Appendix 1

Answers to CSSC’s List of Selected Questions on Corporate Parenting from Children’s Services

1. Who are your looked after children in terms of age, gender, ethnicity, religious or cultural background and disability? What needs and challenges does this profile present? How does the local authority’s commissioning plan reflect these needs?

January 2016 Data (Categories are as defined nationally)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LA1</th>
<th>Number of Children in Care</th>
<th>414</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LA2</td>
<td>No of children in care per 10,000 children aged 0-17 (LBBD Population 59,106)</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LA3</td>
<td>Children in Care Breakdown by age</td>
<td>0-4 - 15.7%, 5-9 - 19.6%, 10-15 - 37.2%, 16-17 - 27.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LA4</td>
<td>Children in Care Breakdown by Ethnicity</td>
<td>White - 58.9%, Black - 18.6%, Asian - 5.9%, Mixed - 11.8%, Other - 4.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LA5</td>
<td>Children in Care Breakdown by Legal Status</td>
<td>ICO - 14.0%, FCO - 49.8%, S20 - 27.8%, PO - 7.0%, Other - 1.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Religion of LAC – 7% identify as Muslim, 27% identify as Christian, 24% no religious persuasion, 1% as another religion. (Please note 37% of looked after children do not have a religion recorded).

9% of looked after children (LAC) are recorded as having a disability.

Commissioning impact

As the borough has become more diverse we have worked to ensure we have staff from a wide range of backgrounds, and with an increasing number of languages spoken to reduce our dependency on services such as language line.

There is a high number of children with complex needs known to social care so we run a specialist Children with Disabilities Team.

A number of specialists exist within the Local Authority to advise on particular issues, for example, gender identity, Prevent, and child sexual exploitation, to reflect the changing needs of our youth population. It is important to note that the age group with the highest proportion of children in care (10-15 year olds at 37.2%) is the section of the population likely to grow the most by 2020 (a 30% increase is expected).
2. **Do you have a system for seeking feedback from looked after children and care leavers about the services they receive?**

   A range of systems are in place. Young People feed into their own reviews to ensure their voices are heard. We run an annual survey where young people feedback on the quality of support they receive. There is a Children-in-Care Council (Skittlz) who present to Assembly. This will now be annually when the social care annual report is presented. We are considering ways to link feedback to events such as the Christmas Party and the Leaving Care Awards Night.

3. **How much do you spend on out of area placements for looked-after children? What are the factors behind this spend and how do commissioning processes ensure that complex needs can be met in the best interests of children?**

   Every out of area placement has to be agreed by the Corporate Director. In addition there is now a weekly review of placements with Jon Bunt and Anne Bristow. The total costs are not calculated on this basis, and are spread across social care, education and health.

   Our inclusion strategy is very clear that, wherever possible, children’s needs are met in-borough. The SEN /EHC Strategy is increasing in-borough provision to reduce out-of-borough costs.

   Individual cases can be very expensive. 3 case study examples will be presented to the meeting.

4. **What plans does the local authority have to raise educational attainment of looked after children?**

   The Local Authority has a new permanent Virtual Headteacher. Children in Care have a six monthly education review (of a document called a Personal Education Plan, known as a “PEP”). This gives individual targets to raise attainment. January figures show that 90% were up to date.

   The Pupil Premium provided for looked after young people is targeted at meeting their educational needs, to raise attainment. It can be spent on mentors, text books, additional tuition, as decided through the virtual school, the school the young person attends and the social worker. The views of young people are sought, but not all young people agree with the decisions reached; for example, they might feel an iPad would help them the most but the adults may feel a maths tutor would be better.

5. **Do you monitor the number of looked after children that are excluded from school and do you know what support and alternative provision is available for them?**

   This is monitored very closely by the Virtual School and is an absolute priority for their work. Figures for the Autumn Term are shown below. We try to ensure that no LAC are permanently excluded. Alternative provision is put in place whenever appropriate.
Appendix 1

6. Are looked after children a priority group for getting access to therapeutic and psychological services including Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) and how long are waiting times for referrals?

Once a child’s mental health needs have risen to the highest level, LAC children are prioritised and waiting times are reasonable. The latest CAMHS review and strategy has identified the need for specialist LAC provision. This will be very helpful and will improve support at early intervention levels.

7. As an at-risk group, what access do looked-after children and young people get to services to help with substance misuse, sexual health and teenage pregnancy?

