

Croydon Children in Care & Care Experienced Young People - Market Position Statement 2025- 2027

Introduction

We have a CLA & CEYA Sufficiency Strategy [Corporate Parenting & Care Leaver Strategy](#) that shapes and informs our service development. This strategy was agreed through data analysis of our looked after population; consultation with stakeholders; research of the process and practices for sourcing appropriate accommodation; and focused decision making on how to improve outcomes for children who are looked after. We are now able to set out our Market Position Statement (MPS) to effectively communicate our vision for the strategic commissioning of placements to the market, which is to meet our Sufficiency Duty by increasing placement choice and enable good matching, through:

- shaping our internal services;
- working in partnership with stakeholders, and a range of public and private sector partners;
- working in collaboration with public sector partners across the regional footprint where this offers identifiable benefits;
- co-produce outcomes focussed services acknowledging that there are a range of different methods for strategic commissioning with multiple partners who may be co-operatives, charities or commercial partners.

London Borough Croydon - Our vision for children and young people who are unable to live safely within their own families

- This links to the National Social Care Framework (2023), Outcome 4: children in care and care leavers have stable, loving homes.
- Children and young people will be healthy and happy and feel valued and loved.
- Children and young people will enjoy learning and grow into successful adults who can have positive relationships, positive futures, become responsible citizens and achieve their goals and ambitions.
- Our aspirations for the children and young people that we look after are the same, as any good parent would want for their children. Where they need it, children and young people will receive the very best possible standards of care and support.

- Kinship care will be enabled through a strong offer to the family & friends who are able to offer a home to children & young people who cannot remain with their immediate family.
- Children will have a network of trusting relationships that support them throughout their journey in and beyond care.

The desired outcome of this approach is improved outcomes for our children and young people who are looked after, to achieve best value of the Councils Corporate Parenting functions with children and young people placed in high quality and value for money placements, which safeguard children and young people and promote their wellbeing.

The sufficiency strategy identifies clear priorities, actions and outcomes the Council will deliver alongside practice improvements and workforce developments; while providing direction on the arrangements we will put in place, and services we will commission to achieve the following commitments:

- to safely reduce the number of children and young people looked after;
- to increase the number of children and young people supported to live safely with their families;
- to reduce our reliance on services and homes outside Croydon where these are not in the best interest of the child and young person;
- to increase the numbers of kinship carers with special guardianship order arrangements;
- to increase the number of Council Foster Carers;
- to work positively with Independent Agencies;
- to increase the range of local services to meet the needs of children and young people with complex needs; and
- to improve the way we commission and procure services:
- to increase the Council's own residential provision in a partnership model with a 3rd sector provider.

We are now able to set out our Market Position Statement (MPS) to effectively communicate our vision for the strategic commissioning of placements to the market, which is to meet our Sufficiency Duty by increasing placement choice and enable good matching, through:

- shaping our internal services;

- developing models of practice which strengthen families and enable children to safely remain living with them
- working in partnership with stakeholders, and a range of public third and private sector partners;
- working in collaboration with public and third sector partners across the regional footprint where this offers identifiable benefits;
- co-produce outcomes focussed services acknowledging that there are a range of different methods for strategic commissioning with multiple partners who may be co-operatives, charities, or commercial partners:
- Care Experienced Young Adults transitional needs and wrap around support including health services.

Purpose of our Market Position Statement

This Market Position Statement is for fostering providers (referred to as IFAs), providers of children's residential care homes, and supported accommodation providers who are; delivering, able to deliver, or are planning to deliver' services in our local authority area. This document will help to structure engagement between the Council, Children's Services, our children and young people who are looked after, their family and friends, carers and providers regarding the future vision of this service.

Our Market Position Statement will:

- act as a starting point for discussions between Children's Services and care providers;
- provide data on current placements and forecast demand to inform providers on specific areas of growth or need;
- identify priority service areas of development where we want to co-produce, collaborate and commission services from providers.

All Children's Services are committed to developing sufficiency of accommodation in their local area. Where sufficiency cannot for identifiable or be achieved in the local area, there is a joint commitment to prioritise sufficiency across our regional footprint. The basis for this commitment is evidence based, intended to support improved outcomes for looked after children and to maximise use of local resources for local children.

If considering Croydon as a location for your service, we welcome an early conversation with providers to help inform location assessments and decision making on service developments. We collaborate with our Planners to ensure that developments that require Planning permission will meet the needs of Croydon children and give priority access to them.

What Outcomes do we want for our Children and Young People?

We will ensure that children and young people are looked after in safe placements that meets their assessed needs, to enable them to achieve the best possible outcomes, fulfilling their potential.

