report routinely to the Children & Families Continuous Improvement Board, the Children & Adults Board and will be ultimately accountable to the Corporate Parenting Committee for successful delivery.

Policy framework implications

16. The Sufficiency Strategy is set within the context of national policy and legislation, particularly the duty set out in the Children Act 1989 (section 22).
17. It supports the delivery of the following local strategies:
 - (i) Corporate Parenting Strategy 2021-24;
 - (ii) The Southwark Children in Care and Care Leavers Strategy;
 - (iii) Southwark Five Year Forward View for Health and Social Care;
 - (iv) Partnership Southwark Recovery Plan including Startwell; and
 - (v) Southwark Stands Together.

Community, equalities (including socio-economic) and health impacts

Community impact statement

18. Section 149 of the Equality Act, lays out the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) which requires public bodies to consider all individuals when carrying out their day to day work – in shaping policy, in delivering services and in relation to their own employees. It requires public bodies to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations between different people when carrying out their activities. The council’s [Approach to Equality](#) (“the approach”) commits the council to ensuring that equality is an integral part of our day to day business. The Equality Framework for Local Government ([link](#)) exists to help organisations, review and improve their performance for people with characteristics protected by the Equality Act 2010.
19. The strategy is designed to improve outcomes and lived experience for all children in care and also for care leavers.

Equalities (including socio-economic) impact statement

20. The strategy has identified that there is a particular need to address the needs of children aged 10-15 years and those aged 16-25 years. It sets out key actions that will reduce inequalities for individuals in these age groups.
21. Children from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds faced significant disadvantage both in terms of their identity and in terms of their education associated with their placement at a distance when compared to their white counterparts. Having provision locally will help address this imbalance and improve outcomes for these children.

Health impact statement

22. The strategy will positively impact children’s health by ensuring that providers continue to uphold their responsibilities for ensuring that children are accessing health checks, immunisations and dental checks as needed.

Climate change implications

23. The strategy seeks to develop more local provision particularly residential provision, where 60% of children are in placements over 20 miles away, this will reduce travel emissions.

Resource implications

24. The priorities set out in the strategy aim to reduce the number of children in care and reduce the distance they are placed from home. Also, by further developing a strong preventative offer the need for children to come into care should be reduced, this will have a positive impact on the resources needed to fund care placements.

Legal implications

25. Concurrent's are given in paragraphs 29 – 31 of the report.

Financial implications

26. As this is a very broad strategy, it is not possible to predict financial implications.

Consultation

27. In the development of this strategy the following groups were involved:
- (i) Children and young people who are looked after and Care Leavers
 - (ii) Social Work Teams
 - (iii) Care Providers
 - (iv) Commissioning Officers
28. As provision is developed there will be ongoing consultation and engagement

SUPPLEMENTARY ADVICE FROM OTHER OFFICERS

Assistant Chief Executive – Governance and Assurance

29. The committee is being asked to note the contents of the strategy which is attached to the report. As noted in the report, the council is required, so far as reasonably practical, to provide a sufficient accommodation to meet the needs of the children who are looked after by the local authority, within the area of the local authority.
30. In taking steps to secure sufficient accommodation, the council must have regard to the benefit of having a number of providers in their area and a range of accommodation that will meet need. The council must be satisfied that this is sufficient. This is set out in Section 22G Children Act 1989.
31. This strategy contains an analysis of the types of accommodation is

required to meet the needs of looked after children and projections as to the likely level of need, both in terms of numbers and the type of accommodation required. This strategy addresses this for the period of the strategy 2023-2026.

Strategic Director of Finance REF: [19DK2022-23]

32. The Strategic Director of Finance and Governance notes the contents of this report. Any savings that may be forthcoming from implementing this strategy will assist in reducing the current budget pressure of the Children and Families division; conversely any pressures will have to be absorbed within current budget provision.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
Children Act 1989 (S22)	Children' and Adults' Services, 4 th Floor, Commissioning Directorate 160 Tooley Street, London, SE1 2QH	Suzanne Green 0207 525 4227
Link: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/section/22		
Equalities Act 2010	Children' and Adults' Services, 4 th Floor, Commissioning Directorate 160 Tooley Street, London, SE1 2QH	Suzanne Green 0207 525 4227
Link: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents		
Corporate Parenting Strategy 2021-24	Children' and Adults' Services, 4 th Floor, Commissioning Directorate 160 Tooley Street, London, SE1 2QH	Suzanne Green 0207 525 4227
Link: https://modern.gov.southwark.gov.uk/documents/s99637/Appendix%201%20Draft%20Corporate%20Parenting%20Strategy%202021-2024.pdf		
The Southwark Children in Care and Care Leavers Strategy	Children' and Adults' Services, 4 th Floor,	Suzanne Green 0207 525 4227

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
	Commissioning Directorate 160 Tooley Street, London, SE1 2QH	
Link: https://moderngov.southwark.gov.uk/documents/s76190/Appendix%201.pdf		
Southwark Five Year Forward View for Health and Social Care	Children' and Adults' Services, 4 th Floor, Commissioning Directorate 160 Tooley Street, London, SE1 2QH	Suzanne Green 0207 525 4227
Link: https://moderngov.southwark.gov.uk/documents/s65995/Southwark%20Five%20Year%20Foward%20View.pdf		
Partnership Southwark Recovery Plan including Startwell	Children' and Adults' Services, 4 th Floor, Commissioning Directorate 160 Tooley Street, London, SE1 2QH	Suzanne Green 0207 525 4227
Link: https://selondonccg.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Partnership-Southwark-Recovery-Plan-August-2020.pdf		
Southwark Stands Together	Children' and Adults' Services, 4 th Floor, Commissioning Directorate 160 Tooley Street, London, SE1 2QH	Suzanne Green 0207 525 4227
Link: https://www.southwark.gov.uk/engagement-and-consultations/southwark-stands-together/southwark-stands-together-pledges		

APPENDICES

No.	Title
Appendix 1	Southwark Council: Children in Care and Care Leavers Placement Sufficiency Strategy 2023-2026

AUDIT TRAIL

Lead Officer	David Quirke-Thornton, Strategic Director of Children's and Adults' Services	
Report Author	Suzanne Green, Interim Head of Children and Young Peoples Commissioned Programmes	
Version	Final	
Dated	27 October 2022	
Key Decision?	No	
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER		
Officer Title	Comments Sought	Comments Included
Assistant Chief Executive – Governance and Assurance	Yes	Yes
Strategic Director of Finance	Yes	Yes
Cabinet Member	No	No
Date final report sent to Constitutional Team		27 October 2022

Southwark Council:
Children in Care and Care Leavers
Placement Sufficiency Strategy
2023-2026

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Executive Summary

This Strategy has been developed as part of our statutory duty to ensure sufficiency of placements for children and young people in our care. It pulls together available data and recent analyses in one place to help uncover themes and trends. This allows us to identify gaps in our provision and informs our priorities for the upcoming period. We continue to develop our fostering service and we especially need more capacity for older children, especially:

- unaccompanied asylum seeking young people
- children on the autistic spectrum
- children who are vulnerable to exploitation or who present risk to themselves or others
- emergencies
- sibling groups of more than 2 children
- Parent and child placements that can include fathers

Our children requiring residential care need local provision – a prospect that is already underway.

The information presented in this report consistently identifies gaps in provision for those people with additional or elevated needs.

Our young people aged 16 and over need more high quality, local accommodation and we need to expand on our offer of quality local block funded provision while providing accommodation suited to specific groups including¹

- gender-specific accommodation
- young parents
- young people with health needs requiring support e.g. with medicine management and administration
- young people on the autistic spectrum
- young people exiting custody or other secure estate
- intensively supported units delivering greater than 1:1 supervision
- young people over the age of 21 who do not meet thresholds for adults services but still have mental health issues and/or learning disabilities

Our key priorities over the life of this strategy therefore are

- a) To work to prevent the need for care through a strong preventative offer
- b) To build a resilient and expert foster care community able to support and care for the older cohort of young people
- c) To improve the experience of care including ensuring a strong voice of our young people is threaded through all services
- d) To continue to improve the numbers of adoptive families available to our children, particularly those that are able to meet the needs of older children and Black children

¹ See Annex C

- e) To ensure that we improve our ability to continuously assess both placement sufficiency and inequity in the system

Introduction

This strategy focuses on understanding the drivers and identifying the requirements and intentions to ensure sufficient placements for children in care and care leavers. It is intended to describe our route map for ensuring sufficiency of accommodation and support for Southwark’s children in and leaving care.

In May this year the Independent Review of Children’s Social Care published its Final Report² and made recommendations advocating a “dramatic system reset”. The Review placed a clear and strong focus on families receiving more responsive, respectful, and effective support at the earliest stages and in community based settings. This builds on the existing Sufficiency Duty as the statutory guidance states that:

“an important mechanism – both in improving outcomes for children and in having sufficient accommodation to meet their needs – is to take earlier, preventive action to support children and families so that fewer children become looked after. This means that the commissioning standard outlined in this guidance ...also applies to children in need who are at risk of care or custody (sometimes referred to as children ‘on the edge of care’).”

Thus, a significant arm of meeting the sufficiency duty in the London Borough of Southwark lies with the work being undertaken to safely and appropriately reduce the need for children to enter care.

Sufficiency Duty: Legal and Policy Context

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

In addition to the legislation already in place (Annex A) in 2022-23, the government will implement a programme of mandatory national standards for unregulated provision that accommodates 16-and 17-year-old looked-after children and care leavers. This will introduce a requirement for providers to register and be inspected by Ofsted. This may present challenges for some of our providers and impact on the supported accommodation local landscape. The council will need to remain alert to developments and work to support providers who can deliver for our young people.

Strategies that are in place or due for a refresh during the life of this strategy include:

- Corporate Parenting Strategy 2021-24

² [The-independent-review-of-childrens-social-care-Final-report.pdf \(childrensocialcare.independent-review.uk\)](https://www.childrensocialcare.independent-review.uk)

- Southwark Five Year Forward View (FYFV) for health and social care 2016-21 - which focuses on population and placed based commissioning, whole-system value and how care is delivered.
- Partnership Southwark Recovery Plan which includes a section called Start Well.
- The Southwark Borough Plan to successfully develop more local homes for children in care and care leavers at the heart of all Council Departments and the overarching strategic plan.

Fairer Future

The Borough Plan 2020-2022 sets out its commitment to achieve a fairer future for all across eight themes. The Sufficiency Strategy cuts across almost all of them.

- Theme 1 - COVID-19 response
- Theme 2 - Southwark Together
- Theme 3 - A green and inclusive economy
- Theme 4 - Climate Emergency
- Theme 5 - Tackling health inequalities
- Theme 6 - Homes for all
- Theme 7 - A great start in life
- Theme 8 - Thriving neighbourhoods

Southwark's Vision

Our vision for all our children is a simple one;

“We want all our children and young people to be safe, happy and healthy and to enjoy life. We will give them the care and support they need to be resilient and well prepared for adulthood and independence. We will provide them with high quality care, support and guidance to ensure they get the opportunities they deserve.”.

We will achieve this through our mission of;

- Putting Children First - this means prioritising and actively supporting all children and young people's right to grow up safe, healthy and happy, in their own families and communities, when it is safe to do so.
- Keeping Families Strong - this means working together with parents and carers, and the networks and services around them, to enable their families to be safe, healthy and happy.

Southwark's Values and Principles

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

- Be the champions our young people deserve
- Deliver high quality care, support and accommodation services
- Do our best to enable families to stay together
- Keep children and young people safe at all times

Southwark's Pledge to Children Looked After

1. We will support you to be healthy
2. Southwark will ensure you can stay safe
3. Southwark will support you to enjoy and achieve
4. We will empower you to make a positive contribution
5. We will equip you to achieve economic wellbeing

- Keep children and young people's needs and wishes central to our work
- Keep all children and young people in care and care leavers well informed about their rights and where to go for help
- Empower children and young people to take control of their own lives and realise their full potential
- Deliver proactive support that secures the best long term outcomes for all children and young people
- Ensure the views of children, young people and their families inform service improvement

Improvement priorities

The Improvement Plan for Children's Services includes the following points relevant to the Sufficiency Strategy:

- Earlier help for children and young people and those that care for them - Ensuring all our children & families get the right help at the right time, and at the earliest possible opportunity.
- An improved cross system approach to the challenges of helping vulnerable adolescents - Ensuring our young people are safely able to grow towards independence and are protected from all threats and risks to them both inside and outside the home.
- A better experience and improved outcomes for the children we parent and the young people we have cared for - A whole Council and whole Borough approach to providing to the children in our care all that they deserve and expect of an excellent parent
- A more able and stable workforce - Making sure our workforce has the right resource, skills, knowledge and tools to be able to deliver our vision for all children and families in Southwark.
- A fairer organisational culture, working with people and listening to all voices - Making sure that our organisation embodies our principles at every level. That we are representative of our communities and everyone inside and outside the organisation has the opportunity to contribute, succeed and achieve.
- A modernised & intelligent system, accountable for impact - Reforming our commissioning, systems, data and performance arrangements to ensure we and our decision making are properly focused on outcomes and the impact of our services, not process and procedure.

Care Leaver Charter

The Council has a Care Leavers Charter. The principles are:

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

Addressing inequalities

In 2020 the council initiated and adopted the Southwark Stands Together programme: a long-term programme of positive action, education and initiatives for the council to work in solidarity with Southwark's communities and the council's staff to tackle racism, injustice and inequality.

The programme has adopted five pledges that should carry through all the work that we do and are especially relevant to children in care.

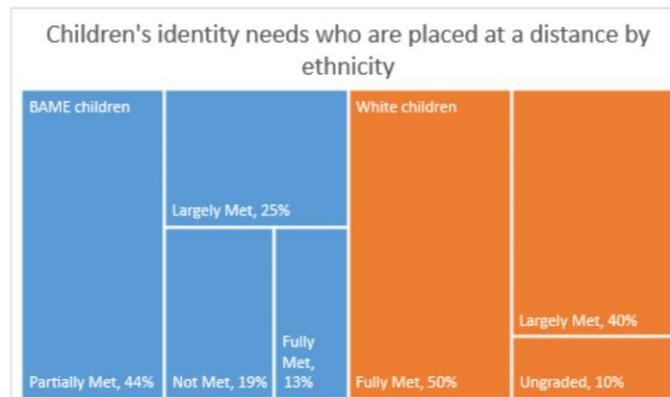
- I/We pledge to promote an open and transparent culture where employees who experience/see racism or discrimination are able to raise it and expect the issue to be dealt with swiftly and fairly.
- I/We pledge to listen to and amplify our diverse voices within our organisations on how we create an inclusive, fair and representative workplace at all levels
- I/We pledge to work to address and prevent structural racial inequalities and structural racism within our organisation, the organisations we partner with and within the service we deliver.
- I/We pledge to champion organisations that address racial injustices and organisations that promote equality and diversity
- I/We pledge to ensuring that people of all backgrounds can rise to the top of the organisation.

