

# Self-Evaluation of Social Work Practice

Children's Social Care

June 2019

# vision

*“Every child deserves the best start in life. We want all children and young people in the borough to grow up in a safe, healthy and happy environment where they have the opportunity to reach their potential.”*

Southwark Council Plan 2018 to 2022

# introduction

Children and families are at the heart of LB Southwark's work. Achieving the best outcomes possible for the children, young people and families that we work with, remains central to our ethos as a council, believing in a fairer future for all, especially those most vulnerable and disadvantaged children and families.

In January 2019, a Focused Visit for Children in Care under the new ILACS framework looked at a range of evidence; performance management; quality assurance activity and children's case records. Meaningful case focussed dialogue with social workers and managers also evaluated the effectiveness of supervision and the range of supports available to social workers, and enabled staff to engage fully with the visit. The outcome was broadly positive with recognition by inspectors of the significant improvements made for children in care since our inspection in March 2017 under the single inspection framework.

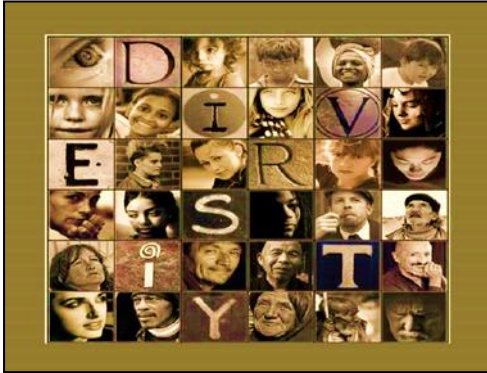
In June 2018, a positive SEND Inspection undertaken by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission examined the effectiveness of support to children and young people with disabilities and special educational needs. This inspection found a generally positive picture of service delivery and a commitment by partners in Southwark to improve outcomes for children and young people.

This self-evaluation summarises the quality and impact of social work practice across our safeguarding and care responsibilities. It originates in the local self-evaluations completed by individual services alongside quality assurance colleagues, and coupled with related plans serves as a key tool to inform service development across the Children's & Families Division throughout 2019/20.

The self evaluation addresses three key questions:

- What do we know about the quality and impact of social work practice
- How do we know it?
- What our plans are for the next 12 months to maintain or improve practice?

# local context



Southwark is **densely populated** with the ninth-highest population density in England and Wales at 10,887 residents per square kilometre, nearly twice as much as the London average of 5,613. The median age in Southwark is 32.9 years but approximately 64,000 children and young people or 20.5% of the population are under the age of 18. 60.6% of residents were born in the UK, with 29.1% of residents born outside the EU.

Southwark is an **ethnically and culturally diverse borough**. 54% of our population is of white ethnicity, 25% are black and 11% of Asian heritage with 10% made up of other ethnic communities. Children and young people from minority communities however account for 64.8% of all children living in Southwark, compared with a national average of 20.7%. Children and young people from Black African and Black Caribbean backgrounds form the largest minority ethnic communities. Between the 2001 and 2011 censuses, the number of people who identified as Christian fell to 52.5% from 61.6%. Muslims are the next highest faith community at 8.5%. A further 8.5% did not state a religion and a sizeable 26.7% identified as having no religion.



Over **120 languages are spoken** in our schools and the proportion of children & young people who speak English as an additional language In primary schools is 43.8% compared to national average of 21.1%. In Secondary schools it is 34.6% compared to the national average at 16.6%. English is a secondary language in 11% of households.

The Indices of Deprivation 2015 measures Southwark as the **40<sup>th</sup> most deprived local authority area** relative to all 326 local authorities with around 15,000 (25%) aged under 16 living in low income families. The proportion of children in low income households is 30.3% and 43.7% of households live in rented social housing. There are 11,945 lone parent households with dependent children

The 2018 census data showed **42.2% of our pupils are eligible for the deprivation pupil premium** compared to an England figure of 25.7% and the proportion of children entitled to free school meals in primary schools and nurseries is 19.6%. This compares to the national average of 13.7% whilst in secondary schools the proportion entitled to free school meals is higher still at 25.1% compared to the national average of 12.4



# progress and continuing support

## Strengths and developments

The Cabinet and **Council Plan 2018-22** has: maintained investment in frontline services for children's safeguarding and care; commitment to care leavers (no Council Tax – July 2018); children's mental health (£2m investment); and early intervention (commitment to maintaining Children's Centres)

Involved and passionate **Lead Member**, knowledgeable and experienced, championing the cause of children across the spectrum but particularly those in care and care leavers through Corporate Parenting

Focus across early help, youth justice and community safety on prevention and strong engagement with our communities, parents, carers and young people across the council and multi-agency partners. Visible through **Keeping Families Strong** strategy and **Extended Learning Review** undertaken by the Home Office Violence and Vulnerability Unit

Constructive **SEND inspection** (June 2018) with positive messages around early identification of need, partnership working and children in care.

Encouraging **Focused Visit on Children in Care** (January 2019) with excellent engagement by staff and a narrative that highlighted strong relationships with young people, good partnership working and *"drive and determination in sustaining and improving outcomes for children in care"*

**All Age Disability Service** live from April 2019 with development of services and approaches incorporating better understanding of the life long journey for those with disability

Stable and consistent **senior management team** continuing to promote and develop culture of high support and high challenge, enabling learning and development while keeping children and families at the centre

**Young people** continuing to play a significant role in our service development and recruitment with strong voices through SpeakerBox and Peer Navigators

## Areas for continued development

The **vulnerability of young people** to all forms of exploitation needs development, building on our strong partnership approach with multi-agency and council partners, to implement recommendations from **Extended Learning Review** undertaken by the Home Office Violence and Vulnerability Unit

Embedding the "Family" model across **Family Early Help** Service rolling out systematically increased YOS diversionary activity addressing serious youth violence, particularly knife crime

Reappraisal of our **practice model and forward plans** building on highly successful Practitioner Gathering *Looking Back, Looking Forward*, reviewing 5 years since the introduction **Social Work Matters** practice model

Implementation of **development plans** including transformation of Care Leaving Services; delivery of Sufficiency Strategy; formation of Partnership Southwark with the Council and NHS for greater impact on supporting earlier help for families (Keeping Families Strong) alongside further development of Access to Resources approach

A refreshed programme of continuous improvement and professional development through a Practice Development Unit lead by a newly appointed **Principal Social Worker** leading an ambitious ASYE and student programme

Further developing value gained from **dedicated practice support roles** with: enhanced intelligence and tracking from the CSE & Missing Co-ordinator; valued and impactful direct supports to families through the Family Support Workers; and desk-side system supports to social workers through Data Practice Co-ordinators

Leading on development of **Adopt London South**, Regional Adoption Agency with 9 local authorities, hosted by Southwark, going live 1<sup>st</sup> July 2019

**what we know about the quality of  
front line social work practice**

**how we know it**

**our plans for the next 12 months to  
maintain or improve practice**

# quality and performance framework

Our Quality and Performance Framework sets out our areas of focus and schedules for audit and observation over an annual cycle. The themes are developed from:

- service and strategic self-assessments
- learning from internal and external reviews and inspection
- responses to local and national priorities

The Framework is delivered through a programme of:

- low volume case file audits including conversations with practitioners
- high volume focused thematic audits on practice areas and processes
- observation of staff in relation to practice areas and processes

Performance is reported against through weekly and monthly dashboards, with service-level capacity to report more frequently. The data visualisation contained within the self evaluation is taken from our business as usual performance dashboard.

