



Croydon Safeguarding Children Board

Annual Report – Child Protection Conferencing and the Role of Safeguarding and Quality Assurance 2017/18

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For presentation to:	<i>Croydon Children’s Safeguarding Board</i>
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Purpose	For Discussion

1. Introduction

a. Role and function of the service

The service oversees the delivery of child protection conferences and provides oversight of children subject of a child protection plan (CP plan). The QA service manager and the chairs are also involved in auditing and training.

The service has recently taken on providing oversight of children subject of a child in need (CiN) plan and offers to chair some complex CiN meetings. As this postdates the period of this report this is not discussed.

b. Professional profile of the service

As of 31 March 2018 the team comprised of a QA service manager, 7.5 FTE CP chairs, a business support team leader and a team of minute takers.

The QA service manager and 5 of the chairs are permanent members of staff who had been with the team at least two years and there were 2.5 part time locums. All of the CP chairs are experienced chairs and many have also worked as independent reviewing officers and some have also been managers.

The CP chairs and the QA service manager have monthly group reflective supervision. This has given the team a space to discuss the impact of the work on them and to explore complex cases. The team has engaged well with this and it has enabled the team to become more reflective about how they practice.

The CP chairs also have monthly team meetings and bi-monthly service meetings. This enables them to come together regularly as a group to share information, discuss practice, policy and procedural issues.

The business support manager is currently acting up due to a secondment and all of the minute takers are permanent or on fixed term contracts. There were a number of staff changes during this period but overall there is a core group of stable and long term team members.

2. Child protection conferences (CPCs)

a. Child protection numbers

The table below shows the number of children subject of a child protection plan for 2017/18 by month

Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
391	387	379	388	429	444	448	433	468	517	530	559

These figures show that the numbers of children subject of a child protection plan have significantly increased since August 2017. This increase can be attributed to the Ofsted Inspection in July 2017, when the authority was graded inadequate. Following the 2017 inspection there was an increase in referrals, children and family

assessments and section 47 enquiries as well as an increase in the number of children subject of a of CiN plan being brought to conference due to increased scrutiny and oversight of this cohort.

Nationally the number of children who are the subject of a child protection plan has continued to increase. Between 2017 and 2018 there was a 5.3% increase in child protection plans overall and a 3.6% increase in Initial Child protection plans.

b. Child protection conferences by type
i. Initial child protection conferences (ICPCs)

Month	CP plan	Other outcome	Total
April	80	11	91
May	42	4	46
June	26	5	31
July	54	10	64
August	72	15	87
September	27	24	51
October	79	12	91
November	67	13	80
December	64	13	77
January	80	14	94
February	53	5	58
March	93	7	100
Total 2017/18	737 (85%)	133 (15%)	870
Total 2016/17	417 (88%)	56 (12%)	473

The numbers of initial child protection conferences varies throughout the year. This is likely to be due to the reduction of referrals in to Children’s Social Care during school holidays and the spike in referrals before and after these periods.

It is important to note the significant increase in initial child protection conferences being convened in comparison to the previous year. This is most likely to be due to the impact of the Ofsted SIF inspection in June 2017.

There does not appear to have been a significant increase in the number of ICPCs which do not result in a child protection plan which would indicate that the threshold for convening an ICPC has remained consistent apart from a spike just after the inspection outcome was published where a higher percentage of children were not made subject of a child protection plan. This is likely to be in response to the finding from the inspection that some children had not been identified as being at risk of significant harm and hence social workers and managers being more cautious.

As at 31st March 2018 the rate of children being made the subject of a child protection plan per 10,000 was 90.1 compared to an outer London average of 59.6

ii. Review child protection conferences (RCPCs)

Month	CP plan	CP plan ended	Total
April	46	23	69

May	66	35	101
June	83	33	116
July	110	42	152
August	21	10	31
September	70	31	101
October	98	43	141
November	67	44	111
December	79	16	95
January	89	27	116
February	90	20	110
March	130	35	165
Total	949	359	1308

The data for RCPCs shows that as with ICPCs there are spikes and dips in the number of conferences held linked to the school holiday period. This is because where possible RCPCs are not held for school aged children during the school holidays. There is also an increase in the numbers of RCPCs due to the increased number of children subject of a child protection plan.