The most significant recommendations in the Southwark Stands Together Programme to affect the care population were to:

- Develop a strong partnership approach across the whole health sector to address the wider health inequalities that disproportionately impact Black and Minority Ethnic communities and their physical, mental and emotional wellbeing
- Recognise that discrimination can occur in many different ways from front line to backroom functions and adopt and embed organisation wide approaches to improve the experiences of Black and Minority Ethnic patients in health and care

Continuing to build these recommendations into business as usual will be a key focus of the work conducted across all teams for the life of this strategy.

In 2021, a needs analysis was undertaken on the children requiring residential care to understand some of the patterns in provision. Of note was the poor experiences of some of the Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic children placed at a distance. The report found that there are significant differences between children placed at a distance from Southwark in the extent to which their needs are met. Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic children particularly face disadvantage in terms of their identity and in terms of their education when they are placed at a distance when compared with white children as shown in Figure 1 below.



Following this work the council adopted its children's residential care provision strategy to develop a number of in borough children's homes which is in the process of being rolled out and will be the primary focus of delivering sufficiency over the next four years.

There is still work to do. The needs analysis found that "over the past four years, in any one month the council [children's social care] has been paying for between 19 and 50 residential placements (monthly average 30 placements) and [All age Disability team] AAD has been paying for between 6 and 12 placements (monthly average 8 placements)." This means that children with disabilities make up a quarter of the residential population and are being placed out of borough – further away from their families and targeted support services. The production of a SEN specific sufficiency strategy will be a priority action within the next four years and will enhance the information we hold on the needs of children with SEND. This should dovetail with the publication of the national SEND delivery plan set for later this year.

The Adopt London South (ALS) has found that it needs to work to address inequalities in children with autism finding adopters. ALS also made recommendations in its annual report to continue to address the racial disparity with more Black children waiting longer to find adoptive families and being more likely to have a reversal of their adoption care plan.

The above are inequalities which are known to us. There remain hidden inequalities which will need to be properly identified in order to prevent or address. If a child is known to be LBQTQ+ the carer would be informed before placement. This is particularly important for children with multiple placement moves, reducing the need for them to come out repeatedly to carers or at least confront that decision at each move.

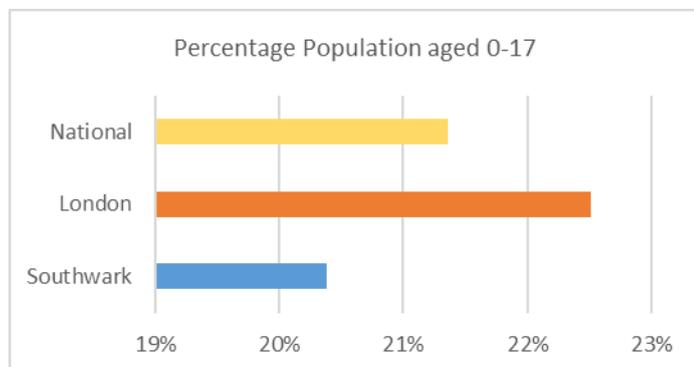
Some measures now in place should serve to move us forwards. In 2022 an Adolescent and Young Adults Pathway Advisory Panel was revived and strives to ensure that young residents and their families receive the services that can best meet their needs, particularly on the transition to adult services. It should also help to inform commissioning intentions where it is identified that there is insufficient care provision.

Southwark: the place

The Southwark JSNA gives the following information³.

“Southwark is a densely populated and diverse inner London borough situated on the south bank of the River Thames, with Lambeth to the west and Lewisham to the east. The borough is made up of a patchwork of communities: from leafy Dulwich in the south, to bustling Peckham and Camberwell, and the rapidly changing Rotherhithe peninsula. Towards the north, Borough and Bankside are thriving with high levels of private investment and development. Yet there remain areas affected by high levels of deprivation, where health outcomes fall short of what any resident should expect.

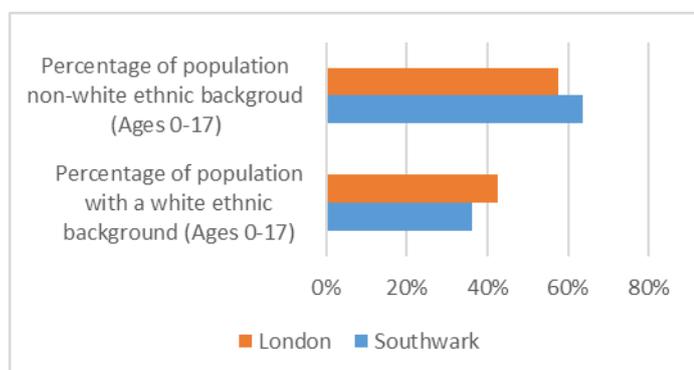
Home to some 320,000 people, Southwark has a comparatively young population but the low average age in the borough stems not from a large number of children, but from a large number of young working age residents: 39% of the Southwark population is aged 20 to 39, compared to just 32% in London and 26% in England. As can be seen in the chart in comparison to London as a whole and the national picture, Southwark has a smaller cohort of 0-17 year olds.



Population growth in the 0-17 age group is expected to remain stable with a very small decrease projected (-0.03%)⁴ remaining around the current 66,474 young people. This is in line with the national reduction in birth rates.

Southwark is a diverse borough with 49% of all residents coming from a wide range of ethnicities and backgrounds and 51% from white background.

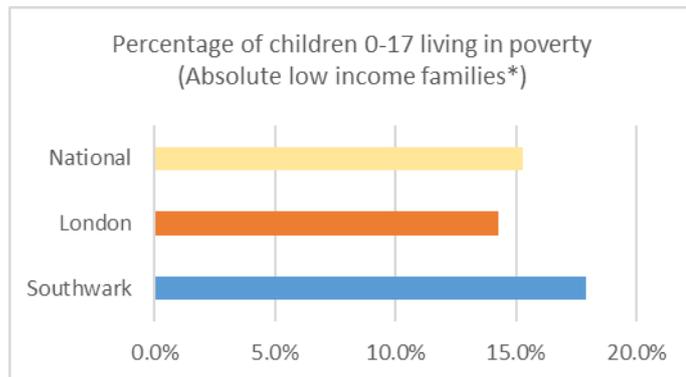
This increases in its young population with over 60% of 0-17 year olds from non-white ethnic backgrounds.



³ For greater detail please see [JSNA Annual Report 2022.pdf](#)

⁴ Source: GLA Ethnic group projections (2016-based central trend)

Approximately 21% of Southwark's population live in communities ranked within the most deprived nationally. This percentage rises for young people. Local authorities with greater increases in child poverty also tend to see greater increases in the rate of children entering care⁵.



The chart shows the greater percentage of absolute low income families in Southwark in comparison to both London as a whole and the national picture.⁶

What the children tell us they want

In Jan-April 2020 all children in care aged 4-18 in Southwark were asked to take part in an online survey to find out how they felt about their lives. The survey was conducted by the Rees Centre and Coram Voice had a 32% response rate.

The children indicated that what was working well was: their relationships with their foster carers, feeling safe, having a trusted adult, relationships with social carers, and liking school. Areas they identified for improvement were: high turnover of social workers, a percentage with high numbers of placements, issues around contact with family, and some children were not clear why they were in care.

⁵ [Child poverty and children entering care in England, 2015-2020: a longitudinal ecological study at the local area level | Elsevier Enhanced Reader](#)

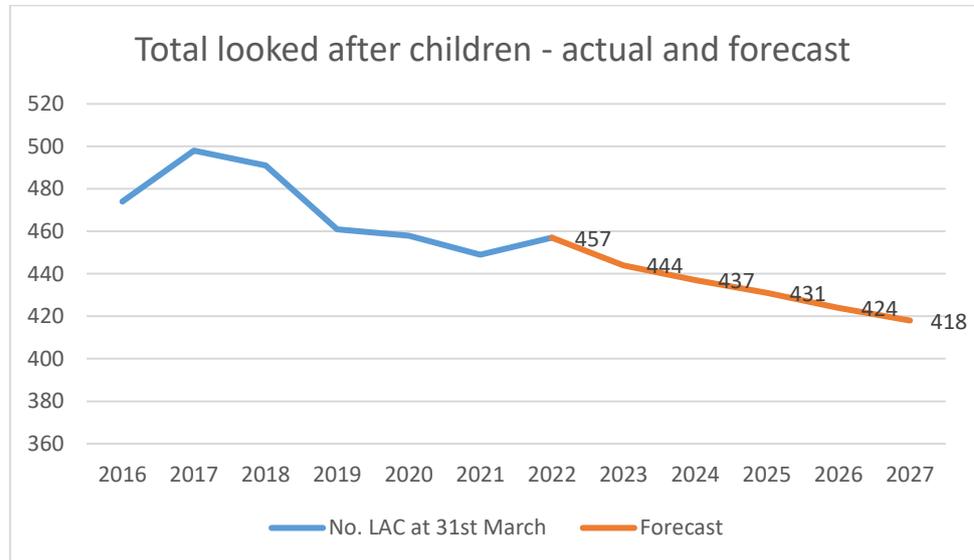
⁶ Source: Children in low income families: local area statistics, financial year ending 2021. Absolute low income is defined as a family in low income Before Housing Costs (BHC) in the reference year in comparison with incomes in financial year ending 2011. A family must have claimed Child Benefit and at least one other household benefit (Universal Credit, tax credits, or Housing Benefit) at any point in the year to be classed as low income in these statistics.

Placement needs analysis

Profile of our children in care

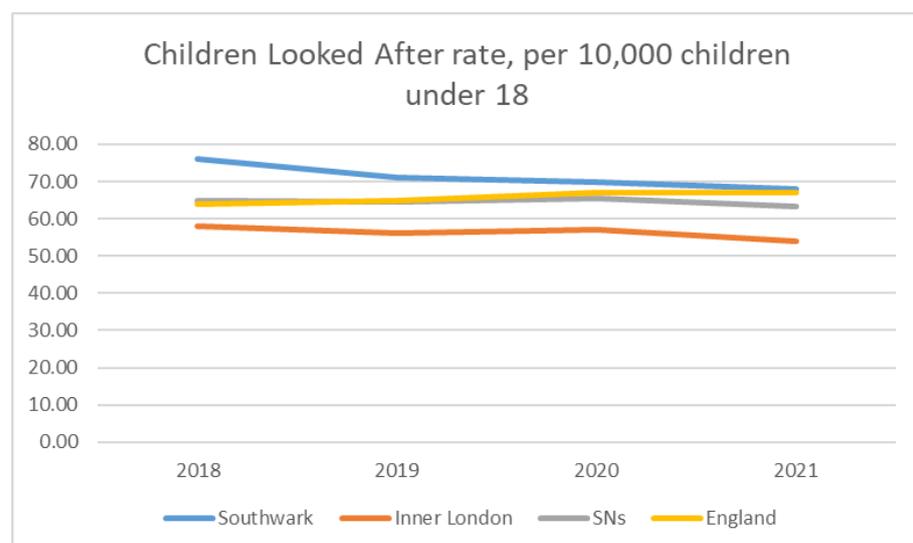
The council's total number of looked after children has reduced over the last five years. Current projections show that this is expected to continue as shown in Chart 1.

Chart 1



In contrast to the national rate which has risen over the last four years, the rate of children coming into care for both the council and inner London has fallen as shown in Chart 2. The council especially sees the greatest drop from 76 to 68 per 10,000 children under 18 so although still higher than comparators, we are narrowing the gap although it should be recognised that we have fewer school age children in the Borough. This also possibly reflects success in delivering a strengthened Family Early Help Team and family support and safeguarding service. This is a positive move that enables more children to live safely with their families and thus reduces pressure on the requirement for placements.

Chart 2

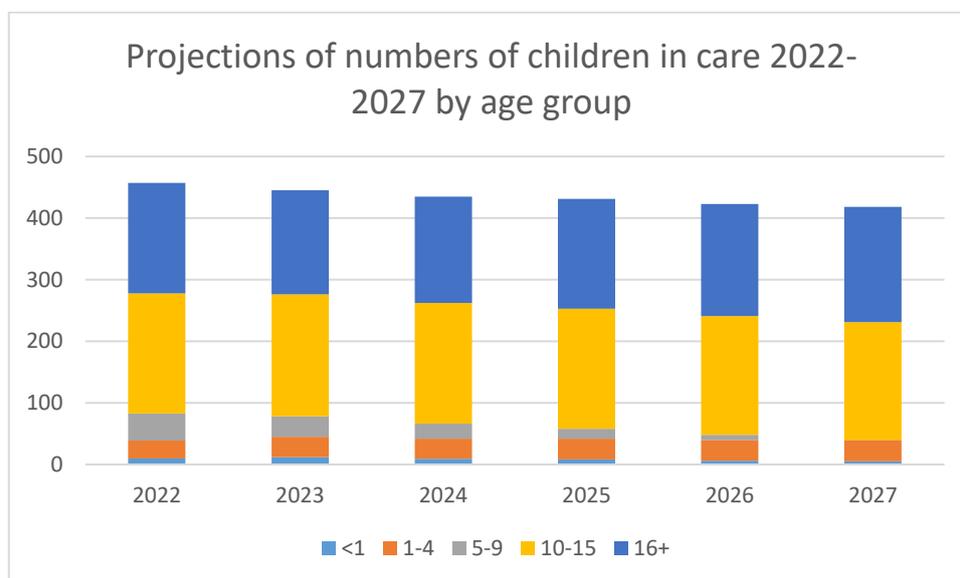


Age, Gender, Ethnicity and projections

Assuming no change to local or national policy or practice, projections show us that for the largest group of Children in Care (CIC) the 10 to 15 age group, an initial increase is expected with a following reduction in total numbers from the current 195 to a projected 191. Effectively no significant change in size but remaining the largest cohort of children across the life of the strategy.

