

This paper reviews the current situation and explores difference possible reasons for this high number. LB Southwark currently (20/6/18) has 363 children on a CP plan. This number represents a 10% increase since June 2016 (when there were 330 children on a plan).

1. National context

Over the last 10 years Southwark has consistently had a high number of children on a CP plan, both in relation to England as a whole and statistical neighbours. Interestingly the overall trend in Southwark over these years is slightly downwards.

At the end of March 2009 Southwark had 58 children on a CP plan per 10,000 population of 0-18's. By the end of March 2018 this had decreased to 54.5 children per 10,000. This represents a decrease of 6% over the 10 years.

The population of children on CP plans in England as a whole has risen significantly over a similar period. The adjusted figure for England as a whole had 31 children on a CP plan per 10,000 population of 0-18's at the end of March 2009. By the end of March 2017 the adjusted figure for the whole of England was 43.3 children per 10,000. This is an increase nationally of nearly 40%.

2. What factors could increase the number of children on a CP plan?

These are different possible causes for an increase in CPP numbers:

- i) Increased number of CP investigations (under s.47 of the Children Act 1989) leading to more CP conferences
- ii) Lower threshold in CP conference for making children subject of plans – e.g. children who should be children in need being placed on plan instead of family support being offered.
- iii) Where children are brought to CP conference in large family groups, there is a tendency that if one child is identified as at risk, it is more likely that their siblings may also be made subject of a CP plan.
- iv) Children staying longer on plans due to difficulties in resolving issues, changes of social worker, risk averse decisions
- v) New categories of risk identified e.g. CSE and criminal exploitation (CE), leading to new reasons for children being placed on a CP plan.
- vi) In addition we know that there are often seasonal variations in numbers. Normally the number of children on a plan falls between August and September (probably due to fewer referrals from school and other agencies during the holidays) and rises from April to July, and October to December. This would indicate that CPP numbers may fall slightly after August 2018.

3. Findings

3.1 Increased S47 investigations?

Analysis of both CP investigations and CP plans starting does not appear to show an increased number of S47 investigations, indeed they have slightly reduced in the last 2 years. In recent years the thresholds for such decisions have been more consistently applied and a higher proportion of CP investigations are now being converted into CP plans. It may be that this has impacted on numbers of CP plans (but this would require more detailed analysis of data).

3.2 Lower threshold?

One key factor is that from April 2016 there was a management approach taken that all children who were subject of the pre-proceedings part of the Public Law Outline (PLO) should also be subject to a CP plan. This had not previously been the case. This decision would have had the effect of gradually increasing the numbers of children subject to a plan. Currently there are 26 children subject to the PLO. This represents 26 children who are on a plan who would not previously have been. Following April 16 (CP numbers 299) the CP numbers did increase to a new high of 344 in August 2016.

3.3 Large family groups?

We do not currently have analysis as to whether the number of large family groups have increased CP Plan numbers but it seems unlikely.

3.4 Longer on plans?

Children on a plan over 2 years

Date	Number on a plan >2 years	%	Total CP
June 14	9	2.7%	331
June 16	18	5.4%	335
June 17	18	5.7%	316
June 18	19	5.2%	363

The figures appear to indicate that the number of children over 2 years on a plan, whilst up from 2014, have remained relatively stable in the last 2 years. In looking at the CP plan cohort as a whole, the biggest numerical rise appears to be in children who have been on a plan 6-12 months. This would indicate that the impact of staying longer on a plan has probably not affected the overall number of children on a CP plan.

3.5 New categories of risk?

CSE and CE impact primarily on older young people. An analysis of the proportion of older children subject to a CP plan is set out below.

Date	No of 16+	% of 16+	No of 14+	% of 14+	Total
December 2013	6	2.3%	28	11%	254
June 2014	13	4%	32	9.6%	331
June 2016	13	3%	47	14%	335
June 2017	10	3%	41	13%	316
June 2018	15	4%	54	14.8%	363

From the very rough data above it looks like the proportion of 16+ children on a plan has stayed relatively stable over the last 4 years but there has been a significant increase in the proportion of 14+ children on a plan between 2013 and 2018.

4. Conclusion

All of the above is based on a simple data analysis. More detailed investigation and analysis could be undertaken to develop further depth to the initial conclusions which appear to show as follows:

- It does not appear that the increase in numbers of CP plans is following an increased numbers of CP investigations. However there *may* be a higher proportion of CP investigations leading to CP conferences (this would need further analysis)
- The decision in April 2016 to have all young people subject to the PLO on a CP plan may have increased the length of time on a plan, and may have increased overall numbers of children on a CP plan in subsequent years. This may currently be increasing numbers by around 26 (7%), but may also mean that children remain subject to a CP plan longer where court proceedings are possible.
- The proportion of children aged 14+ subject to a CP plan has increased over the last 5 years. This may relate to more young people coming onto a CP plan due to child sexual exploitation and / or criminal exploitation.