During 2017-2018 almost 25% of child protection plans ended within 3 months, this is a 5% higher rate than the national average. A review of this cohort will be undertaken to understand any reasons for this trend

iii. Pre-birth child protection conferences

Month	Less than 4 weeks before birth	4 to 10 weeks before birth	More than 10 weeks before birth	Outcome – CP plan	Total
April	0	4	1	5	5
May	1	3	0	4	4
June	1	1	1	3	3
July	0	1	1	2	2
August	2	2	2	5	6
September	1	1	3	3	5
October	3	1	1	4	5
November	3	2	6	10	11
December	4	2	2	6	8
January	2	0	0	2	2
February	0	1	5	6	6
March	2	2	6	10	10
Total	19 (28%)	20 (30%)	28 (42%)	60	67

The number of pre-birth ICPCs has not significantly increased over the past 5 years and there is still no significant improvement on the timeliness of the ICPC being held. There is still a high percentage of late pre-birth conferences. This is still an area for

development especially as audits have continued to show that the quality of pre-birth assessments needs to be improved.

iv. Transfer in and transfer out CPCs

Month	Number of transfer in CPCs	Number of transfer out CPCs
April	6	2
May	4	5
June	16	5
July	8	1
August	7	6
September	4	7
October	6	5
November	2	0
December	10	1
January	16	5
February	2	3
March	7	1
Totals 2017/18	89	41
Totals 2016/17	65	38

The above data shows that the number of transfer in child protection conferences has continued to increase but the number of transfer out child protection conferences has remained the same. There are also twice as many transfer in child protection conferences held as children subject of a child protection plan who transfer out which impacts on our overall number of children subject of a child protection plan.

Previous SCRs and audits identified drift and delay in progressing requests for transfer in CPCs. The process for responding to these referrals has been changed during the period of this report so that they are overseen by the QA service manager once they are progressed by MASH. This has led to a more timely response and an increase in the number of transfer in CPCs held in time from 10% to 32% and only 6 transfer in CPCs have been late during the period 1.1.18 to 31.3.18 (14 children). The main reasons for late CPCs was delay within the care planning service (31 children) which has been resolved by the new process and where it was booked in timescales but the CPC was rearranged (19 children) which is being addressed.

c. Profile of age, gender and ethnicity

The data below is from 31.3.18.

Age	female	Male	Total
unborn	N/A	N/A	13
0-4 years	103	89	192
5-9 years	82	73	155
10-13 years	57	68	125
14-17 years	48	40	88
Total	290	270	573

The data above is from the end of year reporting. There continue to be slightly more females than males who are subject of a child protection plan however the number of older males who are subject of a child protection plan has increased. This is in part due to an increased understanding of child criminal exploitation as well as child sexual exploitation.

Ethnicity	Children subject of a CP plan	%	Croydon population
A1 - White British	175	31.3%	47.3%
D2 - African	59	10.6%	8%
B1 - White and Black Caribbean	53	9.5%	2.7%
D1 - Caribbean	50	8.9%	8.6%
D3 - Any other Black background	48	8.6%	3.6%
A3 - Any other White background	41	7.3%	6.3%
B4 - Any other mixed background	36	6.4%	1.6%
C4 - Any other Asian background	32	5.7%	4.8%
B2 - White and Black African	18	3.2%	0.9%
B3 - White and Asian	18	3.2%	1.4%
E2 - Any other ethnic group	8	1.4%	1.3%
E4 - Information not yet obtained	8	1.4%	N/A
C2 - Pakistani	6	1.1%	3%
C1 - Indian	4	0.7%	6.8%
A2 - White Irish	2	0.4%	1.5%
C3 - Bangladeshi	1	0.2%	0.7%
Total	559		

The above data shows that children subject of a child protection plan from certain ethnic groups are over-represented and others are under-represented. It is possible that this reflects social inequalities such as economic deprivation and its impact upon children's wellbeing. It is important that the CP chairs, social workers and the professional network take this in to account when developing child protection plans. It may also need to be considered at a strategic level to ensure that the issues leading to higher risk of deprivation are addressed.

d. Categories

Category	Number	Percentage	Percent 2016/17
Emotional abuse	181	31.5%	37.5%
Neglect	130	22.5%	11.5%
Physical abuse	2	0.5%	1.5%
Sexual abuse	17	3%	1.5%
Neglect and physical abuse	20	3.5%	0.25%
Neglect and sexual abuse	8	1.5%	0.25%
Neglect and emotional abuse	101	17.5%	4.5%
Physical and sexual abuse	1	0.5%	0%
Physical and emotional abuse	101	17.5%	11%
Sexual and emotional abuse	12	2%	2.5%
Multiple	0	0%	1.5%
Total	573		

The above data is from 1.4.18. It shows that the largest group of children are subject of a child protection plan under dual categories (42%) which is a slight decrease from the previous year (48%). The other two main categories are emotional abuse (31.5%) and neglect (22.5%). An area of vulnerability previously identified was the lower than average number of children subject of a child protection plan where neglect was a factor. This has raised in 2017/18 to 45% from 16.5% in 2016/17 which is now in line with the national average. It is likely this is as a result of the neglect strategy and increased focus on this area.