Available data and initial modelling tells us that the 5 to 9 age group is also likely to see a decline in numbers over the next five years. For the age groups 1 to 4 and 16+ however, we may see a gradual increase in numbers with the 16+ cohort remaining the second most significant cohort in size. While the Under 1's are projected to see a decline in numbers, this is a difficult group to project and most subject to policy or practice change. (Detailed charts in appendix). To build upon this analysis, more detailed modelling will be taken forward with regional colleagues over the next four years.

Chart 3



Currently 82% of children looked after are aged over 10 years old. Looking at the projections for the cohort as a whole as shown in Chart 3, it demonstrates the overwhelming focus of the cohort for the life of this strategy as sufficiency for children aged between 10 and 18 years old. This has implications on how we both deliver and procure care at all levels.

In common with many London boroughs and the national profile, there are currently more males (58%) than females in our care.

About 60% of the borough's population are from black and minority ethnic groups, and just over 50% of children looked after identify as Black or Black British.

The table below shows the distribution of the children looked after across different social working teams.

Table 1: Social worker teams as at 31st March 2022:

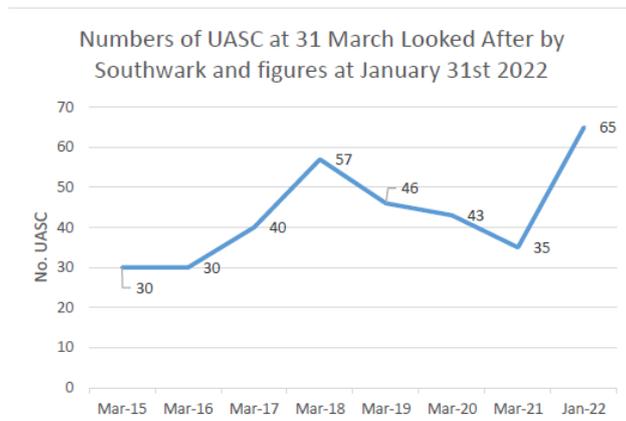
	March 2021	March 2022
All Age Disability Team	22	19
Assessment and Intervention	1	7
Care team 0-15	226	198
Care Team 16+	107	156
Safeguarding and Family Support	93	84

Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children

Following arrival in the UK, unaccompanied asylum seeking children are almost always looked after in local authority care under section 20 of the Children Act 1989 (CA 1989) until they are 18 years of age. Most are 16 or 17 years old but where children are younger it may be necessary to seek a Care Order (s31 CA 1989) in order to gain parental responsibility. On reaching adulthood at age 18, former unaccompanied asylum seeking children who were looked after for more than 13 weeks become *former relevant children* under the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 and are eligible for the complete range of care leaver services, whilst others will be “*qualifying children*” with more limited entitlements to post 18 services.

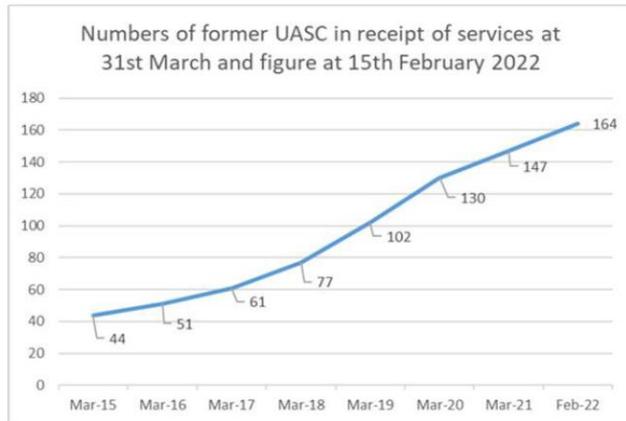
As at February 2022 there were 64 unaccompanied asylum seeking children who were in the care of the council. This equates to 14% of the total of children in care.

- 95% are male.
- 59% are 17 years old, 28% are 16 years old and 13% are under age 16 years.
- 73% were undergoing age assessments at the time
- 67% were living in semi-independent accommodation, 33% were in foster care.



On the same date, February 2022, there were 164 care leavers receiving services who were formerly unaccompanied asylum seeking children. This was 29% of the total of number care leavers receiving services, almost double the proportion of children in care.

- 87% were male.
- 62% were 18 to 20 years old, 38% 21 years or above.
- 49% were in semi-independent accommodation, 30% in independent living, 7% are staying put with former foster carers, with very small numbers in various other forms of accommodation including supported lodgings, custody or living with a relative.



Young people who are unaccompanied and asylum seeking have specific accommodation and support needs especially when not placed in foster care. They need to be placed in a culturally matched environment that can support them over long periods of time as the legal processes in which they are involved can be lengthy. Once in placement, their friend group frequently takes on some of the role of a family and it can be very difficult to move them on. This places an importance on having this type of accommodation locally to ensure that local services can be brought in to support them. It also means that the nature of the support provision must be flexible as their needs change without needing to prompt a move.

Legal status of children looked after

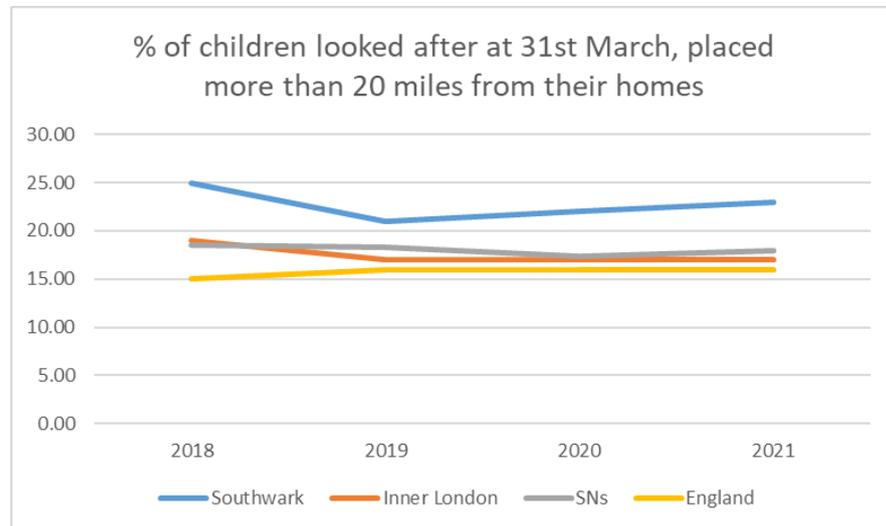
The majority of our children looked after are subject to a legal order, with only 30% accommodated under Section 20 of the Children Act 1989 with parental consent or the consent of the child if 16 years and over.

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2022 (%)
(C1) Interim care order	45	53	45	61	49	11%
(C2) Full care order	298	282	282	278	260	56%
(E1) Placement order granted	21	13	15	17	12	3%
(J1) On remand, or committed for trial or sentence, and accommodated by LA	3	3	6	2	2	0%
(L1) Under police protection and in local authority accommodation	0	0	0	0	2	0%
(L2) Emergency protection order	0	3	0	0	1	0%
(V2) Single period of accommodation under section 20	120	102	111	91	138	30%
Total CLA	487	456	459	449	464	

Placement distance

Nationally around 21% of children in care are placed further than 20 miles from their home. [7] Although the council has a slightly higher rate of children placed at distance than comparators at 23% (Chart 4). Work to develop local residential provision is underway but further work is needed to recruit more local foster carers.

Chart 4



The key driver behind this is that Southwark currently has no residential provision within its boundaries so all children must leave the borough to access this. In February 2021 just over 60% (43) of children in residential children's homes were placed more than 20 miles from Southwark

The plans to open residential care homes in the borough over the life of this strategy should significantly increase those placed within 20 miles of Southwark.

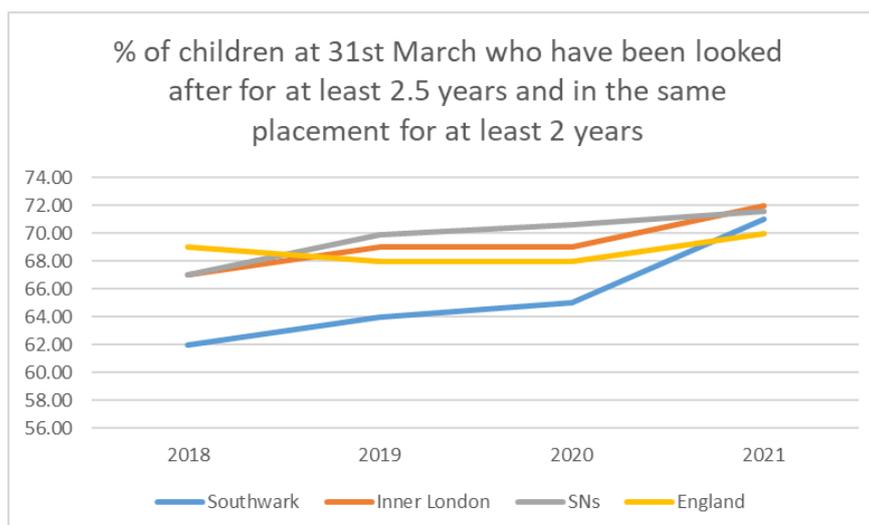
Placement stability

Long-term: The council has shown a strong and consistent trend in improving the percentage of children in long-term stable placements over the last four years: from 62% to 71% (Chart 5). Compared to other Inner London boroughs who have also shown an improved trend, the council improvement is quite marked and has narrowed the gap.

In 2019 the Access to Resources Team (ART) implemented a process of requiring stability meetings be held before agreeing to a placement ending. Where a placement move for the child is not part of their care plan, a stability meeting must be held and the report must be signed off and a placement move approved by the Head of Service for Permanence and Resources. This has had a positive effect on placement stability, however there is still a high rate of emergency referrals made to ART. A desktop review of 48 referrals made to ART between April 2022 and August 2022 showed that over 50%, (25 v 23) were for placements required within one working week and therefore defined as an emergency. It is not clear whether this is yet having an effect on the resilience of the placements being made.

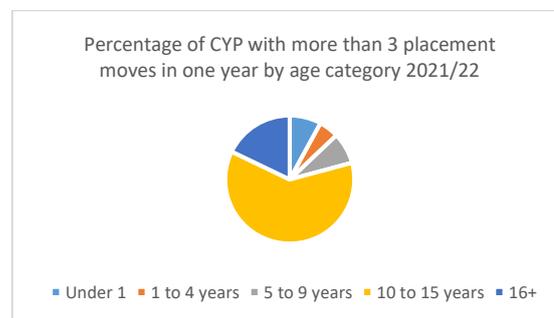
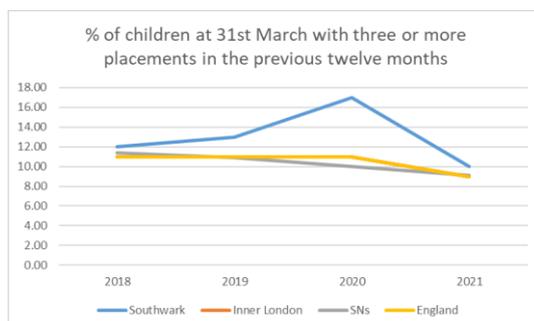
⁷ [Children looked after in England including adoptions, Reporting Year 2021 – Explore education statistics – GOV.UK \(explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/explore-education-statistics)

Chart 5



Short-term: As the national figure in Chart 6 shows, there is a small percentage of children who have more than 3 placements in one year. Each time a child moves home at best it is unsettling, at worst creates additional trauma so all LAs seek to minimise this figure. We see that the Council has had, and continues to have, a slightly higher rate than comparator areas but does have an overall downward trend. As the local residential provision becomes available, more children will be supported locally and this number should reduce further.

Chart 6



Educational attainment⁸

As of July 2022, 430 students were recorded on the roll of Southwark Virtual School compared to 422 last year: 293 children are of statutory school age and 137 in Key Stage 5. Recorded as 166 females 264 males.

5% (16) of the councils looked after children are educated in schools graded less than Good by Ofsted. 4 placed prior to coming into care, 4 already at the school prior to the inspection, 5 unaccompanied asylum seeking children placed in specialist ESOL provision, 2 placed due to travel distance and 1 placed in a provision consulted as being able to meet needs.

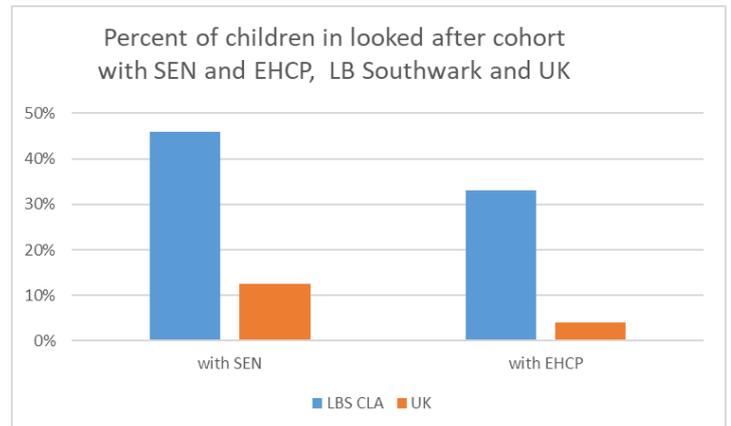
Children only attend 'requires improvement' schools in exceptional circumstances, such as when a previously good school has a poor inspection outcome but it is

⁸ Information from Virtual School HT report to Corporate Parenting Board July 2022

considered in best interests of the child for them to remain there.

In Southwark, the proportion of statutory school age looked after children with special educational needs is 46% (134) compared to 12.6% nationally with an EHCP is 33% (95) compared to 4% nationally.

The residential needs analysis identified that of the CLA children placed within a residential children's home, 73% have an EHCP, indicating significant overlaps between SEND and social care involvement.

