1. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1.1 Regular performance reports were requested at the Corporate Parenting Panel meeting on 13 May 2009 with more in depth performance reports at intervals.

2. **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

2.1 At the Corporate Parenting Panel on 13 July 2010, the panel members requested a more detailed report on:

- Progress of the Looked After Children stability task force
- Progress on improving the timeliness of reviews for Looked After Children.

2.2 This note covers these two topics.
3. DETAIL

Background on Croydon’s Looked After Children

3.1 Croydon’s looked after children (LAC) population is unique in comparison with other authorities. In addition to looking after indigenous children, Croydon is the home to a Home Office’s screening centre for asylum-seekers. In partnership with the Home Office, Croydon provides placements for all unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) who arrive at this screening centre. In recent years, over three-fifths of Croydon’s LAC population have been UASC. This is around one fifth of all UASC in England.

3.2 At the end of March 2010, there were 434 indigenous Croydon children in care which is high number in comparison with previous years. A key objective of the Refocus Reform social care transformation programme is to maintain numbers of indigenous children in care below a threshold of 400. In addition at the end of March 2010 there were 574 unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in care.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>04-5</th>
<th>05-6</th>
<th>06-7</th>
<th>07-8</th>
<th>08-9</th>
<th>09-10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Croydon all CLA numbers</td>
<td>705</td>
<td>805</td>
<td>990</td>
<td>1,060</td>
<td>1,071</td>
<td>1008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Croydon indigenous CLA numbers</td>
<td>392</td>
<td>391</td>
<td>362</td>
<td>363</td>
<td>386</td>
<td>434</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Croydon under 18 population</td>
<td>80,400</td>
<td>80,200</td>
<td>79,300</td>
<td>79,800</td>
<td>80,300</td>
<td>80,248</td>
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<tr>
<td>Croydon all CLA rates</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Croydon indigenous CLA rates</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.3 Including all LAC, the rate of LAC per 10K population under 18 at the end of March 2010 was 126 per 10K which is a decrease in comparison with 2008-9.

3.4 For indigenous CLA only, the rate per 10K population under 18 at the end of March 2010 was 54.

3.5 The age profile of the indigenous looked after children population is shown below.

CP100922 AR06
Age profile of indigenous looked after children

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age at year end</th>
<th>2004-05</th>
<th>2005-06</th>
<th>2006-07</th>
<th>2007-08</th>
<th>2008-09</th>
<th>2009-10 Q1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aged 0-4 years</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aged 5-10 years</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aged 11-14 years</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aged 15-17 years</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.6 Achieving stability of placements is key factor in determining positive outcomes for LAC. There are two national indicators relating to stability, one for short-term stability over the previous 12 months and one for long-term stability. Long-term stability for Looked After Children is a priority in our local area agreement.

3.7 Reviews for Looked After Children are a key mechanism for understanding the needs and wishes of children and resolving issues with placements before they lead to placement breakdown.

Progress achieved by the Looked After Children Stability task force

3.8 National indicator 62 focuses on short-term stability as the percentage of LAC with three or more placements in the previous 12 months. Historically, Croydon has performed well in terms of short-term stability with a smaller proportion of CLA having three or more placements than the average for our statistical neighbours and the national average. The chart below shows our performance in the context of other authorities.

![Chart showing stability of placements over years]

3.9 Our target for 2009-10 was 10%, to maintain good performance against average for statistical neighbours and national average but accept that positive reasons for moves may increase moves against the 2008-9 figure. Our 2009-10 performance fell short of the target with 11.2% of CLA experiencing three or more placement moves. A further 36% of CLA experienced 2 placement moves in the previous 12 months.

3.10 At the end of June 2010, our performance was 8.6% for LAC who experienced 3 or more placements between 1 July 2009 and 30 June 2010.
3.11 National indicator 63 focuses on long-term stability, the percentage of looked after children aged under 16 at 31 March who had been looked after continuously for at least 2.5 years who were living in the same placement for at least 2 years, or are placed for adoption and their adoptive placement together with their previous placement together last for at least 2 years. Historically Croydon has performed well against this indicator. The chart below shows our performance in the context of other authorities.

3.12 Our target for 2009-10 was 73% as set in the Local Area Agreement. At the end of March 2010, our performance was 69.9% with some variation seen at the end of each quarter where each quarters out-turn is calculated over the previous 12 months. While this performance falls short of the target, it compares well with the average for our statistical neighbours and the national average in 2008-9.

3.13 At the end of June 2010, our performance was 71.1% for this indicator.

3.14 In relation to stability for looked after children, our ambition is to be excellent. As part of the Refocus Reform social care transformation work programme which ended in June 2010, we convened a six month Looked After Children Stability task force drawn from across social care and the fostering and adoption teams to identify and implement the changes which need to be made improve stability.