Yes, these services prioritise LAC. Foster Carers receive training in these areas. They are expected to make sure that young people attend. Referrals are often part of care plans, but foster carers and schools are able to raise the need with social workers should it become apparent between meetings.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Days</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Date in Care</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student 1</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>East London Independent Special School</td>
<td>WBRI</td>
<td>08/08/2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Godwin Primary</td>
<td>WBRI</td>
<td>13/07/2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Eastbrook</td>
<td>WBRI</td>
<td>21/07/2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>The Deanes School</td>
<td>MWAS</td>
<td>06/07/2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>The Warren School</td>
<td>WBRI</td>
<td>25/09/2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Hilldene Primary</td>
<td>WBRI</td>
<td>18/11/2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Redden Court School</td>
<td>WOTH</td>
<td>18/06/2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>The Frances Bardsley Academy</td>
<td>WBRI</td>
<td>10/06/2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>St Edwards CE School</td>
<td>MWBC</td>
<td>04/04/2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Deanwood Primary</td>
<td>WOTH</td>
<td>10/07/2015</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
8. **What do looked-after children say about their placements?**

Children are generally very positive about their placements (as evidenced in the surveys they complete). Young people in secure and residential placements are not always as positive. Where young people express particular concerns, this is always fully investigated.

9. **How many children move placements three or more times during a year?**

In 2014/15, 60 children had three or more placements (13.1%), this compares to 46 children (10.0%) in 2013/14. As of the end of Q2, 17 children have had three or more placements so far in 2015/16 (3.9%). SN/ national average is 11%.

10. **Do you believe any of the children placed out of borough (or neighbouring boroughs) could be looked after within the area of the local authority?**

We try hard to place as many children as possible in-borough and have excellent local foster carers. One factor that presents a challenge is that many foster carers already have children and so need a larger house to take additional children. Most properties in Barking and Dagenham do not have sufficient space.

11. **What is the percentage of children who maintained the same social worker for the last 12 month period?**

35% of children in care, who have been in care for at least 12 months, have had the same social worker for the last year. The turnover rate and level of agency staff is lower in the looked after children teams, to reduce the impact of turnover on young people. However, this is still higher than we would like.

12. **What percentage of children are placed for adoption within national timescales of the decision to adopt and are subsequently adopted?**

In 2014/15, 19 out of 32 children were placed for adoption within timescales (59.4%). This compares to 9 out of 17 (52.9%) in 2013/14. As of the end of Q2, 9 out of 12 (75%) children have been placed within timescales.

13. **What is the profile of children waiting for a permanent placement and what are the barriers to finding them a home?**

This information will be provided in the next Annual Adoption Report as it is not collated mid-year.

14. **Do you have a sufficient pool of suitable foster carers locally to meet the needs of children requiring placements? If not, what steps are being taken to address this?**

We have a very strong fostering team who recruit more successfully than other boroughs. That is why we are able to maintain relatively low placement costs. We recruit constantly.
15. What is the turnover rate of foster carers and do you understand the reasons why carers leave the service?

This is not calculated numerically. Turnover rates are low. Recently one couple retired after 40 years of fostering for us. Foster parents end their role for a variety of reasons, sometimes they cannot manage the behaviours of an individual child and so the placement may end, but they remain foster carers and a new placement starts. In a very few cases we terminate the foster carers because their care has not been good enough.

16. How does your use of residential care compare to other similar authorities?

Our use of residential care is relatively low, but this varies.

The CIPFA benchmarking report will be available at the meeting.

17. Do you have any children placed in a secured care?

Yes. This is for one of two reasons. Either they are extremely high risk to themselves or others (for reasons including running away, self-harming and sexual abuse) so we need them to be somewhere safe for a while whilst we stabilise their behaviour patterns, or because the courts have placed them in a secure setting due to offending behaviours.

18. What data is available regarding the number of looked after children who are asylum seekers within the borough and does this percentage have a detrimental effect on the local looked after children in care within the borough?

Looking at the number of in-house foster carers within the borough, does this mean more local looked after children have to be placed out of borough and how does this affect the caseload levels carried by social work staff?

There are currently a total of 29 UASC who are LAC (7% of the total LAC population). 20 of the 29 are placed in semi-independent accommodation, 7 are placed with LBBD foster carers (5 in-borough, 2 out-of-borough), and the remaining 2 are placed with Agency Foster Carers (both out-of-borough).

19. What procedures do social workers use when putting a care plan in place, for example, for asylum seekers, before placing these vulnerable young persons with foster carers or other care providers, given that it is possible that they have very little information about the vulnerable young person?

A full assessment is completed for all young people who come into care. This is normally completed before placement. In an emergency this is not always possible so we place young people with the best foster carers available initially and plans are then reviewed as the assessment takes place and the young person settles down. A number of UAS children are placed with a foster carer initially but the older ones quickly move on to semi-independent living.

A presentation about Leaving Care Services was shared with the Corporate Parenting Steering Group. This will be circulated to the Select Committee.