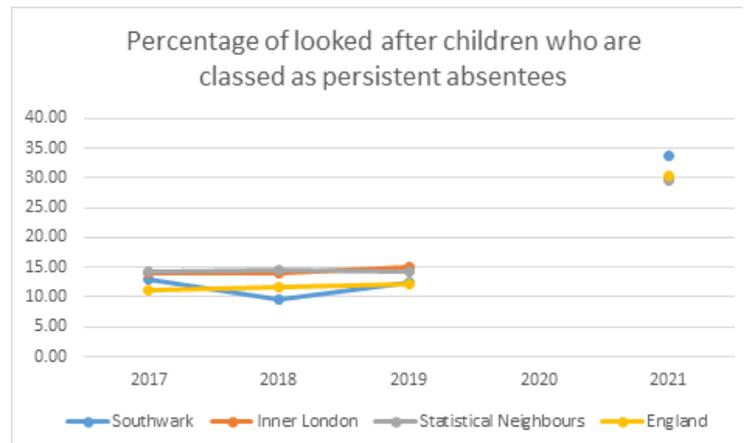


Persistent absenteeism data shows 28% (81) of looked after children with below 90% attendance. Of these:

- 29 are in Yr11,
- 20 are in Yr10,
- 20 are in KS3 (Yrs 7-9),
- 12 are in Primary.

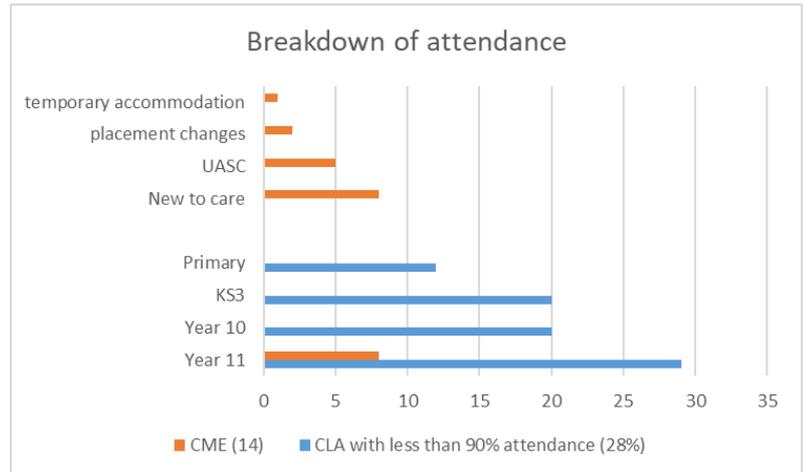
Of this group,

- 24 are new to care in this academic year so attendance was not collected prior to care episode.
- 7 are unaccompanied asylum seeking children – of which 5 arrived in the UK this year.
- 23 had one or more placement changes,
- 20 received fixed term exclusions and
- 1 child was permanently excluded.



By way of comparison the national rate recently more than doubled from 1 in 9 (2018/19) to 1 in 4 (Autumn 2021).⁶ 81 children from 430 is 1 in 5.3.

Reasons for absences were attributed to post pandemic school refusal especially in KS4 where children lost confidence in sitting the examinations, new to care, care placement change and medical absences. Fixed term exclusions have also contributed to this increase.



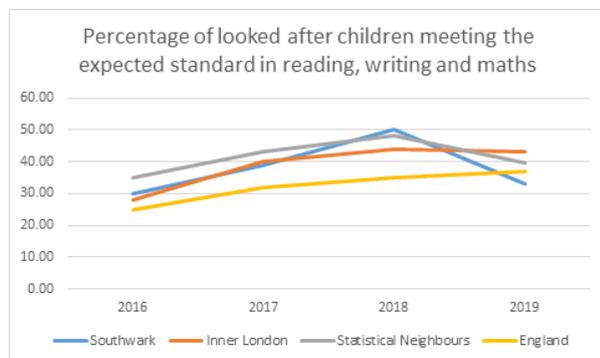
Children Missing Education (CME): 14 children looked after remain out of education compared to 8 this time last year. All have access to education provision through tuition, of these:-

- 8 came into care this academic year of which 5 are unaccompanied asylum seeking children .
- 8 are in Year 11 with pathway plans for the year ahead
- 2 had a recent placement change
- 1 is in temporary accommodation

This is a significant achievement when considering post pandemic engagement and the rate of mobility of looked after children in this cohort.

KS4 GCSE outcomes:

42% of the council's 2021 children looked after GCSE cohort achieved a Grade 1-9 in English and Maths. Attainment 8⁹ is lower than the previous year but in line with national data. London attainment 8 is marginally ahead



KS5 Outcomes: 80% of learners who are children looked after achieved at the expected level for their course against 83% last year. The 2021 year 13 cohort has achieved a 100% progression/pass/ success rate at A' level/ L3.

Destinations of children looked after aged 16+: Destinations are recorded against access to education, employment and training, this continues to be a strength 37% in education, employment and training including 34% of children choosing to continue in

⁹ The UK measure of how well pupils in key stage 4 are doing: it includes English, maths and 6 other subjects

education. There is an improving trend with 21% recoded as not being in education, employment and training compared to 26% at this stage last year.

Educational sufficiency and placement sufficiency are so closely interlinked that in addition to the strategic work being undertaken by the Virtual School to narrow the attainment gap and address persistent absenteeism, the following areas of work have been identified by the Virtual School:

- Working to ensure that children looked after are enrolled and engaged in school without delay as they come into care by introducing a Virtual School presence on the New to Care panel.
- Improving the joint working between social workers and Virtual School by commissioning and embedding an electronic PEP system
- Raising awareness with social working teams that PEP and attendance are always a priority for children in care and spreading the focus across the year rather than at key times.
- Reducing the length of time that children spend out of education by improving the understanding of and adherence to, of all departments across the Council to the Virtual School mandate.

Children looked after with additional needs¹⁰

There is an element of overlap between the cohorts of children in care and those with Special Educational Needs or Disabilities (SEND). For those children supported by Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP) the most common need identified is Autistic Spectrum Condition. The Children Looked After Health Team are jointly working with CAMHS to expedite autism assessments for CLA and CLA consultants are doing joint assessments for autism with CAMHS which means earlier assessment and intervention for special educational needs arising from autism, earlier assessment for ECHP and earlier identification of the right placement and school.

The Virtual School has been supporting the speech language and communication needs (SLCN) of children in care. The impact report from the current provider for the period September 2021 to February 2022 notes that the primary diagnosis of the cohort of students consisted of:

- | | |
|-------------------|--------|
| • General anxiety | • ASD |
| • PTSD | • ADHD |

The carer-scored SDQ (Strengths and difficulties questionnaire) is a mandatory measure collected annually for all children and young people in care. The 21/22 Annual report indicated that 79.1% of children aged 4 to 16 years old who were looked after for a period of 12 months or more had an SDQ score. Of those, 34.2% were lower than the national average and therefore "Cause for Concern". Although there are acknowledged caveats to using SDQ scores, this suggests that slightly over a third of the cohort of children in care have significant additional emotional health and wellbeing needs.

¹⁰ Taken from the 2021/22 Annual Health report

A key ambition for 2022-23 was noted as “SDQ reporting to be supplemented by use of the Child & Adolescent Strengths & Needs (CANS) measure, which will improve our population level understanding of our children’s mental health needs and allow us to better plan strategically to meet them”. This work will also serve to improve placement management.

Areas noted as gap areas for children with disabilities, neuro-diverse children and children with mental health needs include:

- more regional commissioning of low-incidence high-need provision
- the role of the Integrated Care System (ICS) and need for transparent, efficient panels
- partners to work together to improve the effectiveness of therapeutic placement support for both children and young people and those that care for them
- the use of MDT approaches and/or clinical services for reducing placement breakdowns

Health priorities for the cohort

The 2021-22 Annual Report on the Health of Children Looked After indicated that:

“There is a robust system in place across the partnership for constructive challenge, scrutiny and learning around issues pertaining to looked after children and care leavers”

and highlighted that there remains:

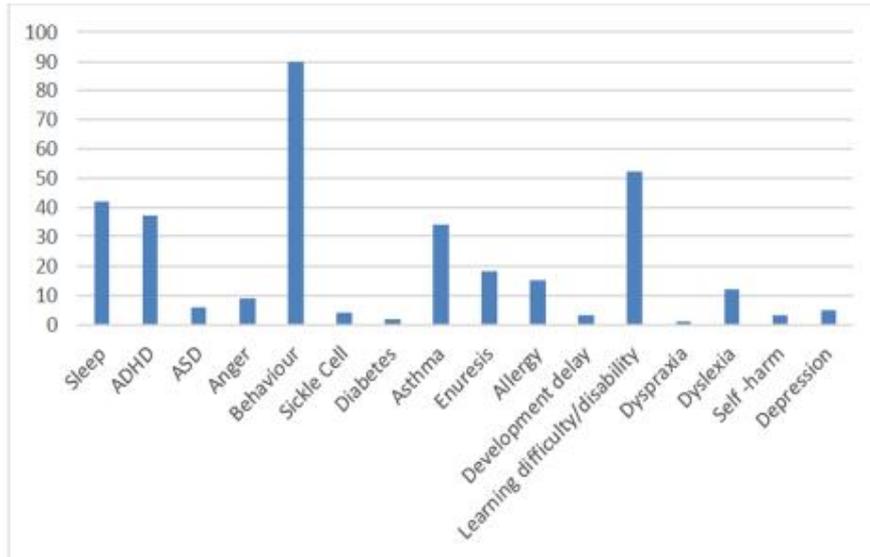
“...equitable consideration of looked after children placed further away as those placed within LB Southwark boundaries.”

Challenges which make it more difficult to ensure that the right placement is sourced for the child at the right time and with the right support package around them that were noted included:

- There continued to be challenges in completion of initial health assessments (IHAs) within the statutory timeframe. Resolving this is a priority for 2022-2023.
- There is a changing statutory landscape across the country resulting in difficulties in access to resources such as school placements and mental health support depending on where children are placed
- There is an increasing complexity of individual children and the cohort as a whole – particularly around safeguarding issues such as exploitation and violence including exposure to knife crime, impact of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs); and mental health need.

Chart 7 below indicates the most common health needs of the cohort.

Chart
7



Most common health needs of Southwark looked after children at March 2022 – identified from statutory health assessments

In addition to addressing the above-mentioned challenges, priorities for the year ahead include:

- Transition to adult services remains an area of further work. Ensuring a smooth transition across health and social care systems remains a challenge for a significant proportion of young people.
- Ensuring parity of access to mental health services and support for Southwark looked after children and for care leavers wherever they are placed - including those in high-cost residential placements as well as those in secure accommodation
- Ensuring looked after children have access to immunisations and dental care
- Embedding trauma-informed care in root practice across the system
- Working with the Southwark Clinical Service project to create a system of recording mental health provision that our children and young people are receiving in order to allow us to monitor issues around access and outcomes.

CYP at risk of custody

When a child or young person under 18 is remanded or sentenced to custody, the Youth Custody Service (YCS) decides where they should be placed. This will be either at a secure training centre, secure children's home or under-18 young offender institution (for young males only). These services are commissioned by the Department for Education.

Table 2 shows the number of secure placements and the number of young people remanded into custody started in-year for the last five years. The numbers of young people in this situation are small and quite variable but it can be clearly seen the increase in spend as the weekly rate has increased.

Table 2	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Secure					
started in year	5	1	4	2	3
Remanded in custody					
started in year	15	12	22	8	11
FY spend	£28,773.00	£156,406.00	£137,769.00	£244,159.00	£317,079.00
average of weekly rate	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
	£ 3,295.24	£ 3,980.79	£ 6,153.45	£ 8,112.73	£ 5,641.20

Children are sometimes held in a secure setting either on the grounds of “justice” through the criminal justice route, or through the “welfare” route where they are admitted for their own safety. Of the 13 secure children’s homes operating in England at March 2019, providing a total of 206 beds, 6 take only welfare children; 2 only justice children and the other 5 are mixed. There is a shortage of suitable, available placements..

There is currently no local London provision of secure setting. Following the Independent Review into Children’s Social Care, which recommended the establishment of Regional Care Cooperatives, the Association of London Directors of Children’s Services (ALDCS) have taken the first steps with a “Pan London Vehicle (PLV)”. This PLV is in the process of being piloted and its core focus would be on Secure Welfare placements initially, followed by Low Incidence High Cost placements for young people with very complex needs and then the residential market as a whole.

Initial data from the London Innovation and Improvement Alliance (LIIA) shows that over the last three years London LA’s have referred 295 children to Secure but received only 159 places. There is on average 33 London children in secure settings at a time. The proposed PLV pilot would develop provision of 24 Welfare beds and Step-down facilities and a site search is underway. Resources have been secured for development but the PLV legal vehicle is required to take the project forwards. This is due to be developed through Autumn 2022.

This PLV-commissioned secure accommodation has the potential to also deliver against the legal requirement for all Local Authorities to provide PACE¹¹ accommodation. Data is not currently collected on the extent of the requirement for PACE non-secure beds but it is a small volume. The current accommodation offered for PACE can be fostering or residential care. Information from the service indicates that in Southwark potentially one bed would be required for one to two nights at a time up to 20 times a year. A PLV-commissioned secure setting would both supply the expertise to care for young people in this setting and provide a cost & volume arrangement for all London LA’s.

The children who require secure settings are extremely vulnerable and have high levels of needs. A May 2021 study found that their needs include “speech and language problems; physical and learning disability; severe trauma; mental health

¹¹ Police and Criminal Evidence Act

issues such as anxiety, depression and post-traumatic stress disorder; and behavioural disorders.....”¹²

Having appropriate accommodation in place to support young people upon their release from secure placements (justice or welfare) is a known gap. Currently young people are housed through the 16+ accommodation service however long term post-release accommodation that is more specific to their needs would improve their outcomes and reduce the likelihood of reoffending. Additionally, the YOS has identified a need for services that can deliver respite accommodation and support for young people on temporary release.

It should be noted that the development of the Southwark-based children’s residential care provision offers the potential for risk-managed suitable placements in-house possibly to accommodate the above-mentioned requirements and in particular for those young people who cannot live alongside others due to risk at a point in time.

Transition to adulthood

As has been previously indicated, it is not unusual for children coming into care to be older adolescents aged 16 years and over (26% in 2021), this is an increasing trend locally and nationally. This has several implications.

1. The young person has possibly had much longer for negative experiences and trauma to develop and embed and therefore needs are more complex and require correspondingly complex care and support.
2. There is less time for the care system to be able to support the young person and meet their needs.
3. There are higher numbers of care leavers often requiring more complex support
4. There are increased numbers of young people needing to transition into adults services.