Dedicated support within the Management Information Unit provides capacity to undertake in-depth analysis of emerging and indicative themes from practice.

The quality and impact of social work practice is gathered and assessed in five broad strands:

- **Analysis** of in year data and audit activity
- **Intelligence** generated from Quality Assurance Leads, managers and Quality and Performance Service, Practice Educators and Principal Social Worker
- **Casework scrutiny** through capitalising on opportunities such as taskforces, panels, escalations and reviews
- **Views** gathered from young people (Speakerbox); parents and carers (surveys and groups); complaints, compliments and representations
- **Reviews** undertaken internally, commissioned externally or provided through inspection

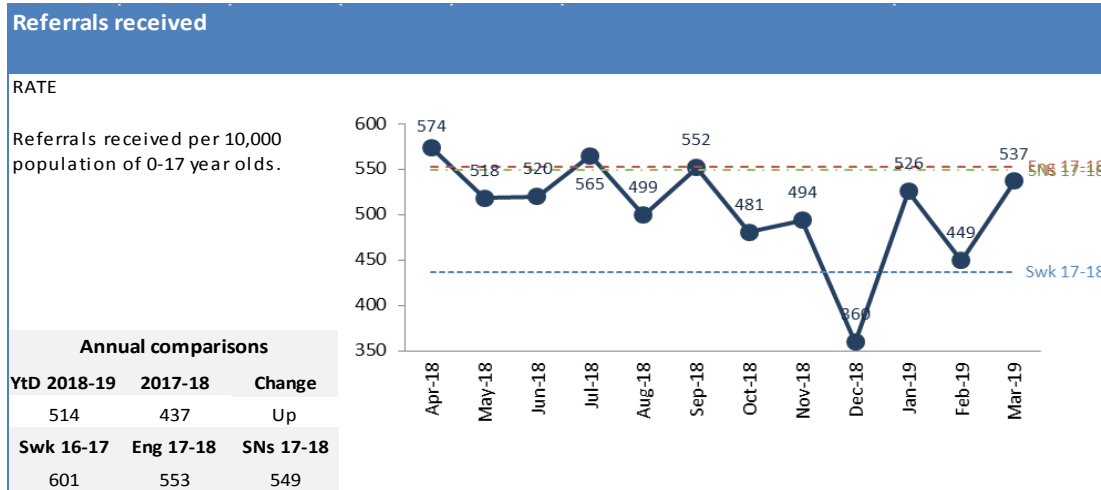
Standard and localised tools have been developed to support dialogue and feedback with social workers. One of our aspirations in 2019/20 is to modify the dialogue with practitioners to support an energising audit conversation about their purpose and impact when working with families.

Our emphasis remains on identifying areas of strength, areas for development and remedial action, and using the five different strands above as avenues for supportive critical reflection and development for our staff.

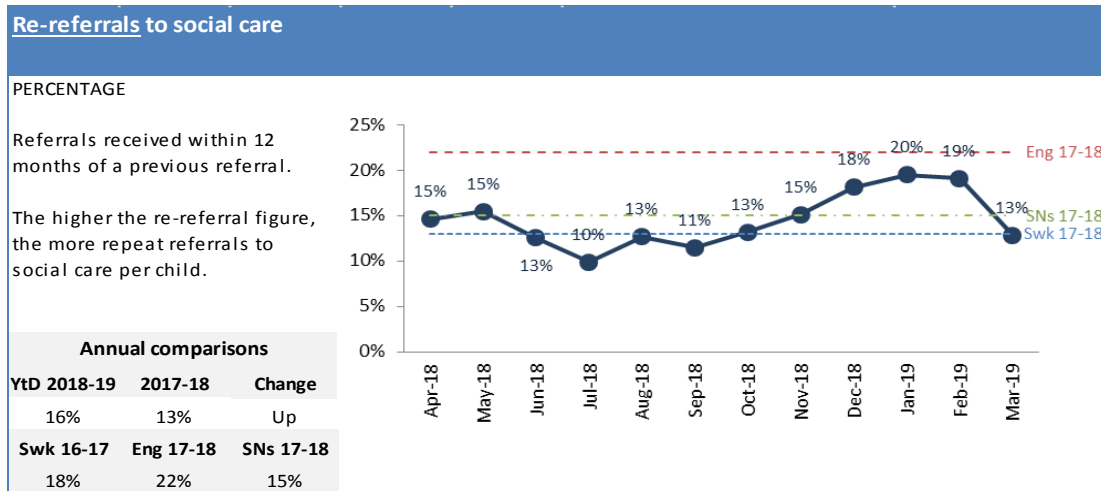
# front door

## key performance indicators

(provisional 2018/19)



Referrals in 2018/19 have shown an increase of 18% from 437 to 514 per 10,000. This has brought us more in line with England and statistical neighbour averages and reflects continuing work around threshold management and application. Workflow processes have been improved allowing cases below social care threshold to be stepped down to Family Early Help.



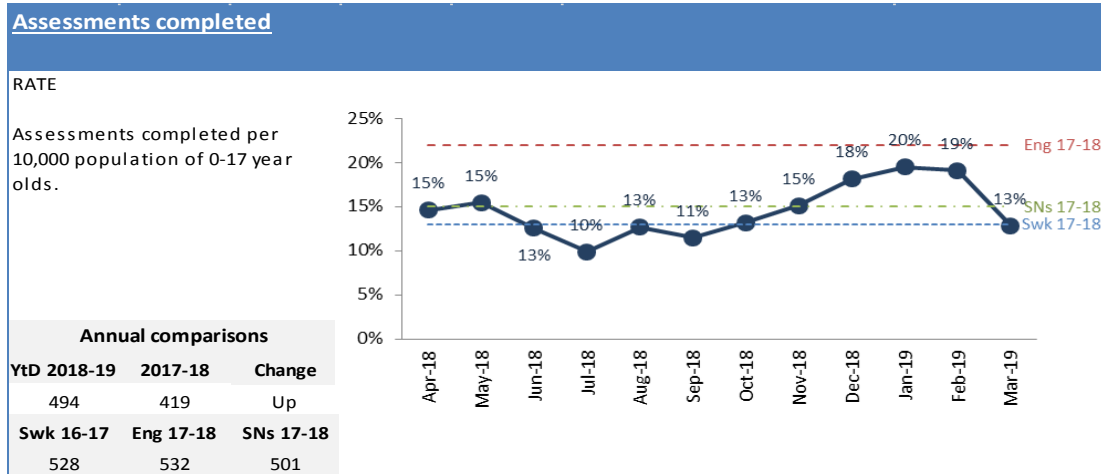
Re-referrals within 12 months in 2018/19 have seen a small increase of 3%. Recent activity suggests this is again reducing but is an area we are exploring further to understand this in more depth given the rise over the course of the year and peak at 20%.