3.15 The task force is currently implementing the following priorities for change:
   - A robust tracking system that identifies second placement move so that additional support is put in place to prevent further disruption.
• Enhance existing matching process so that the first placement meets the child’s specific needs.
• CAMHS continues to run regular training for foster carers to enhance their skills in responding to behaviours often associated with placement disruption.
• Review existing placement support procedure (often known as Disruption Meeting) to improve practice that promotes prevention of placement breakdown; for example, identifying signs of strains.

3.16 Alongside the Stability task force action plan, a short-term Permanence task and finish group has been set up to strengthen permanence planning across social work teams. The objectives of the task and finish group are to:
• Strengthen permanence planning by increasing the proportion of relevant children who have good quality plans;
• Increase the number of children placed for adoption;
• Increase the number of children placed with kin;
• Increase the number of children with Special Guardianship Orders;
• Increase the number of children with Residence Orders.

3.17 Evidence of progress on permanence is reported regularly to the Social Care Improvement Board in the form of progress against these objectives.

3.18 The following describes progress achieved by the LAC stability task force and the Permanence Task and Finish Group:

Placement Stability Task Force

• There is now in place a tracking process that identifies second placement moves. This information is sent out to all Operational Managers and Service Managers across Children’s Services. All cases that are identified as a second placement are now assessed and additional support is put in place to prevent disruption.
• As part of every Social Workers’ induction, they now spend time with our ART Service. This is to improve Social Workers’ understanding around matching when identifying placements to meet the needs of the child.
• CAMHS continue to run training sessions for foster carers to enhance their skills in responding to behaviours often associated with placement disruption. CAMHS also attend LAC team meetings to meet with social work staff to help identity need, offer support and discuss early intervention.
• The current placement disruption protocol is being revised and replaced with a placement stability protocol. The current disruption protocol is called when a placement has broken down and the child has moved from the placement. The new stability protocol will focus on children where there are concerns around stability of the placement and set out guidelines around when additional support should be considered and identify a program of additional support for the child.
• Fostering has resurrected the CYPL and Private & Voluntary providers Group to improve the interface between the two services. This is to address the concerns around external placements disruption at short notice.
• There is now a system in place of collating information from the consultation forms used within children’s review meeting. This information will be analysed within a quality measurement framework for placements.
• The task group considered the issues around placement stability and stability
within the children’s education. A review of 12 cases across residential and foster care found that 90% of these cases had issues around the provision or stability of education. The task group would recommend that the provision of education for children in care be reviewed, as there were strong links between placement stability and the lack of provision of education for some children or instability in their education.

**Permanency Task and Finish Group**

- As the Placement Stability Task Force came to an end, a new group was set up to focus on securing permanence for all Croydon’s looked after children.
- The Permanency Task and Finish Group reports to the Children’s Social Care Improvement Board.
- It has set itself two work streams: 1) reviewing and streamlining current permanency policies and procedures; 2) supporting staff to implement the policies and procedures that facilitate and secure permanence.
- The timeframe for completion of the tasks set is end of September 2010.
- Progress milestones are met; for example, all the indigenous looked after children have had an individual permanence plan, which will be reviewed regularly. All the key permanence policies and procedures have been reviewed and draft amendments are being made. Many productive meetings with a range of social work teams were held. As a result, permanence has become far more prominent in care planning as it should always be.
- A number of workshops will be held in late September and throughout October 2010 to promote the revised permanence policies and procedures.

**Timeliness of reviews for Looked After Children**

3.19 National Indicator 66 is the percentage of looked after children for whom all reviews were carried out cases within required timescales during the year.

3.20 Historically, Croydon performance against this indicator deteriorated from 92% in 2006-7 to 82% in 2008-9.

3.21 The chart below shows our performance in the context of other authorities.

![Timeliness of reviews for Looked After Children](chart)

3.22 The target for 2009-10 was 95% to improve performance to above the average for our statistical neighbours and the national average. By the end of December 2009, as a result of actions taken following a performance investigation earlier in
the year, our performance had improved to 83%. By the end of March 2010, our provisional 2009-10 performance calculated by a tool on the Department for Education web-site had stabilised at 78.2%. While performance has improved significantly, it was not possible to off-set the poor performance in the early part of the year, and so this falls short of the target.

3.23 At the end of June 2010, performance for the previous 12 months (which overlaps with around 6 months before the performance investigation) was 89.6%. The expectation is that this will continue to improve.

3.24 Performance in this area continues to be monitored on a weekly basis and had extended to include monitoring of the quality of documentation provided for review meetings.

4. CONSULTATION

4.1 Not applicable

5 FINANCIAL AND RISK ASSESSMENT CONSIDERATIONS

5.1 There are no financial implications for this report.

6. FREEDOM OF INFORMATION/DATA PROTECTION CONSIDERATIONS

6.1 This information is in the public domain.

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BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS: Not applicable