Work has begun through the Adolescents and Young Adults Pathway Advisory Panel previously mentioned (page 5) which sits under the Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health Group. This group seeks to bring the system together so that services should ‘stretch up’ or ‘reach down’, to ensure that young residents and their families receive the services that can best meet their needs. It also intends to inform the development of future commissioning intentions.

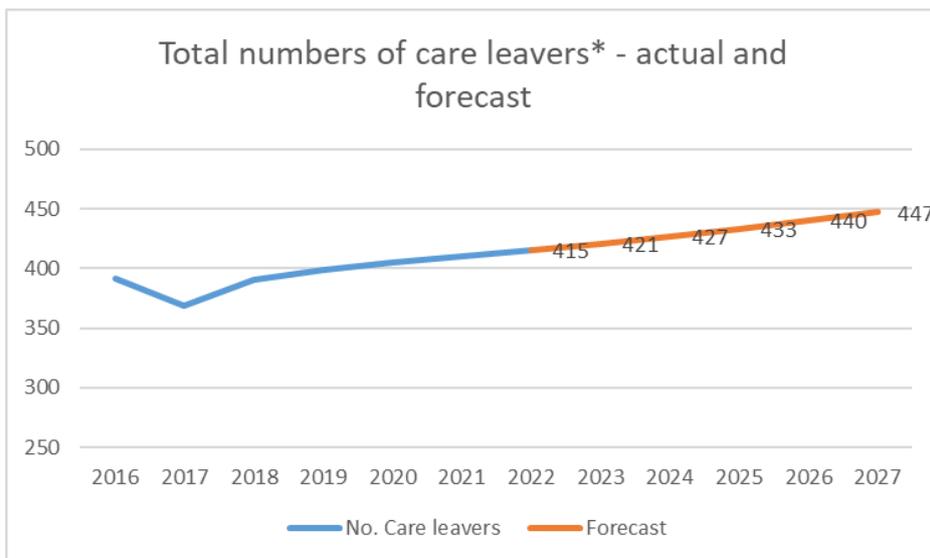
Care Leavers

In September 2022 Southwark had 567 care leavers (all categories). The trend shown in Chart 8 shows a clear and steady increase that is projected to increase.

Number of Care Leavers (total receiving a service) at 31st March	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Southwark	395	464	528	545	567

¹² [Secure children’s homes: placing welfare and justice children together \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

Chart 8



*including relevant and former relevant care leavers only

While there has also been a steep rise in unaccompanied asylum seeking children which creates an additional input into numbers of care leavers, it is not possible to predict those numbers with any accuracy. It is possible that due to measures put in across the country to reduce the number of children and young people seeking asylum the trend will slow and may have already started to do so.

The majority of accommodation for older young people in care (16-17 years), care leavers and other vulnerable young people is provided through staying put with former foster carers, commissioned supported accommodation services and spot purchased semi-independent and supported accommodation as seen in Chart 9 and 10.

Chart 9

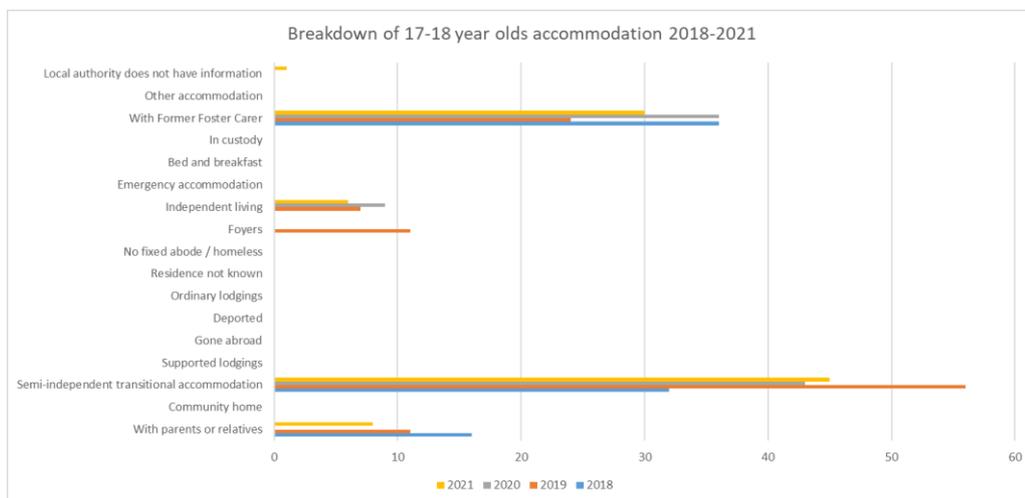
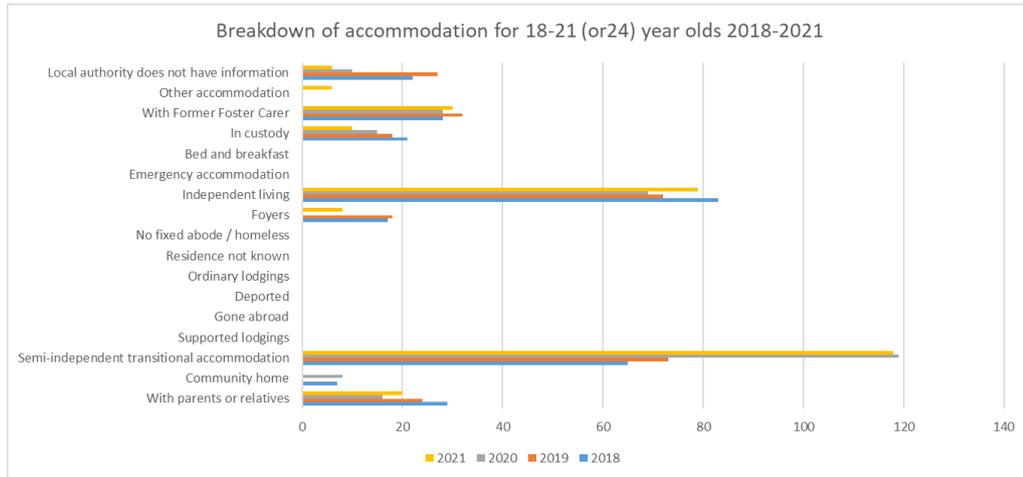


Chart
10



The council has a small number of children [aged 16 or 17] where they have care needs and are in supported semi-independent accommodation. In December 2021 this was 4 children (16 and 17 years olds) and an audit of their cases by the Audit and Learning Team showed all 4 were making good progress and their needs were being met. While the legislation would indicate they should move to foster care or a children's home, searches had not found such a provision able to meet their needs. In some cases the young people had experienced multiple moves in foster care and residential children's homes and were doing better in supported accommodation. In some cases a move to a regulated placement would go directly against the young person's expressed wishes. There is regular senior management oversight for this cohort of young people including multi- agency oversight at the Complex Needs Panel.¹³

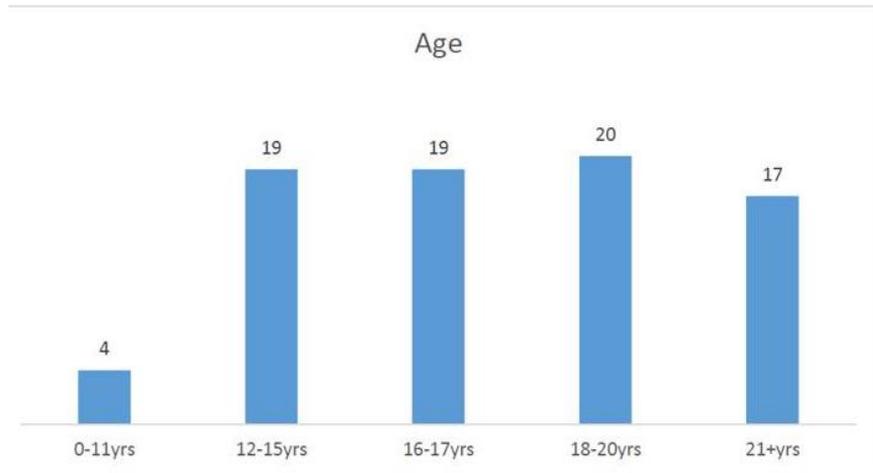
How Care Leavers Feel About Where They Live

Housing remains a key issue for care leavers as well as children in care. The Q1 report for FY 2022-23 from the Advocacy Service indicated that housing was the top issue for young people at the point of referral.

"...in the reporting period, similarly to previous quarters, a high number of young people accessed advocacy support to resolve issues around housing. Advocates support young people to understand Southwark's housing local offer for care leavers and explain the differences in rights & entitlements based on care and immigration status, age and additional vulnerabilities. In addition, when requested by young people, advocates also support them in accessing specialist legal housing advice where young people themselves instruct solicitors based on their advice"

¹³ AS report to CP on semi-independent accommodation for children in care and care leavers April 2022

The age profile of the young people accessing the Advocacy service that quarter is shown here.



Provision

Adoption

The council hosts the Adopt London South (ALS) Regional Adoption Agency. 2021/22 marked the third full year of the partnership. The members are the London Boroughs of Croydon, Richmond and Kingston (Achieving for Children), Lambeth, Lewisham, Merton, Southwark, Sutton, Wandsworth, and on 1st April 2022 the London Borough of Greenwich joined. Key points regarding sufficiency across these authorities taken from the ALS Annual Report 21/22 are:

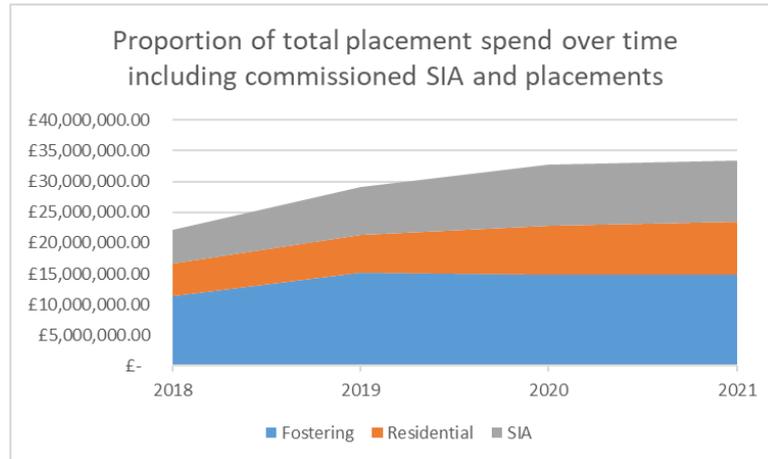
- 58 adopters were approved in 2021/22, slightly higher than the previous year. On 31st March 2022 there were 38 approved adoptive families waiting for children. Of these families, 7 were Black or of Black mixed heritage and 20 were suitable for transracial placements. However, there is still a shortage of the right families to adopt south London children, in particular for Black children and all children with additional needs.
- 50% of the south London children waiting are children of Black and Black mixed Caribbean and African heritage and we are working towards 50% of our adopters being right for Black children. All ALS adopters are offered transracial adoption training. There is now a surplus of families offering transracial placements. Of equal significance for delay is reluctance of adopters to consider children with additional needs such as autistic spectrum conditions because they fear that there is not enough support available. Clearer messages about children's needs are now given at the point of adopter enquiry and through the process.
- One of the benefits of adoption regionalisation is the availability of ALS adoptive families and the local support which can be offered. 60% of South London children were placed with ALS adopters in 2021/22, compared to 68% the previous year, a target for improvement. 12 external children were placed in ALS Families of whom 3 were from Adopt London. 81% of ALS children joined new families in London or the South East.

Placements

The proportion of total placement spend in the last four years spent on residential services has increased as has that on semi or supported accommodation (Chart 11).. Overall this is a 50.9% increase in costs across all commissioned placements between 2018 to 2021. This reflects the picture across the country¹⁴.

¹⁴ [Councils boost social care budgets by £700m but say they are 'plugging gaps in an underfunded system' - Community Care](#)

Chart 11



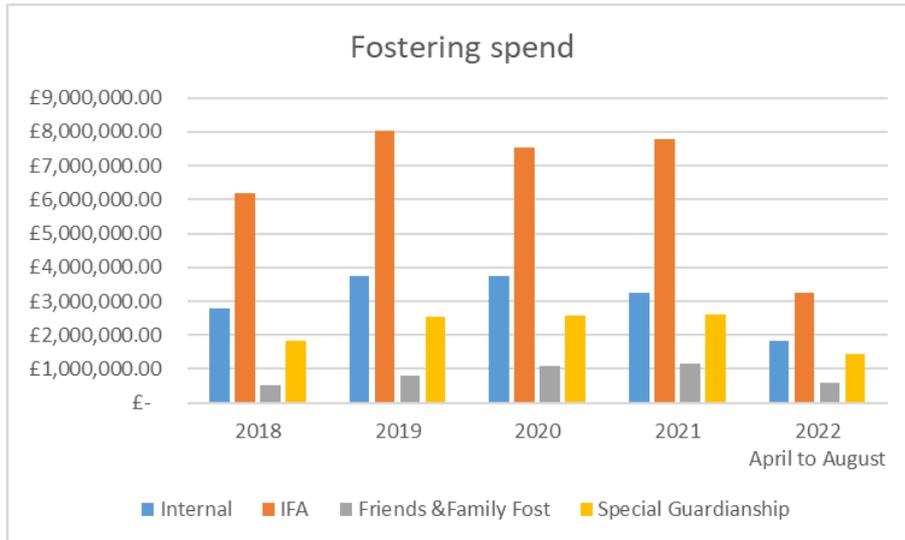
Fostering

Chart 12 shows how the internal fostering service was negatively impacted by the pandemic, losing a significant number of foster carers. As part of the work to rebuild the service in the wake of the pandemic, the council's Fostering Service has begun to reinforce their training programme for Friends and Family Foster Carers as well as maintain an assertive recruitment and assessment programme. The work will occur in partnership with the SGO team around support areas such as life story development and supporting transition of carers into the role. There are also plans to strengthen the awareness and understanding of the different options of Special Guardianship Orders and Friends and Family Foster Carers to ensure optimum and appropriate take up of each service. The service will work alongside the national movement to obtain increased recognition for these carers.

As of March 31st 2022, 52 out of 134 internal foster placements were in-borough and only 7 were over 20 miles away.