# front door

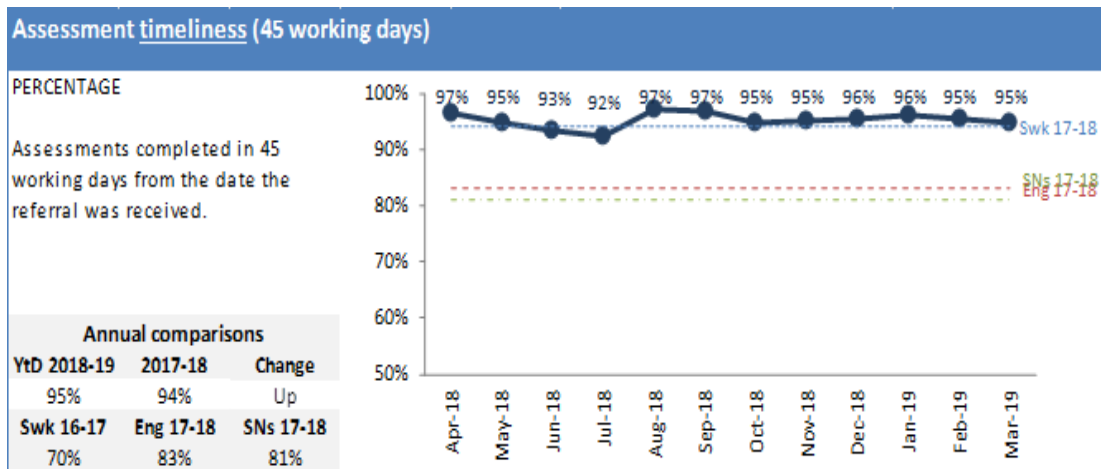
## key performance indicators

(provisional 2018/19)



Assessments completed in 2018/19 have shown an increase of 18% from 419 to 494 per 10,000. This brings us more in line with statistical neighbours and a little below England.

There is no single reason for the increase in demand, however it is in-line with the increase in referrals. Based on factors recorded within the assessment the most significant change is domestic abuse which has risen from 40% to 60% of all assessments.



Assessment timeliness has continued to be good at 95% within 45 days making this strong performance despite the increase in volume.

This is an area that we will consider further over 2019/20. For example asking ourselves whether more assessments should finish earlier than 45 days and also test further how this relates to quality.

# front door

## What we know about the quality and impact of social work practice *(how do we know?)*

The **MASH** continues to support decision making in a timely way for children through information sharing with a wide range of partners. More work is needed to maximise information from all agencies *(review)*

**Thresholds** are used appropriately to support decision making by social care managers. We need to promote learning of officers to develop greater consistency of decision making *(review)*

**Strategy meetings** lead to timely, effective and proportionate decisions and investigation and safeguarding plans. Multi agency information and children's views and experiences are used to inform judgments but enabling more schools to contribute would be beneficial *(analysis and intelligence)*

**Children are seen** in a timely way and **assessments** begin promptly and are almost always completed within 45 days *(performance data and analysis)*

High quality **interventions** are offered quickly in the assessment process. **Direct work** is a strength and this work helps when it is most needed, addresses risks and mitigates the likelihood of them escalating *(casework scrutiny and intelligence)*

**Safety planning** is embedded in practice and undertaken early with families enabling them to set realistic goals and reduce concerns and risk *(casework scrutiny and intelligence)*

Social workers are persistent in **engaging families** using positive, creative techniques that develop trusting relationships with parents. The Keeping Family Together (KFT) team continues to work intensively and effectively to reduce the need for children to enter care *(casework scrutiny & intelligence)*

Families access help at the right time through improved **step up /step-down** processes between Tier 3 Children's Social Care Services and Family Early Help

## Our plans for the next 12 months to maintain or improve practice

Enhance the '**Team Around the School**' to include key partners in YOS, Children's Social Care, St Giles & CAMHS to manage risk and reduce exclusions enabling families to get the right help earlier

Further develop **management oversight** and consistency of decision making in the MASH through more effective use of quality assurance systems, partner relationships and learning opportunities

Roll out **training and workshops to partner agencies** on refreshed 2019 Threshold of Need Document to improve multi-agency understanding of thresholds and parental consent

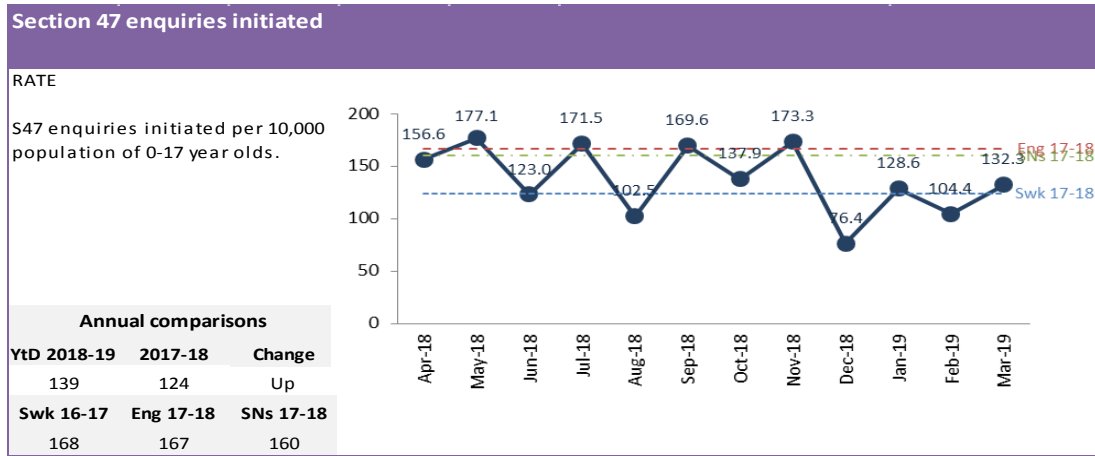
Continue **supportive management** and **manageable caseloads** for social workers so children and families continue to receive the right protective response from Assessment & Intervention Service

Review **approaches to helping families** to ensure all section 47 investigations are necessary and whether fast tracking young people and families to services may produce better outcomes sooner