Permanence

Our focus is on ensuring that children live in situations where they feel they belong. To that end we encourage work that enables children to reunite with their families where it is safe, this will include kinship arrangements to support that outcome. Where children cannot return to their family, we will seek permanence including legal permanence for children. To that end we expect to work in partnership with internal and external providers to support permanent orders where that is agreed as the best plan for the child. Where permanent or long-term matching is the best outcome, we will look for providers to support those possibilities by realistic pricing that reflects the long-term nature of the arrangement. This is linked to the Croydon Permanence Strategy [Permanence Strategy](#)

Stability

We recognise the negative impact of unintended or emergency end of placements along with the psychological harm that additional Adverse Childhood Experiences have on children. Croydon work systemically and will look to support carers to manage difficulties to maintain placement stability. We expect and encourage a partnership approach by providers to work in a can-do, problem-solving way to avert unnecessary moves. WE encourage providers to have a develop a trauma informed practice approach which links to the National Social Care Framework and the Stable Homes Built on Love approach.

Resource

Like most Local Authorities, we operate within the context of reduced funding and increasing demand pressures. We have been, as a Council, asked to save £35M during 2025/26. The Council's spend for 2025/26 is currently forecast to be approximately £37.9M (May 2025). For 2025/26 the CYPE & H Directorate has a provisional efficiency savings target of £9.8M. With approximately 89% of its net budget made up of externally commissioned services, and there is a strong savings focus on the cost and volume of commissioned services.

We are therefore more likely to commission services that have clear aims and objectives, target resources, and provide strong evidence of impact of value for money. Having a model of care that is understood and embedded across the whole organisation is a development that we absolutely

welcome. Research evidence those models setting clear expectations with a consistent approach build staff confidence. They improve the quality of assessment, intervention, and direct work with children, young people and their families and ultimately improve outcomes for children and young people. We are committed to work with providers to support service developments and welcome contact from you to discuss any service developments.

Current trends – Key factors that are specific to Croydon

The number of children and young people between the ages of 0-19 years is forecast to 90,000 and is one of the fastest growing in London.

The changing context within Croydon includes:

- Numbers of children and young people looked after and placed at home with parents continues to be stable at about 59 per ,000 head of population. This averages between 525 and 550 at any given point in time
- Numbers of care experienced young people stable around 800.
- Numbers of children and young people looked after and placed in generic in-house foster placements has slightly decreased.
- Numbers of children and young people placed in all fostering households has decreased from 84% to 79% in 2 years; this is a priority
- Numbers of children and young people looked after and placed over 20 miles has decreased – continued improvement is a priority.
- Numbers of children and young people requiring residential care because a foster home was not available has increased. This is also a priority.
- The South London Framework will cease to operate in 2028. Alternate arrangements include a possible London Regional Commissioning Hub

Fostering

Where we are now

Numbers of children and young people placed in-house and with IFAs are decreasing.

Parent and child placements are increasing.

Lack of fostering provision for children and young people of all ages and abilities.

More Children and young people are living further closer to their home area.

Requiring new homes not in or too close to Croydon where there are contextual safeguarding concerns person.

Where we want to be

Increased local fostering capacity enabling our children and young people to live close to home.
Increased capacity to meet demand for children being discharged from hospital.

Increased capacity to meet the identified needs of children with a disability, including complex neurodiversity with challenging behaviour.

Strong relationships with commercial, charitable and co-operative fostering providers, and work with them to develop services that will compliment those we deliver within the Council.

Services to provide outreach and respite support to prevent crisis/breakdown for children and young people on the cusp of care, including short term emergency provision.

Key Statistics

The number of looked after children and young people with Independent Foster Carers is 189 (45% of fostered children) with 227 (55%) as of June 2025.

The overall number of CLA per '000 remains steady at around 75 whilst the overall percentage of children fostered has decreased from 84% to 79% over a 12-month period (May 2025).

Who we need

- Carers who live in Croydon, and can provide step down from residential care, with an outcome-based approach.
- Carers who can work with systemic approaches and engage in therapeutic services such as Positive Behaviour Support.
- Resilient carers who are trained and skilled in trauma informed practice, drug and alcohol misuse, domestic violence, absconding, and exploitation.
- Carers who are resilient when faced with the threat of physical violence, verbal aggression, and challenging behaviour, and are skilled in de-escalation.

What we don't need

There is demand for all types of foster homes. So, there is very little we do not want you to develop in or near the borough.

Residential

Where we are now

We have increasing in-house residential provision within Croydon, which has been developed with a 3rd sector delivery partner.

There are currently 34 homes (123 beds) within Croydon these include both private and third sector provision.

However, the majority of our children and young people in residential care are still placed outside of Croydon. A lot of placements are for children presenting neurodiversity, challenging or self-harming behaviour. There is difficulty in placing children and young people with a disability.