Since 2018, the proportion of spend on internal fostering has been at a consistent 22-26% and on external providers at 51-54% with Friends & Family Foster Care and Special Guardianship Orders between 21-29%. Determining like for like cost comparisons with in-house and external provision is challenging however, due to difficulties in separating out central on-costs for in-house services. The number of friends and family carers varies given the temporary nature of many arrangements but has broadly doubled over the last 3 years. The chart below gives an indication of costs

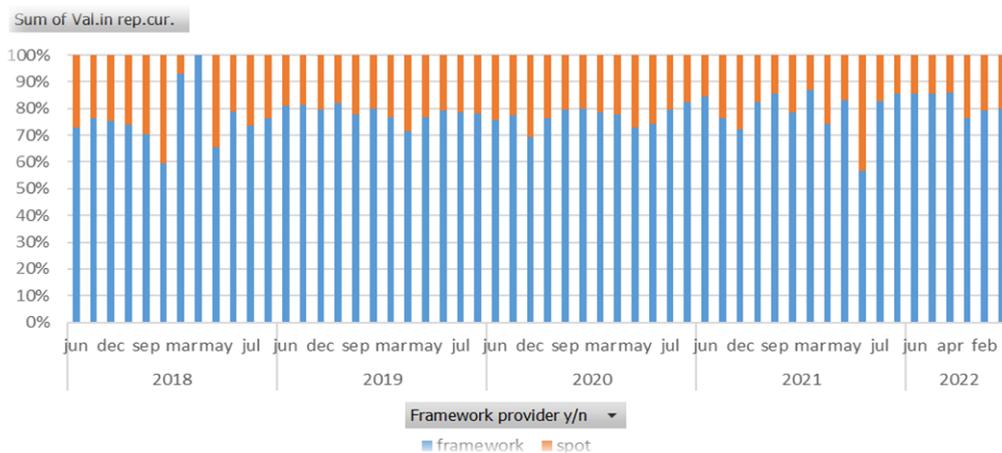
Chart 12



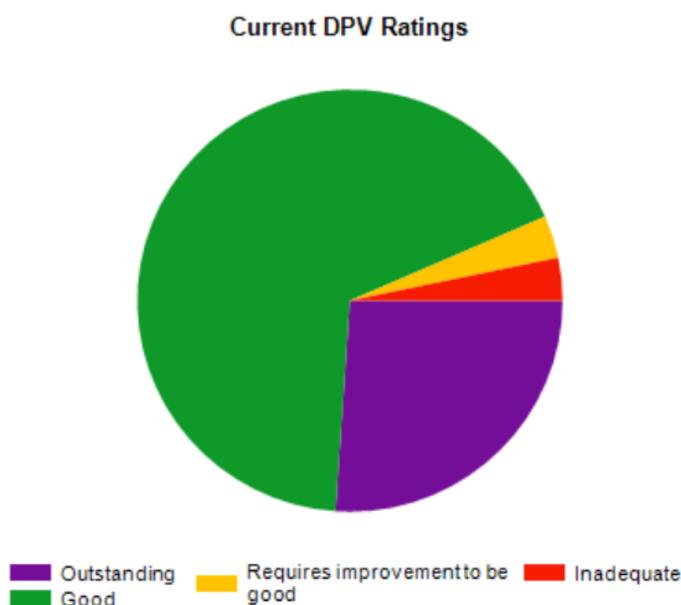
The Council is a member of the Commissioning Alliance Fostering Dynamic Purchasing Vehicle (DPV) where costs are stabilised across the lifetime of the contract. As shown in Chart 13, DPV placements consistently make up approximately 80% of the externally sourced placements. This shows good use of the commissioned arrangements although there is known to be a number of bespoke support arrangements in place.

The contract runs out in May 2023 and the work to appraise options has begun.

Chart 13



The quality of the external provision is largely good or outstanding as seen in the pie chart.



Parent and child

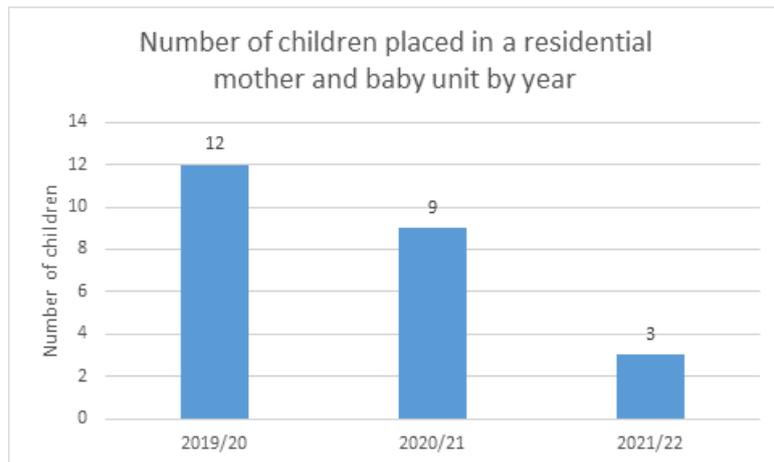
The Council uses a mixture of fostering and residential parent and child placements based on the assessed risk to the child and support needed for the parent. The combined picture is given in Table 3.

Table 3	FY 18/19	19/20	20/21	21/22
Number of families under assessment	16	18	22	11
Total spend	£539,515	£394,451	£472,774	£454,699
Number of providers used	8	7	14	10

The number of residential parenting assessment placements has dropped significantly over the last three years as shown in Chart 14. If safe to do so then fostering placements are preferred as they are closer to the community setting that the parent will return to following the assessment period. While residential placements are the preferred environment when safety is a concern, they can mask the care -and therefore the risk- brought by the parent.

Chart 14

The average time placed in this setting is 87 days (range: 6 to 272)



Availability of placements has not been an issue although the following are areas that have been identified as gaps:

- local Southwark-based placements
- placements that take fathers and children
- placements that allow fathers access during the day to support with care
- placements that take couples
- Improvements in the quality and timeliness of reports submitted
- Clarity for carers around how to support the parent without doing the job for them

Currently if a placement has to be sought out of hours, the social worker must undertake the placement search. This opens up a risk of variation in placement cost and quality. To avoid going outside of commissioned arrangements and to ensure a consistent standard in placement quality, rigorous arrangements, training and induction need to be in place. A piece of work to consider how best to manage out of hours placement searching could serve to ensure the best arrangements are in place.

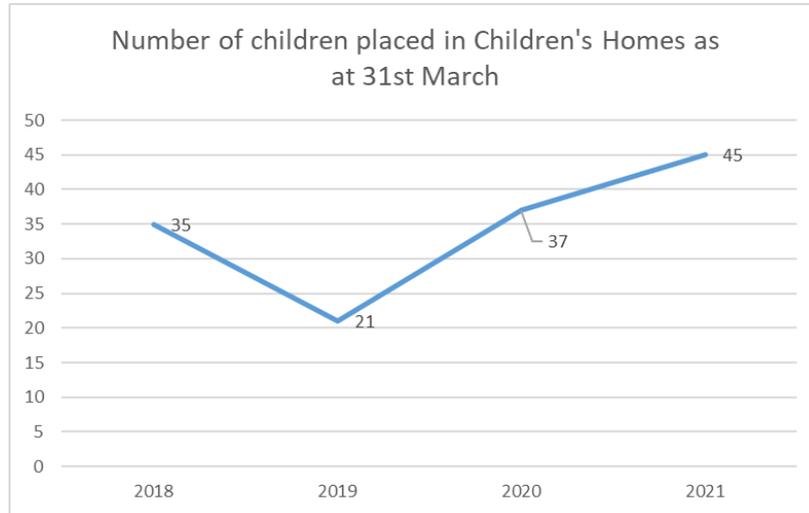
Residential

Following an initial drop in placements made, the number have risen since 2019 (Chart 15). This is likely to be a combination of:

- Nationally, more children are coming into care, and more children are staying in care longer, meaning that the overall cohort size is increasing while the national number of foster carers is decreasing. This means that despite lower numbers of children in care locally, competition for externally-sourced foster placements is high.
- The consequence on children with more complex needs is that it is much harder to source a foster placement and some residential providers are now being asked to care for children who should or could be in a fostering setting in addition to children whose needs require residential care which increases matching difficulties.

- It is now generally acknowledged that overall levels of complexity in the needs of the children and young people are rising – children who are at higher risk of mental ill-health, criminal and gang exposure, or CSE, present real challenges in how to care for them within current provision both fostering and residential.

Chart 15



A needs analysis for children in residential settings done in 2021 showed that

- Of the 43 children in residential care, 10 (33%) were White British and 33 (77%) were from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds.
- The case files of Southwark children show that approximately a quarter needed to be placed at a distance from Southwark, and this need was likely to continue.
- Attendance with education was a problem for around half the children in residential care. A large proportion had Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) and access to provision was often exacerbated when children change placements in emergencies because it takes time to get children registered with a new school. This has been offset more recently by the wider availability of remote tuition, albeit the service reports that some children were reluctant to engage with this.
- A study of the case files of the 43 children in residential placements (as at 1 February 2021) was undertaken. Twelve of the 43 children were worked with by the All Age Disability (AAD) Service to meet their needs.

Current best practice suggests that children requiring residential care are best served by homes which are family sized and look like the homes of their peers. In 2021, the council endorsed and adopted a residential development programme to deliver three new homes local to the borough. A £1.85m bid to the DfE was successful and progress is underway to secure funding for homes two and three. The residential strategy proposes, dependent on identified needs, to deliver three homes as follows:

One home of 5 beds for children of mixed gender who are between the ages of 10 and 16 years.	Property is identified and refurbishment programme underway. Home expected on line towards the end of 2023
A 5 bed home with high quality therapeutic support for children aged 13-17 years old with more challenging behaviour and	Property identified and refurbishment programme being developed. Home expected on line in 2024.

potentially an emergency bed/solo accommodation attached.	
A short term assessment home with up to 5 beds and flexibility to build bespoke packages of care around children who may need very high levels of care in an emergency	No property yet identified.

The council is a member of the Commissioning Alliance Residential DPV to source external placements. The contract is due to expire in May 2023. Options appraisal work has already begun.

The council's Local Offer has one internally operated home for children with disabilities that provides short breaks and overnight respite for children and young people. Short breaks are also commissioned from external providers.

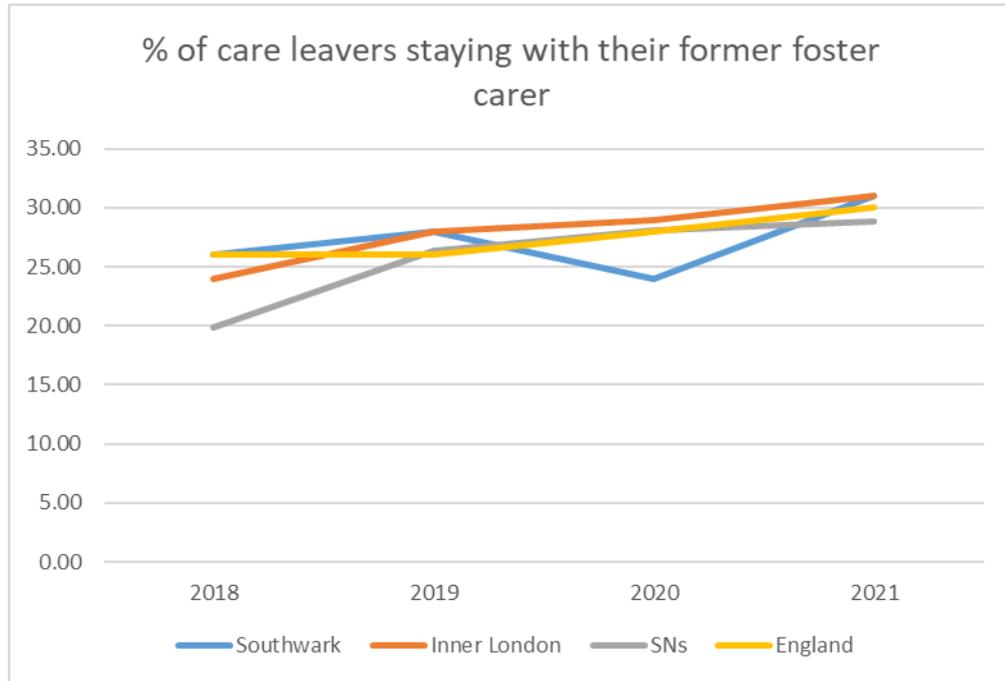
[Accommodation and support for young people over the age of 16](#)

As already seen, the numbers of children in care aged 16-17 and the number of care leavers are rising steadily. Accommodation for these young people is provided mainly through

- Staying Put fostering placements
- Commissioned 16+ housing and support services
- Spot Purchased Supported Accommodation and semi-independent placements
- A pilot Supported Lodgings service
- Staying Put

The council is showing a steady trend towards increasing numbers of staying put placements and has closed the gap with statistical neighbours and national figures as shown in Chart 16. For 17-18 year-olds, staying put with former foster carers made up 33% of all placements in 2021.

Chart 16



- Block Commissioned 16+ Service

The 16 Plus Support and Accommodation Project is block commissioned accommodation with both staffed and dispersed accommodation with floating support. It has a north and south focus across the borough and is open to children in care aged 16 and over, care leavers and young people aged 16 to 18 in vulnerable housing.

The service has established an Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children Hub to build upon local support services and reduce reliance on expensive spot purchased semi-independent accommodation.

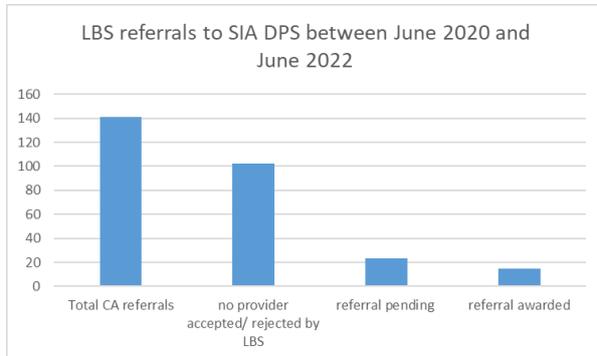
A 2021 review into the performance of the commissioned service established that it has proved difficult to move young people on to independent accommodation and there are still a number of challenges to be overcome. The review made a number of revised recommendations which will continue to be embedded over the life of the contract.

As a part of the procurement of this provision an options appraisal work will take place 2022-23. This provision needs to be able to free up low level capacity in order to be able to move young people on from provision for higher needs.