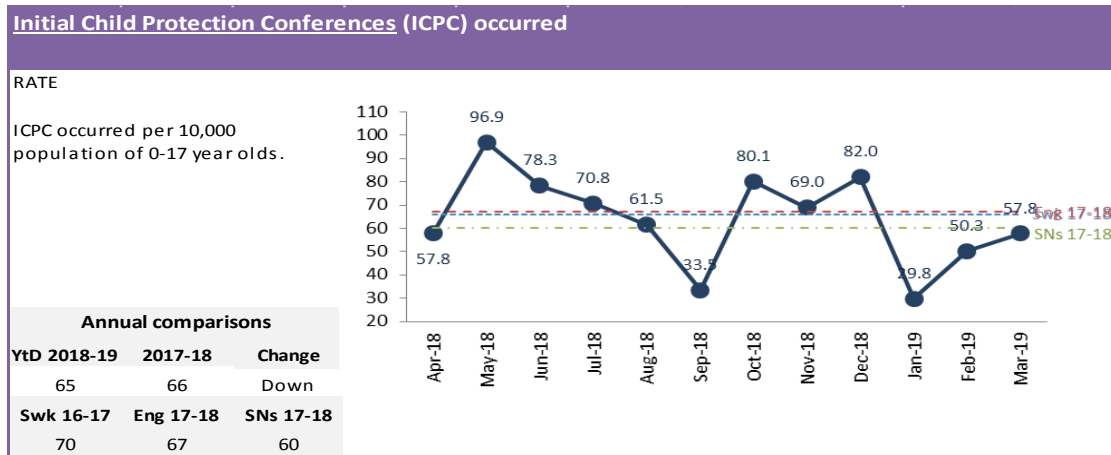
Further develop practice in **strategy meetings** to improve opportunities for schools and other non co-located agencies to contribute through better use of technology supported by a virtual meeting facility

Further develop focus on **children being seen**, their views and experiences through changes to Mosaic recording practice and management oversight of this

# child protection key performance indicators (provisional 2018/19)

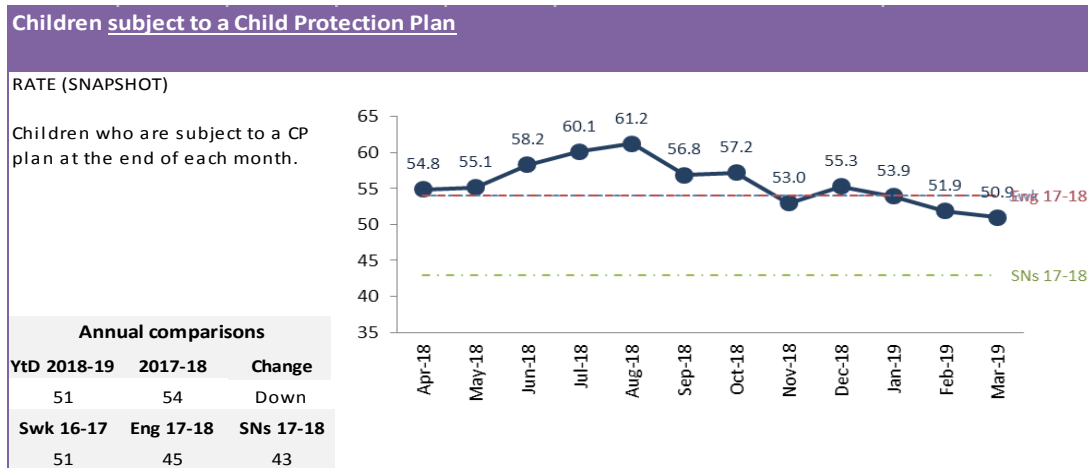


Section 47 investigations over 2018/19 have risen 12% to 139 per 10,000 bringing us nearer to statistical neighbours and England average. This reflects the rise we have seen in referrals and assessments over the last 12 months. It is helpful to see these changes have brought us nearer to comparators not further away.

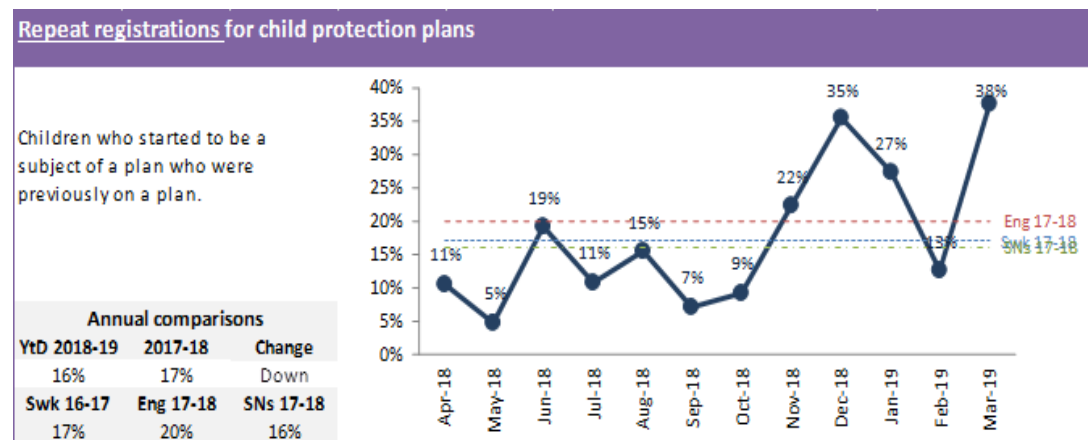


ICPCs per 10,000 as an average over 2018/19 have remained consistent. Setting this against the 12% increase in section 47 investigations we are planning further work to ensure only those families that need to be are subject to child protection investigation processes.

# child protection key performance indicators (provisional 2018/19)



The number of children subject to CP plans per 10,000 during 2018/19 decreased 3% over the course of the year. This is significantly higher than statistical neighbours. There is ongoing scrutiny to review children who have been subject to a CP plan for more than 18 months which helps to explain the decrease of that cohort over the year. There remain challenges for example, Court's making children subject to Supervision Orders rather than Care Orders, which can lead to prolonged periods on CP plans.



Children who have had more than one period subject to a CP Plan is at 16% which is a slight reduction on last year's figure and in line with statistical neighbours. The two main categories of abuse are neglect and emotional abuse, however emotional abuse as a category increases at the point of review conference from 43% to 50%. This relates to work that takes place once a child is subject to a CP plan of physical harm or neglect where characteristics associated with emotional abuse sometimes emerge.