Where we want to be

We want to reduce the number of children and young people requiring residential care. We want to work collaboratively with local providers to develop local provision to meet the needs of children and young people looked after in Croydon. This includes the ability to accept emergency placements. We want to develop routes to accessing local homes

We want to work with a provider to develop short-term residential provision that supports children and young people who are on the cusp of care and/or have clear plans for reunification with family. We would like this to be a development of existing local provision.

Key Statistics

The number of children and young people in residential settings is 59 as of October 2025.

The majority of children and young people placed in residential care are outside of Croydon (11 placed within Croydon, and 26 within 20 miles and 21 further away out of authority as of October 2025).

Who we need

- Settings who are willing to develop close arrangements to give priority access to Croydon children.
- Residential settings with the ability to provide support to children who are returning home or moving across to foster care or to live independently.
- Residential staff who are trained in crisis intervention and can work calmly under pressure.
- Residential staff who are trained in managing challenging behaviours, self-harm, CSE or risk of CSE, criminal exploitation, and gender identity.

What we don't need

We do not want or need any new EBD Children's Home provision as that is also over provided within the borough.

Our relational commissioning has seen improvement in the homes meeting our sufficiency gaps, so new provision is not the answer. More development of those already existing is.

Supported Accommodation

Where we are now

The number of children placed in Ofsted registered Supported Accommodation has remained relatively stable at 57 young people as at 31.10.25.

The 2023 Supported Accommodation Regulations has removed a number of providers. There is over provision of this type of accommodation in the borough.

Where we want to be

Collaboratively increasing capacity and choice of supported lodgings provision for young people aged 16 + by continuing to work with local Registered Social Landlords and support providers. Develop clarity about care vs support needs assessments to ensure only young people who are appropriate to live in this form of accommodation do so.

Have a clear pathway of accommodation options to meet the range of needs for young people 16+ to assist them into early adulthood with stability and support. Improve working arrangements with fostering agencies to support Staying Put provision where appropriate and in line with the best interests of the child. Develop Supported Lodgings as an option for young people 16 to 25 years.

Key Statistics

In October 2025, 45 Ofsted registered providers were offering Supported Accommodation from 119 addresses within the borough.

Croydon have a steady 50 young people using such provision.

No more such accommodation is required.

Who we need

- Registered Social Landlords / Housing Providers to provide high quality affordable accommodation for young people turning 18.
- Support providers who are committed to supporting transition within a flexible timescale.
- Support Providers who are trained and skilled in trauma-informed practice with young people.
- Support providers who are skilled as advocates for young people, promoting their independence and self-care while supporting their journey into adulthood.
- Support providers who are adept at risk management during transition.

What we don't need

We do not need residential providers to expand registered local provision to include transitional options such as semi-independent flats rooms or shared living. We do not encourage expansion in Croydon by residential private providers that duplicate existing commissioned developments at this end of the market. However, we would benefit from expansion of charitable provision experienced in supported housing or RSL provision which is available to 18+ in transition. Supported Lodgings are needed.

How we will commission services

We will continue to use the South London Commissioning Partnership APPA framework until it lapses despite being the only remaining sole user of the framework. Decisions are still being made about a future framework for our market engagement, but London Innovation and Improvement Alliance (supported and guided by the London Association of Directors of Children's Services) plans to launch an all-London Regional Commissioning Hub arising from the 2 pilot Regional Commissioning Hubs in Manchester and Southeast regions may be a way forward.

Currently around 75% of IFA placements are made through the APPA framework.

We have continued to rely heavily on spot purchase arrangements due to the diminished appetite from providers to use the SLCP APPA. Whilst we would prefer a framework approach the ability to focus sharply on the individual needs of children and create bespoke packages of care for them has had some advantages. The area of disadvantage is cost. We have witnessed spiralling cost escalation which is creating an unsustainable situation. We are all aware of, and support, national attempts to "reset" residential care costs.

Support we will offer in service development

We want to work collaboratively with good quality providers to co-produce development of services that we need. In specific areas, a co-production approach with shared resource components between us and providers that work in an integrated way may be identified as the best approach. We have focused on encouraging a Community of Practice with Croydon and local providers supported by our commissioned Positive Behaviour Support providers. We welcome further initiatives which may draw on a DfE grant funded project to support the recruitment and professional development of residential staff and managers. Opportunities for discussions on co-production will be publicised across the market.

We take a relationship-based approach to commissioning underpinned by compliant procurement processes. We believe that use of e-procurement systems are an effective tool that can complement relationship commissioning rather than transactional commissioning, with a positive ethos adopted by partners. In our relational commissioning we seek to support and develop our collaboration with good residential providers seeking to establish ways to assure access for Croydon children to remain living locally. Our collaboration with Planners has seen the development of a S106 Unilateral Undertaking to advertise every vacancy to Croydon first allowing us 3 weeks to match and make placements. We would welcome extending this to existing providers. You can contact us on the email address below:

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