- Spot purchased Supported Accommodation and Semi-Independent placements

In 2021/22, the council spent over 4 times (£6.7M) on spot purchased placements as opposed to £1.4M on the block contracts. The number of young people in block contracted services and spot purchased services are similar, between 250 and 300, and therefore the imperative to increase provision within the block contracted services should be a priority. This is not only due to the cost-effectiveness of such action but more importantly the fact that the two appointed providers are strategic partners in providing Southwark homes for Southwark children.

In 2020, the council joined the Semi-independent Accommodation and Support Framework that operates as a Dynamic Purchasing Vehicle (DPV) run by the CA on behalf of a large partnership of 19 other mainly London Local Authorities. The CA also manage an accreditation service for providers on the DPV.



Data suggests a success rate of 10% for referrals put through the DPV however there are known problems with the data that may confound this. More rigorous understanding of the placement data is required to evaluate the contract.

The contract will end in June 2023 and options appraisal work has begun.

- Supported Lodgings

In addition to the continued work to increase the numbers of young people in Staying Put placements, a pilot scheme to develop an internal Supported Lodgings service is underway. The pilot for 6 households was begun in April 2022 with the first hosts expected to be ready by November 2022.

A key benefit of delivering the service in-house is the close working relationship and open conversation between the recruitment, 16+ and Care Leaver teams in order to get an early match between hosts and young people. Hosts need to be completely ready to start once approved.

Another benefit is the ability to dovetail with fostering recruitment. The service has already been able to transfer 3 carers from fostering to the supported lodging assessment process.

- Next steps

Both the commissioned block of accommodation and support and the DPV contract require renewal during the life of this strategy. This creates an opportunity to deliver a robust offer to young people in vulnerable housing situations, the excellent progress made by joint working and having an experienced housing practitioner sitting in the 16+ team have already made significant improvements. However there are still challenges as well as a number of gaps in accommodation for specialist groups. Annex C shows the feedback from a 16+ working group session on sufficiency.

With the incoming process of mandatory registration with Ofsted for providers supporting young people aged 16+, there is an opportunity to work with quality providers and support them in delivering locally to our specific requirements.

Gap analysis

Fostering

We know that our fostering service generally has sufficient capacity to meet the needs of the under 10s locally but we need more capacity for older children, especially

- unaccompanied asylum seeking young people
- children on the autistic spectrum
- children who are vulnerable to exploitation or who present risk to themselves or others
- emergencies
- sibling groups of more than 2 children
- Parent and child placements that can take fathers, allow fathers access, take couples

There is a need to develop carers who are able to work with our local residential offer to take young people stepping out of residential provision, this will include undertaking an options appraisal of the DPV for Independent Fostering Agencies.

There is a need to promote enhanced support for foster carers such as the Mockingbird Model to support them in caring for our most complex young people including those aged 16 or 17 who still require care rather than support.

Residential

We have a programme to develop local residential provision along with access to externally commissioned provision. However we are still in a position where children may have to live outside of Southwark and are concerned around the negative impact that this may be having on too many young people so we will continue to develop our residential offer at pace. In considering the profile of the remaining two homes there is a need to examine the need for children at risk of multiple placement breakdowns, those with SEN and the outcome of the proposed 16+ needs analysis including a review of current provision and the current DPV purchasing arrangements

16+ accommodation

More information on the needs of the 16+ cohort is required to inform and ensure that a robust framework of options to support our care leavers and unaccompanied asylum seeking children locally is in place.

We recognise that we need to ensure our planning and support for adolescents is robust so that only those who really need to be looked after do so and only for as long as necessary. We need to work with providers, including those on the DPV and our placement team to ensure robust placement management processes support this.

For care leavers, there is a need to continue to develop supported lodgings and staying put arrangements and there is a need to continue to work with our partners including those through the DPV to provide options and support our young people who are NEET.

Children at risk of custody

There is a need to ensure accommodation and support is in place that meets the need of young people exiting custody including those on temporary release as well as long term post-release.

There is a need to identify the requirement for and ensure availability of PACE accommodation.

All placements

We want to minimise the number of placement moves looked after children may experience, especially those which are unplanned and emergency placements. We will work with our Access to Resources Team to build on the current successes and ensure our potential to be more effective in this area is reached.

There is a need to work to improve the support around engaging with new education settings for those young people who have to change placement. All contracts for external provision should be retendered to ensure continuity of access to good quality placements at best value.

Enablers

Engagement and involvement: we will further develop consultation and engagement with young people in respect of placement commissioning, monitoring, quality assurance and service development. As part of an overall consultation and engagement strategy, we will develop a programme of Young Inspectors by the end of 2023. We are committed to developing this area of our work over the life of this strategy.

Partnerships: we will work with health and VCS partners within Southwark and across the South East London ICS to develop a clear and consistent pathway and support under the Transforming Care agenda and in relation to placements that require a multi-agency response in terms of expertise, services and funding to meet physical, mental and emotional needs. We will also need to refresh the SLA that covers the CLA nursing team to cover leaving care requirements and ensure that it is in line with other services up to the age of 25 years.

Sharing data: we will continue to pay attention to our data quality, so that data available is responsive and contributes positively to inform provider performance and service development as well as enables us to identify areas of inequality. Where we commission therapeutic placements, we need to ensure our health colleagues are fully part of reviewing the quality and outcomes of any therapeutic or clinical element of the placement.

Special Educational Needs (SEN)

The production of a SEN specific sufficiency strategy will be a priority action within the next four years and will enhance the information we hold on the needs of children with

SEND. This should dovetail with the publication of the national SEND delivery plan set for later this year.

Equalities

In terms of outcomes, experience and access there is a need to ensure that the information we gather permits us to identify where there is inequity across all services as well as understand what support or action is needed to remove it. We will need to hold all providers as well as our internal services to a high standard and call out services with pronounced inequity.

Key priorities

- 1) We will continue to work to safely and appropriately reduce the need for children to be in care through a strong preventative offer
 - a) We will continue to ensure robust support packages for families where children are cared for under Special Guardianship Orders.
 - b) We will work to make sure that children only stay looked after for as short a time as necessary.
 - c) We will ensure strong join up with SEND commissioners to ensure that the risk of children requiring specialist SEND provision becoming looked after is reduced if their needs can be best met by family support and appropriate educational provision.

- 2) We will build a resilient and expert foster care community able to support and care for the older cohort of young people.
 - a) The in-house fostering service will continue with its recruitment plans and, alongside this, ensure attention is given to retention and incentives/barriers for carers to care for older or more complex children.
 - b) We will grow our own fostering service in each year of this strategy to create the range and types of fostering placements required for complex needs, older children, respite, crisis intervention, siblings, and parent and child as well as ensuring a supply of follow on placements for our residential provision.
 - c) We will work to reduce the number of children placed in residential care by increasing the number of foster care placements available locally.
 - d) The number of care leavers is rising and, together with the significant increase in unaccompanied asylum seeking children, this has future implications for leaving care services. We will keep careful monitoring on 16+ provision to increase capacity within the block contracted arrangements.
 - e) We will continue to build a strong family and friends fostering offer in order to maximise our opportunities for these placements for children and young people.

- 3) We will continue to improve the experience of children in our care including ensuring a strong voice of our young people is threaded through all services
 - a) We will ensure that the voice of young people is central to any commissioned or provided service
 - b) We will open local children's homes
 - c) We will improve placement stability through a better supply of local high quality placements alongside improvements to practice in relation to assessment, care planning and placement.
 - d) We will work to reduce the persistent absenteeism levels of children and young people who are looked after.
 - e) We wish to embed a culture whereby risk is managed by keeping young people close, with trauma informed and restorative approaches. Partners need to be encouraged to support this approach at all times.
 - f) We know we have some excellent multi-agency resources for children with specialist and complex needs. We will build in opportunities to ensure partners are fully involved at the earliest opportunity in planning support and managing risk with children and their families/carers to prevent admission to care or placement breakdown.
- 4) We will continue to increase the numbers of adoptive families available to our children, particularly those that are able to meet the needs of older children and Black children
 - a) We will support the Adopt London South in their work to find adopters for Black children and autistic children.
 - b) We will maintain and develop the sufficiency of adoption placements through Adopt London South working in collaboration with all Adopt London Regional Adoption Agencies.
- 5) We will improve our ability to continuously assess placement sufficiency and inequity in the system on an ongoing basis to ensure a responsive system
 - a) We will work to improve the quality of our data allowing us to track outcomes, inequality, and impact.
 - b) We will work with partners both locally and regionally to ensure the best possible outcomes for our children.

Measuring success

A successful Sufficiency Strategy means that in four years' time we can look back and see that

- we improved the choice of placement options we were able to offer children in care;
- more of our children were able to be in homes in or near the borough;

- there is increased placement stability and children experience less placement moves;
- we reduced the numbers of children, especially older ones, coming into care as they and their families were better supported in the community; and

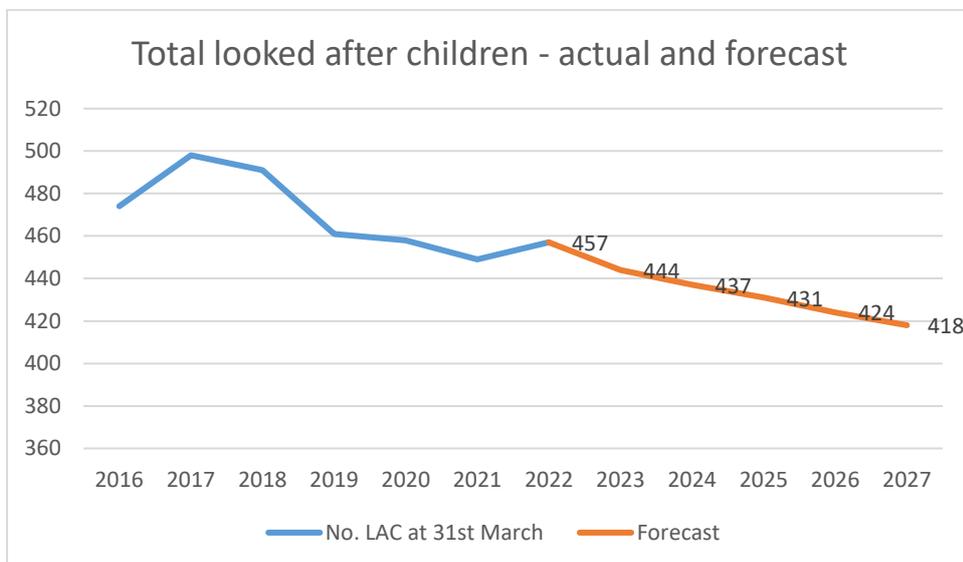
An action plan will be developed by March 2023 and monitoring will be on six monthly basis with regular reporting to the Sufficiency Steering Group who will also review forecasts annually to support any changes to the actions needed.

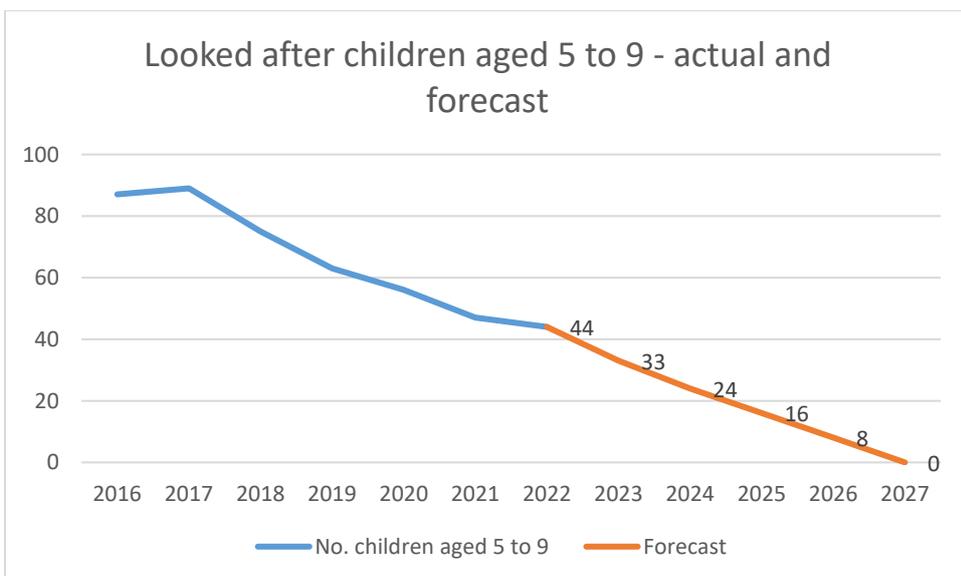
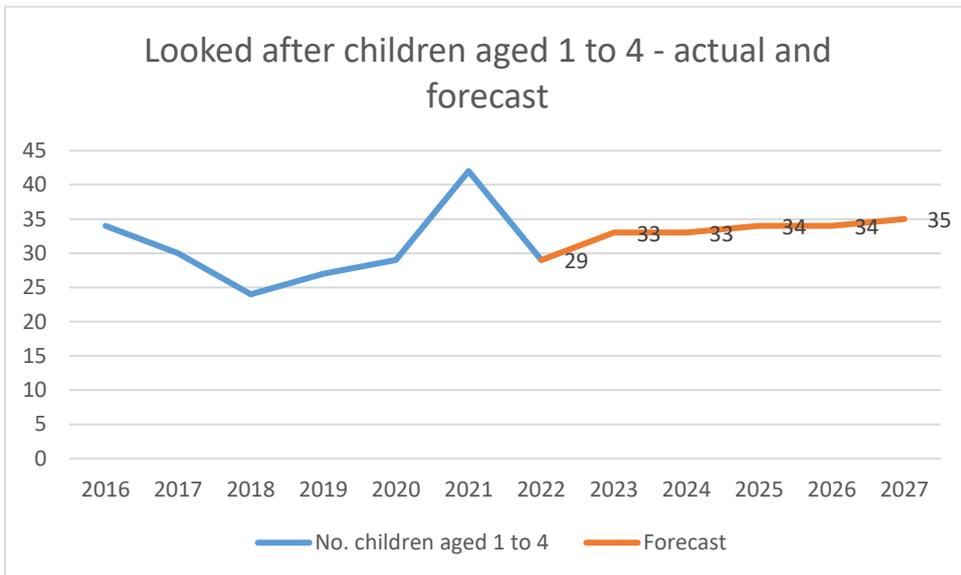
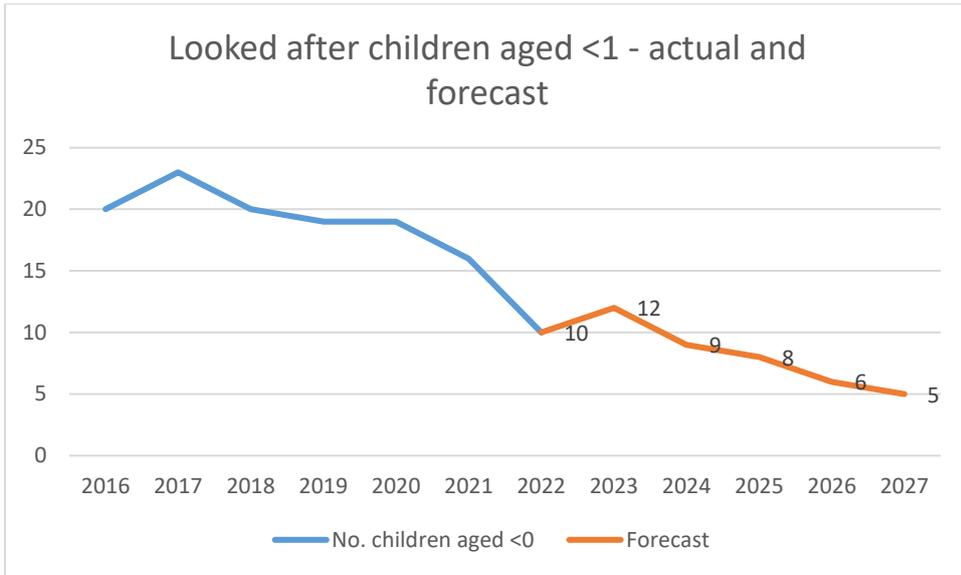
Annex A Legislation