# children in need and subject to a child protection plan

## What we know about the quality and impact of social work practice

*(how do we know?)*

**Social workers** are confident, reflective and well supported. They know their children well and undertake good quality work that is making a difference *(casework scrutiny and intelligence)*

**Direct work** with children and young people is a strength with a wide range of tools used. Social workers don't always fully record this, and in some areas could improve the focus of their direct work

Group **supervision** continues to support a persistent and reflective approach to families, particularly those hard to engage. Continuing attention is important to ensure the child is always at the centre and recording is consistent *(casework scrutiny, intelligence and analysis)*

**Child in need plans** are of good quality, with clear actions although some practice in this area could benefit from greater purposefulness *(review)*

Skilled non-social work professionals enhance **interventions**. Family support workers provide targeted practical help. Specialist IDVA roles embedded in teams have also shown positive impact. Clinical practitioners continue to support high quality casework *(casework scrutiny, views and reviews)*

**Child protection plans** are of good quality, making clear the multi-agency support and what parents or young people need to do. Children are mostly held at the right threshold but some need escalation to PLO earlier *(review, intelligence, and analysis)*

At **pre-proceedings** stage, effective and timely planning, support and decision-making happens. **Care proceedings** are well managed with appropriate consideration of family options through strengthened FGC and SGO Services *(casework scrutiny and analysis)*

## Our plans for the next 12 months to maintain or improve practice

Enhance **management oversight** and consistency of practice through more effective use of the performance indicators and quality assurance systems

Improve the recording and focus of **direct work** more clearly linking to purpose of statutory involvement

Develop more emphasis on **outcome-focused work** and child's experience through practice development work supported by the Principal Social Worker

Develop the **family support offer** to include more specialist intensive work with families where neglect issues are heightened due to domestic abuse, mental health and substance misuse issues

Undertake and implement findings of review of tracking systems and intervention approaches for **neglect** to particularly catch those children who travel between categories of help particularly: children in need; child protection; and Supervision Orders

Further develop family minded **practice approaches** particularly the use and positioning of FGCs to provide more and earlier opportunities for family lead help and plans, as well as strengthening SGOs

Undertake and implement findings of a review into reducing numbers of **adoptions** and increasing numbers of **SGOs** to ensure all children are benefitting from these opportunities if appropriate

Undertake and implement findings of a review of safeguarding practices in **All Age Disability** Service following establishment of the service in April 2019 to support service consolidation and development

# vulnerable adolescents

## What we know about the quality and impact of social work practice *(how do we know?)*

Current **partnership working** from Family Early Help, Police, YOS, ART, Housing, Schools & CAMHS is strong and delivering a skilled response to young people at heightened risk within a contextual safeguarding frame *(casework scrutiny, analysis and intelligence)*

Dedicated **resource targeted to missing from care** including enhanced tracking, improved RHI offer and strong intelligence links, has greatly increased understanding of missing patterns and behaviour but timeliness of some RHIs needs improving *(casework scrutiny and intelligence)*

Strong **understanding of missing** cohort has led to detailed mapping alongside creative engagement to intervene, disrupt and manage risk, making a good impact on practice and young people's safety *(intelligence)*

**Strategy meetings** work well although quality needs development in some areas. **Direct work** is used well, supported by clinical practitioners, to make engagement more meaningful, promote insight and increase safety *(casework scrutiny and review)*

Dedicated support at edge of care from **Keeping Families Together** team continues to show impact and reduces the need for children to be in care including supporting well-timed reunification and increasing safety *(casework scrutiny and review)*

The system and resources around **children missing education** work well to support and challenge young people, families and professionals *(review)*

There is good, persistent work to reach **young care leavers**, recognising their continuing vulnerability into adulthood *(case scrutiny and review)*

## Our plans for the next 12 months to maintain or improve practice

In partnership with multi-agency and council colleagues implement recommendations from **Extended Learning Review** undertaken by the Home Office Violence and Vulnerability Unit

Develop **MASE** to increase its oversight of child criminal exploitation. Further develop the role and capacity of the **CSE / Missing Lead** to support this multi-agency work

Undertake programme of development to improve quality of **strategy meetings** and more dynamic use of safety plans

Build on strengths of **resource targeted at missing from care** to ensure RHI offer has full reach. Develop peer approaches to the RHI offer considering SpeakerBox and YOS Peer Navigators

Review approaches to **working with adolescents** to identify ways in which our response and approach can be strengthened

Strengthen connectivity between **YOS and Care Services** to ensure young people of mutual concern receive more targeted, joined-up interventions.

Work with the **Virtual School and Family Early Help and Youth Justice Services** to support restorative responses in school settings to reduce exclusion of young people with heightened vulnerability

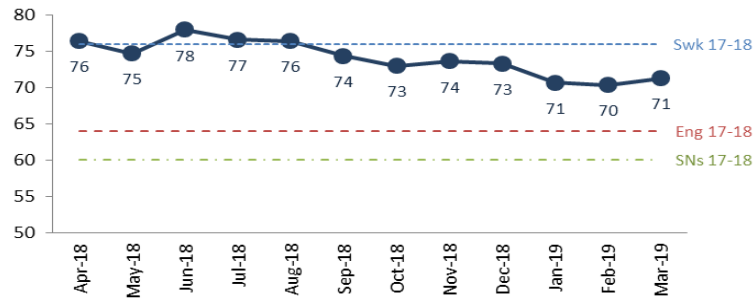
Continue to develop **placement sufficiency** for increased adolescent placement options particularly around high needs

# children in care key performance indicators (provisional 2018/19)

## Children looked after

### RATE (SNAPSHOT)

Children who are looked after at the end of each month.



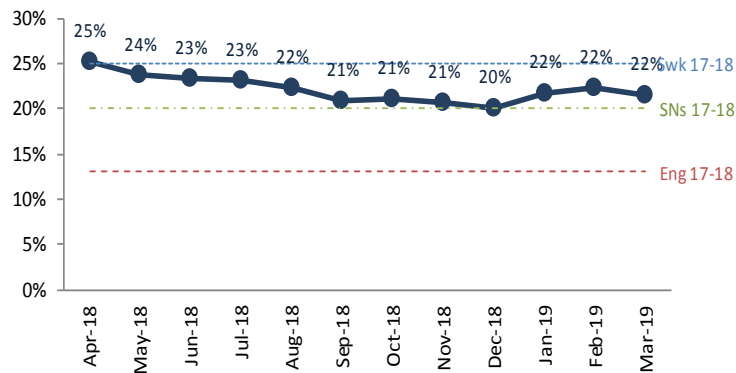
### Annual comparisons

YtD 2018-19	2017-18	Change
71	76	Down
Swk 16-17	Eng 17-18	SNs 17-18
79	64	60

The number of children in care over 2018/19 has reduced by 5% per 10,000. The number of UASCs has remained constant between 45 and 50 however as a proportion of the care population they have risen to 12%. This change is explained by our continuing work to reduce the need for children to be in care through targeted support approach (KFT and Clinical Service) and greater use of FGCs.

## Children looked after placed out of borough and more than 20 miles from home

### SNAPSHOT PERCENTAGE



### Annual comparisons

YtD 2018-19	2017-18	Change
22%	25%	Down
Swk 16-17	Eng 17-18	SNs 17-18
27%	13%	20%

The proportion of our children in care placed far from the borough has reduced by 3% over 2019/20. This is much nearer statutory neighbours which are London boroughs with similar characteristics to ourselves. This reduction has been supported by our reducing need to use residential care and Access to Resources Team focusing more on identifying placements closer to the borough where young people are better able to benefit from local services and we provide more support around placement stability.

# children in care

## What we know about the quality and impact of social work practice *(how do we know?)*

**Social workers** know their young people and talk about them with genuine warmth and care. This enables children to contribute to planning for their future through the strengths of the relationships they built. Social workers undertake purposeful work with children including sensitive life story work (*casework scrutiny, analysis, views review*)

Social workers are creative and go to added lengths to maintain **contact** with parents and family members. This is articulated well in plans and reviewed regularly (*review*)

The **Access to Resources** Team has continued to develop a vigorous approach to identifying the right placements for children, nearer to the borough with better support (*casework scrutiny, analysis and review*)

There is effective and dedicated resource for **children missing from care** that support the service in managing risk well with excellent multi-agency partnership engagement (*see vulnerable adolescent section above*)

**Permanence planning** is consistently stronger while still having further to go to consolidate and build on improvements (*see permanence section below*)

Children benefit from **stability of social work relationship** with a very stable staff group within the children in care service (*casework scrutiny*)

Children benefit from regular **looked after children's reviews** from consistent Independent Reviewing Officers who have long term involvement. Some improvement is needed in timeliness (*analysis and review*)

Effective **transition planning** to leaving care is timely with consistent allocation from 16 in most cases and better transition planning between All Age Disability Service as well as Adult Services (*case scrutiny*)

## Our plans for the next 12 months to maintain or improve practice

Continue to develop **management oversight** to ensure all improvements are consolidated and built on maximising use of management information and quality assurance systems

**Access to Resources** Team to continue to work with teams around improving placement request referrals to reflect strengths-based approaches that support better placement matching

**Access to Resources** Team to continue to work to deliver improved placement sufficiency with Commissioning Division and commissioned providers

Continue to work with the Virtual School to provide support and interventions for the **education** of children in care helped through roll-out of E-PEPs

Develop work with the YOS and other partners to support children in care who are at increased vulnerability from **criminal and sexual exploitation** activity

Work with the Clinical Service and CAMHS to provide an holistic response to the growing **emotional and mental health needs** of children in care

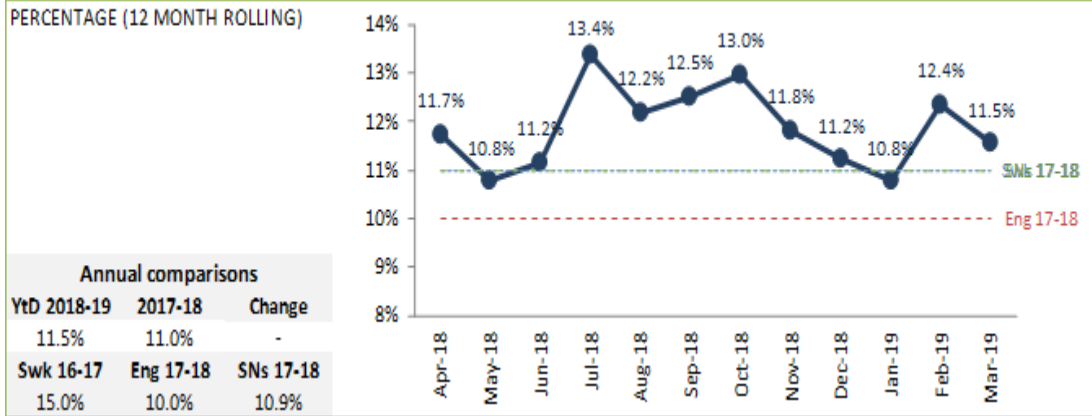
Explore Foster Carers being recruited for **late care entrants** to provide option of supported living in family settings outside of "staying put" arrangements

To work with Speakerbox to broaden **participation** opportunities to younger children in care and continue to include young people in recruitment processes.



# children in care key performance indicators (provisional 2018/19)

## Short term placement stability (3+ placements in the year)

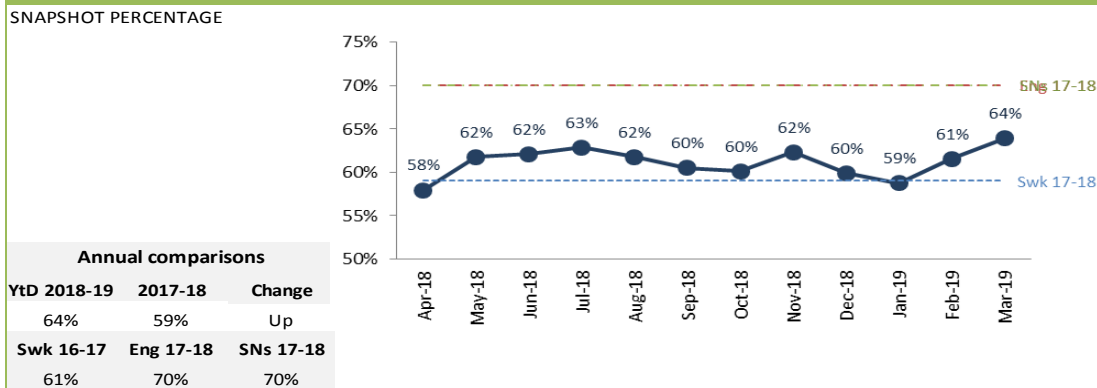


Short term stability over 2018/19 remains stable which is slightly above statistical neighbours and England averages. This is a consolidation of stable performance which has historically been higher.

Long term stability has risen 5% over 2018/19 and is continuing to rise. This is below statutory neighbours and England.

Since January 2019 a Stability Taskforce has met to oversee the strategic intention to sustainably improve both stability measures but particularly long term stability.

## Long term placement stability (same placement for 2+ years)



A key part of this is the continuing development of a strong child-centred Access to Resources Team sourcing well matched placements with resilience or a wider spread of skills is enabling young people to be maintained or in some cases returned to fostering environments. Challenge processes that require stability meetings to be held before placements change also allow for reflection or added support that has enabled more placements to be sustained.