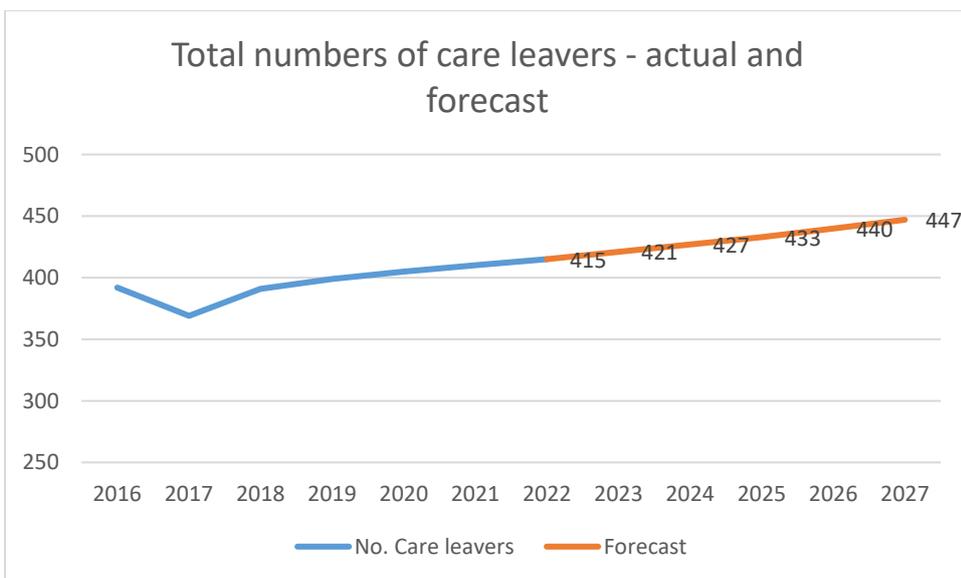
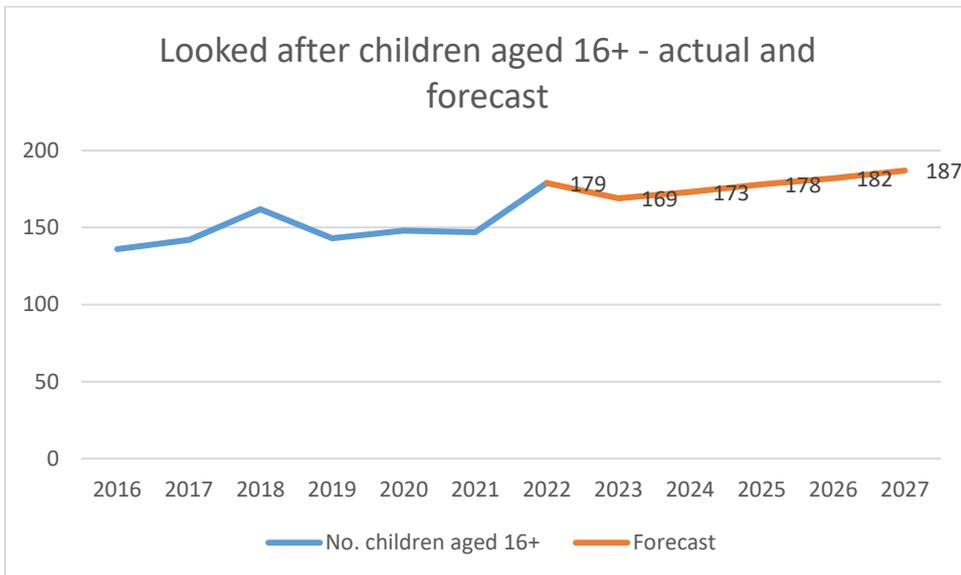
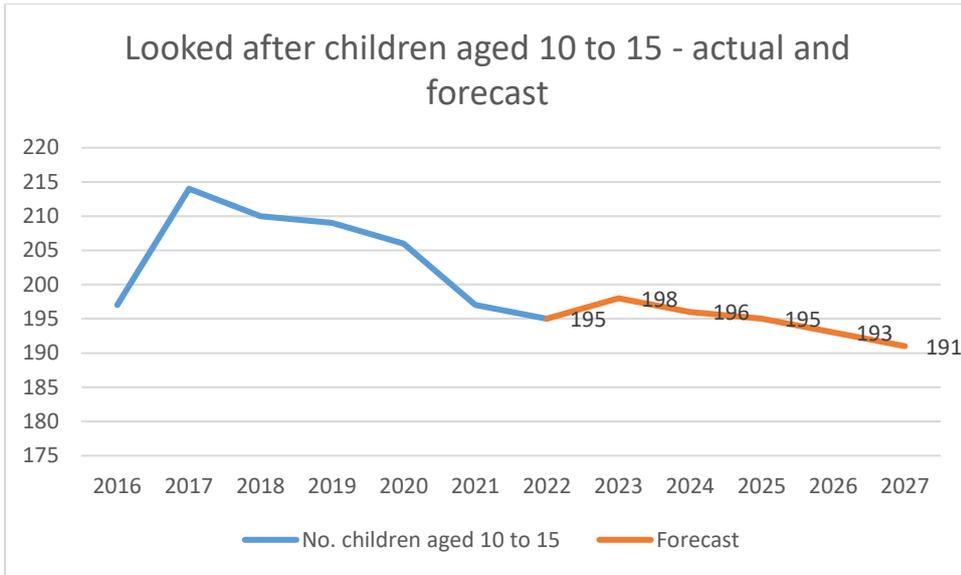
The Sufficiency Strategy is set within the context of national policy and guidance with the following primary legislation applying:

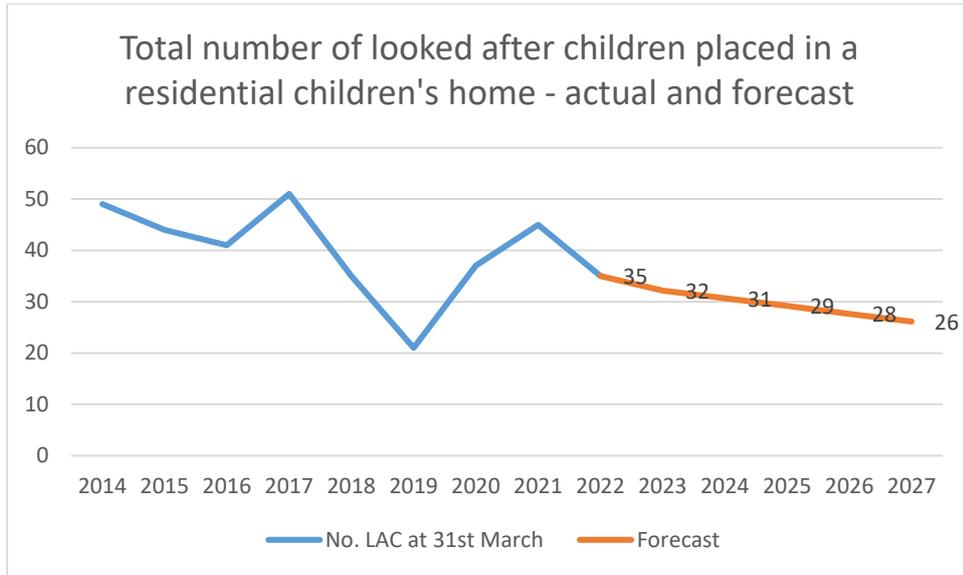
- Children Act 2004
 - Children and Young Persons Act 2008
 - Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000
 - Care Standards Act 2000
 - Children and Family Act 2014
 - Children and Social Work Act 2017
 - Statutory Guidance on Securing Sufficient Accommodation for Looked After Children 2010
 - Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations 2010, 2015
- Putting Children First* (2016)

Annex B – cohort projections by age group









Annex C – 16+ session feedback

Areas that were highlighted as gaps in a specialised focus group session were:

- The need for training flats in assured short hold tenancies
- Floating support
- Affordability checks
- The Telford Care Leaver hub is forced to close a 5pm due to insurance criteria which is not in line with Care Leaver requirements.
- Work needs to be done with providers on the quality of their keyworker reports.
- Outreach support staff being confident to conduct assertive outreach
- Contracts need to be managed more effectively and providers held to account when necessary
- Out of hours provision requires social workers and PA's to run placement searches themselves
- No emergency bed provision is available
- No PACE provision is available

Below is the focus group's evaluation of the landscape in Southwark against the acknowledged best practice [St Basils and Barnardos Accommodation and Support Framework](#).

Short stay / Emergency	High support	Medium support	Low support
Nightstop No provision	Small units 24/7 OASIS	Floating Support DePaul	Shared houses with floating support OASIS and SA
Short breaks respite Orient Street	Small group homes Not currently but residential strategy could deliver	Supported accommodation – commissioned OASIS and SA	Peer landlords No provision
Short term Supported Lodgings Pilot project	Specialist supported lodgings Not currently		On-call concierge Not known
Emergency assessment bed No	Housing First Not known		

Greater clarity of data around the needs of young people is needed to inform the work that needs to be taken forward in 2023.

- An in-depth analysis of the 16+ cohort would serve to inform both a joint strategy for young people's independent housing and commissioning activity. This could include an agreed Joint Housing Assessment protocol, tenancy training, pre-tenancy schemes as well as increasing aspirational tenancies.
- Analysing the DOLS activity could potentially highlight an invest to save opportunity for accommodating young people with the most complex needs
- Existing contracts deliver accommodation and support that is fairly generic. More granularity of information is needed to understand the needs of different groups and how providers can flexibly respond to these needs, especially
 - gender-specific accommodation
 - young parents
 - young people with health needs requiring support e.g. with medicine management and administration
 - young people on the autistic spectrum
 - young people exiting custody or other secure estate
 - intensively supported units delivering greater than 1:1 supervision
 - young people over the age of 21 who do not meet thresholds for adults services but still have mental health issues and/or learning disabilities.

Item No. 11.	Classification: Open	Date: 1 March 2023	Meeting Name: Corporate Parenting Committee
Report title:		Corporate Parenting Committee – Work Plan 2022-23	
Ward(s) or groups affected:		All	
From:		Director of 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 2022-2023 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 – draft outline

19 April 2023

- Speakerbox verbal update
- Virtual head teacher annual report
- Children in care and care leavers with disabilities
- Special guardianship
- Child safeguarding review placed in residential school.

5 July 2023

- Speakerbox verbal update
- Annual health report for looked after children
- Race, ethnicity and gender proportionality
- Foster and Adoption Service annual reports.

SpeakerBox

19. 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, equalities (including socio-economic) and health impacts

Community impact statement

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

Equalities (including socio-economic) impact and health impact statement

6. Relevant issues will be addressed in the reports submitted to the corporate parenting committee.

Climate change implications

7. The work plan process for the committee has no direct implications.

Resource implications

8. 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 of Children and Families	
Report Author	Beverley Olamijulo/ Paula Thornton, Constitutional Team	
Version	Final	
Dated	7 February 2023	
Key Decision?	No	
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER		
Officer Title	Comments Sought	Comments included
Assistant Chief Executive – Governance and Assurance	No	No
Strategic Director of Finance	No	No
Cabinet Member	No	No
Date final report sent to Constitutional Team	20 February 2023	

CORPORATE PARENTING DISTRIBUTION LIST (OPEN)**MUNICIPAL YEAR 2022-23**

NOTE: Original held by Constitutional Team; all amendments/queries to
Paula.thornton@southwark.gov.uk; Beverley.olamijulo@southwark.gov.uk

Name	No of copies	Name	No of copies
Membership		Paula Thornton/Beverley Olamijulo	12
Councillor Jasmine Ali (Chair)	1		
Councillor Darren Merrill	1	Total:	14
Electronic versions (No hard copy)		Dated: 21 February 2023	
Councillor Naima Ali			
Councillor Rachel Bentley			
Councillor Esme Dobson			
Councillor Natasha Ennin			
Councillor Charlie Smith (Vice-Chair)			
Reserve members – electronic copy			
Councillor Portia Mwangangye			
Councillor Sunny Lambe			
Councillor Kimberly McIntosh			
Councillor Joseph Vambe			
Councillor Irina Von Wiese			
Co-opted members			
Mark Kerr (email)			
Rosamond Marshall (email)			
Children's Services - electronic versions (No hard copy)			
David Quirke-Thornton			
Alasdair Smith			
Legal – electronic version (no hard copy)			
Sarah Feasey			