# permanence

## What we know about the quality and impact of social work practice

*(how do we know?)*

When plan is **reunification** of children who have been in care a while, risks are well understood and appropriate action is taken to reduce these risks. These plans proceed at a pace consistent with the child's needs *(review)*

Increased formal **matching** for children in **long term foster care** placements with 20 matched in 2018/19 and continuing focus on strengthening this area of practice *(analysis, intelligence, casework scrutiny)*

**Access to Resources** Team (ART) continue to lead rigorous approach to placement quality. Placements demonstrate better matching between children's identified needs and the capacity of carers to meet those needs, supported by better placement referral information

Sustained improvement to **short term stability**, with more children living closer to home and able to benefit from local services *(analysis)*

Improvements in **long term stability** showing impact of continuing focus on this area particularly greater emphasis on pro-active stability meetings, rather than a reactive disruption approach *(analysis)*

Reduced use of **residential care** but where necessary it is of higher quality with clear outcomes and expectations set *(analysis)*

Evidenced impact from greater use of **Family Group Conferences** in particular Life Longs Links on the lives of children, their story, identity, social capital and increased networks *(analysis, intelligence and casework scrutiny)*

## Our plans for the next 12 months to maintain or improve practice

Develop renewed practice model for **reunification** work, based on NSPCC approach, to support work with children returning to families care building on learning through successful reunification work, Family Group Conferencing and better understanding of young people and family voices

Roll out **matching best practice approach** supported by matching template across all Care and Permanence Services

Consolidate and develop management oversight via **Permanence Tracking Strategy** for long term foster care to provide support and challenge to delay

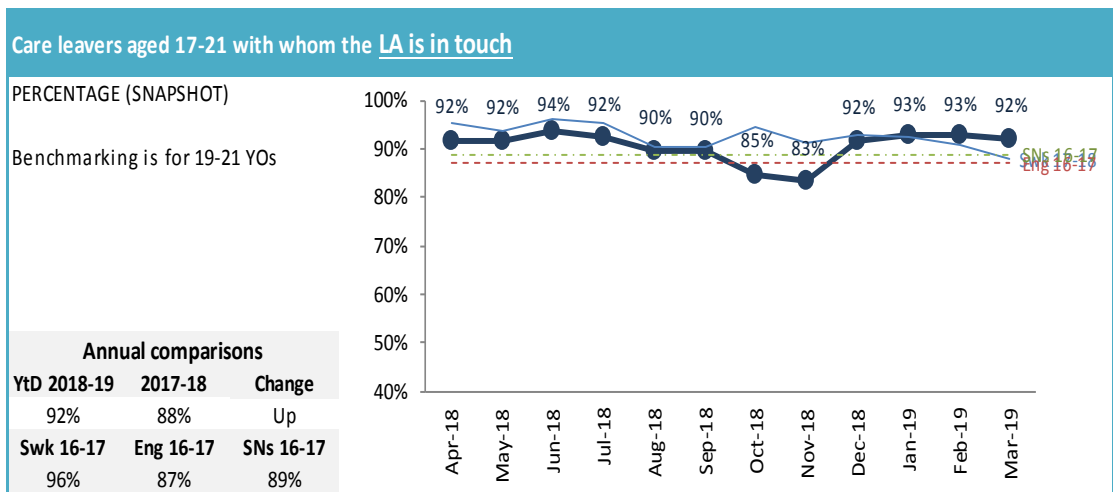
Continue focus on **placement stability** through Director lead Stability Taskforce to continue to build on improvement in this area

Review work with London local authorities to design a shared framework for **high quality fostering (IFA) and residential care provision**

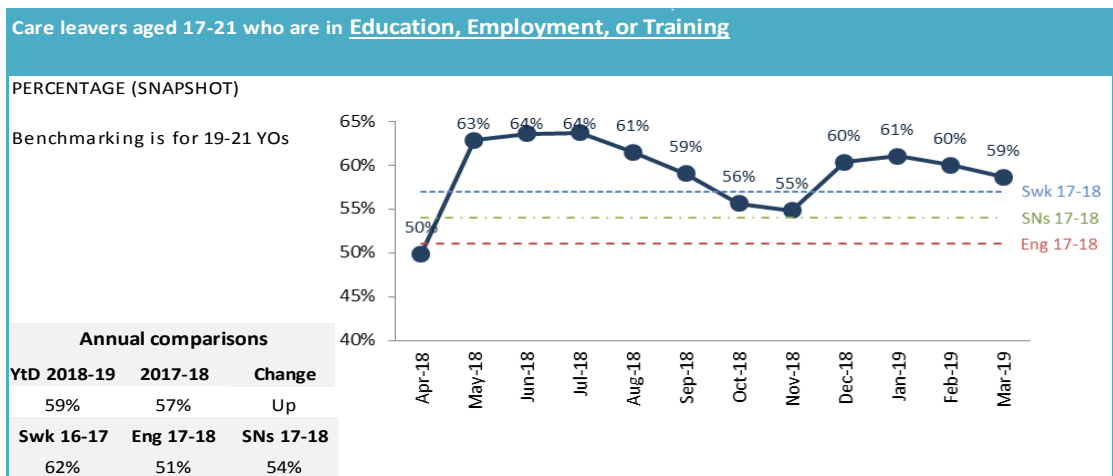
Undertake and implement findings of a review into reducing numbers of **adoptions** and increasing numbers of **SGOs** to ensure all children are benefitting from these opportunities if appropriate

Undertake and implement findings from review into **friends and family practice** to ensure all children are benefitting from these opportunities if appropriate and work with extended family and networks.

# care leavers key performance indicators (provisional 2018/19)



Care leavers with whom we are in touch has risen over 2019/19 by 4% placing us significantly higher than statutory neighbours and England. This reflects our dedicated approach and investment in this area. We have a good understanding of those young people who we are not in touch with and continue to work to engage them through assertive outreach and local offer development.



Care Leavers who are engaged in employment, education or training activities when they get to 21 years old has increased 2% over the last 12 months to 59%. This is significantly above England and a little above statutory neighbours. It is an area of high focus and has been impacted by the rise in care leavers with whom we are in touch who have often experienced more difficulties in this area. This is a Council Priority to improve for 2019/20.

# care leavers

## What we know about the quality and impact of social work practice

*(how do we know?)*

**Social workers and personal advisers** know their young people well and are highly committed to supporting them. There is an improved and growing understanding of good practice and strong partnership working (*analysis and casework scrutiny*)

The quality of **pathway planning** is improving and managers are providing greater challenge to practitioners and quality assurance of such plans. The quality remains variable particularly with reviews post 18 (*casework scrutiny and review*)

Some **visit records** for care leavers are very good, clearly structured addressing key areas and actions taken to progress identified issues, but this is not consistent in all cases (*analysis, casework scrutiny and review*)

There is effective and dedicated resource for **care leavers** that supports the service in managing risk well with excellent multi-agency partnership engagement (*see vulnerable adolescent section above*)

Work with **unaccompanied asylum seeking young people** is good, benefitting from a specialist manager and social worker upskilling staff around age assessments, HRAs alongside work with the Young Migrants Project to regularise status sooner (*intelligence and casework scrutiny*)

Care Leavers are increasingly involved in **co-designing** and **co-delivering** services for example group work activities; local offer content and communication; and recruitment panels for Care Leaver Service workers as well as senior management appointments (*intelligence, views*)

The **Local Offer** has been completed and shared with all care leavers and has been welcomed by them (*views*)

## Our plans for the next 12 months to maintain or improve practice

Enhance **management oversight** and consistency of practice through more effective use of management information and quality assurance systems

Improve the quality of **pathway plans** particularly in relation to reviews post 18 through workshops and increased practitioner and management accountability

Co-design a new **pathway plan** and approach to pathway planning with young people and workers, building on learning from pilot approach, for a more meaningful plan for young people

Continue to develop the **Corporate Parent offer** across the council to offer mentoring, apprenticeship and internship opportunities for care leavers building social capital

Further develop our approach to **“returnees”** up to 25, embedding the expectations of the Children and Social Work Act 2017

Implement new commissioned **accommodation and support services** for care leavers from 1<sup>st</sup> July, raising the quality of suitable accommodation and experience of young people in

Implement and evaluate **Experienced Practitioner roles** to deliver and facilitate intensive interventions in specific areas where specialist professional knowledge and expertise has been identified as essential to improving outcomes for care leavers: Youth / Group Work, Substance Misuse, Mental Health, Young Women, Housing / Homelessness.

To further develop and promote the **Local Offer**, co-designing this with young people to ensure accessibility and availability through different forms of media including the development of our pilot website.

# Voices

## Children and young people

**Speakerbox**, our Children in Care Council continues to shape practice and influence decision making with a seat at both the Corporate Parenting Committee and Southwark Safeguarding Children Board.

During 2018/19 Speakerbox made a short film - **Bridging the Gap** developed through a series of workshops that explored children and young people's relationships with their social workers. This has been used widely to help everyone reflect on the importance of relationships from the young persons perspective.

**Peer Navigators** are an amazing group of young people who have successfully completed their statutory contact with the YOS and have been trained in communication skills and trauma awareness. As well as being effective peer mentors they have engaged with different services and training events as well as the Councils Serious Youth Violence Panel to give a strong perspective on being a young person in Southwark.

Speakerbox and Peer Navigators were a central feature of the **Practitioner Gathering (March 2019)** placing the experience of young people at the centre of our work

Young people are a key part of **recruitment activity** and many permanent roles have young people involved in the interview process including, for example, recent interviews for personal advisors and experienced practitioners in the Care Leavers Service all involved a young people's panel.

**Bright Spots**, the Coram and University of Bristol independent survey of subjective wellbeing was conducted in 2018. 38% of the child in care population responded. Key recommendations for improvement were integrated into the Care Service Business Plan 2019-20

## Parents and carers

An increasing aspect of our work ensures the voice of parents and carers is used alongside that of children and young people to measure impact as well as influence what we do and how we do it. Among the **key groups** working in this space are Southwark Pause, Mum's Supportive Group, Southwark Fathers Group, Grandparents' Plus who all alongside their core purpose articulate the voice of parents and carers.

Examples of the **work they have been involved in** include: consultation around the redesign of early help services during 2018/19; interviewing senior management appointments jointly with young people; influencing practice through speaking at the Practitioner Gathering (March 2019)

**Feedback surveys** are conducted periodically as part of the case closure in our Assessment and Intervention Service and routinely during the CP Conference QA process. These highlight improved responsiveness around giving information and how to make complaints. The significant majority of feedback forms received are positive about the service delivered.

A growing feature in measuring our impact are **parent testimonies** as part of the Parenting Programme graduation, which often gives powerful feedback on the impact of the programme on parents and their relationships with their children.

This year, with help from the Family Rights Group, we co-designed a **Parent Council** to ensure listening to families is strengthened in our service design and improvement work and over 2019/20 we hope to develop the impact of this including peer advocacy.

## Annual Complaints Report 2018/19

We **take complaints seriously** and we find generally service users and stakeholders are not complaining about the services which are available to them, or their entitlements. Complaints are low in relation to the quality of our services or service providers but are none the less taken very seriously.

Overall there was a **reduction in the number of complaints** during 2019/20 particularly in relation to those that progressed to Stage 2 indicating a better approach to early resolution. There was a threefold rise in the number of compliments received which supports a more relational way to approach concerns being developed across all services.

Analysis of the complaints investigated shows **communication** as the underlying factor in most complaints. For example where relationship breakdown is indicated as a cause, the complaint has almost always been made following a chain of communication which has not been prompt and sufficiently explanatory in the view of the complainant. This is important learning that has been considered by all services and given the vulnerability of the client group and focus on relationship based work something that will understandably need continuing work.

Scrutiny and learning is undertaken in each complaint to draw out what we may have been able to influence or change. We continue to promote the value in a considered phone call or face-to-face meeting, to ensure our relationships remain effective, do not give rise to a loss of trust, and a formal complaint. Our culture is open and accountable – we apologise if we get things wrong, we put them right and learn from feedback.

## Social Workers

Social workers views have been gained through our staff survey, active Practitioners Forum and through the work of the Principal Social Worker, newly appointed in January 2019.

Our **Practitioners Forum** continues to be a strong voice for practice with a focus on continued co-ownership of the practice framework, to evolve it so it is more driven by practice evidence, to best support the changing needs of our young people and families. This is alongside a strong desire to develop more outcome focused practice approaches and use the forum as place to influence policy, strategy and procedures. This was reinforced by co-producing and delivering an energising Practitioner Gathering (March 2019) **Looking Back, Looking Forward** which involved practitioners at all levels reviewing the impact of the *Social Work Matters* and engaging with future planning on how we will work with children, young people and families over the next five years.

The forum (and wider staff groups) have identified **future areas of focus** to include greater cohesion and consistency in induction, input to training and procedural updates in working with contextual harm, enhancing the reflective quality of group supervision, and seeking to further ongoing professional development opportunities in particular expanding and strengthening a 'coaching culture' throughout the department.

Social workers overall feel **well supported** with particular keenness to continue to further their understanding and use of systemic practice. They report positively of the support of the Clinical Service and the impact this has on their practice and their outcomes for families. They are excited about opportunities co-location and modern technology may bring being keenly involved in plans for a new building for Children's Services in 2021.

# for more information

**David Quirke-Thornton**

0207 525 3289

Strategic Director, Children's & Adults Service

[david.quirke-thornton@southwark.gov.uk](mailto:david.quirke-thornton@southwark.gov.uk)

(Director of Children's Services)

**Alasdair Smith**

0207 525 0654

Director, Children & Families

[alasdair.smith@southwark.gov.uk](mailto:alasdair.smith@southwark.gov.uk)

**Tom Stevenson**

0207 525 3816

Assistant Director, Quality & Performance Improvement

[tom.stevenson@southwark.gov.uk](mailto:tom.stevenson@southwark.gov.uk)