It is difficult to make a clear comparison with other local authorities due to the high use of dual categories in Croydon. However the national data is outlined below. The use of multiple categories is currently being reviewed in Croydon as it is recognised that we are not in line with national practice and it can possibly lead to a lack of clarity and focus of risk for families and the professional network.

Category	National %	Croydon %
Emotional abuse	35.1%	31.5%
Neglect	48%	22.5%
Physical abuse	7.7%	0.5%
Sexual abuse	4.1%	3%
Multiple	5.2%	42.5%

e. Parental and child factors

The table below illustrates the parental and child factors of concern identified by the social worker in their report for child protection conferences.

Factors identified	Number
Domestic Violence : Parent/Carer	116
Mental Health : Parent/Carer	98
Drug Misuse : Parent/Carer	61
Alcohol Misuse: Parent/Carer	61
Abuse or Neglect : NEGLECT	41
Abuse or Neglect : Emotional Abuse	26
Domestic Violence : Child	25
Mental Health : Child	22
Physical Disability or Illness : Parent/Carer	21
Socially Unacceptable Behaviour	21
Young Carer	19
Learning Disability : Child	19
Domestic Violence : Other Person Living in Household	13
Missing Concerns	13
Self-Harm	11
Gangs	10
Physical Disability or Illness : Other Person Living in Household	10
Physical Disability or Illness : Child	9
Child Sexual Exploitation	8
Learning Disability : Parent/Carer	7

Drug Misuse : Child	6
Drug Misuse : Other Person Living in Household	5
Abuse or Neglect : Physical Abuse	4
Mental Health : Other Person Living in Household	3
Abuse or Neglect : Sexual Abuse	3
Learning Disability : Other Person Living in Household	2
Alcohol Misuse: Child	2
FGM	1
Trafficking	1
Grand Total	638

The above information indicates that the most significant factor impacting on children subject of a child protection plan is domestic abuse. It also identifies that parental vulnerability factors including mental health and substance misuse which can significantly impact on children. It is acknowledged that for a significant number of families there are two or three of these main factors present. This is consistent with the findings from serious case reviews as highlighted in the Department of Education report *Triennial Analysis of Serious Case Reviews 2011-14* which identifies that where multiple parental vulnerability factors interact there is a cumulative level of risk and harm to the child. This highlights the need for improved understanding by professionals about these factors and better engagement with adult services to ensure that parents are receiving the required service and children's services have access to expert advice and information.

The child factors indicates the level safeguarding concerns related to vulnerable adolescence who are risk due child sexual exploitation, criminal exploitation, substance misuse and mental health issues. This is an increase in previous years due to the better identification and recognition that these young people need safeguarding plans implemented to address the risk factors. It is recognised that the current approach of child protection conferences and child protection plans do not adequately address risks outside of the family home and alternative models are currently being explored. This will look at how young people can be better involved in identifying risk and safety planning and ensure that all the relevant professionals required are included in planning and providing appropriate support.

3. CP performance indicators

a. Children that became subject of a child protection plan for a second or subsequent time

16.7% of children became subject of a child protection plan in Croydon in 2017/18 (national average 15.9%).

All children who have been subject of a child protection plan previously in Croydon are reviewed when they become subject of a child protection for a second or subsequent

time each month by the QA service manager and the findings are disseminated to the key service managers.

The table below shows the breakdown by reason for this cohort:

Reason	No. of families	No. of children	% of children
Previous CP plan over 5 years ago so file not reviewed	14	16	19%
Previous CP ended appropriately	9	14	16%
Family transferred out or left the country but then returned	4	10	12%
Previous and current reason for CP plan is domestic abuse – work not completed	7	11	13%
CP plan ended too early – poor engagement, over optimism, work not completed, based on self-reporting	9	24	28%
Decision to end CP plan appropriate but CiN plan not robust/implemented	2	5	6%
New issue but this is likely to have been missed previously	2	5	6%
TOTAL	47	85	

In 47% of cases the previous child protection plan either ended at least 5 years ago or ended appropriately.

In 53% of cases the review showed that it is possible that the child protection plan either ended prematurely or the subsequent child in need plan was not sufficiently robust or appropriately progressed.

Themes from cases where children were on a CP plan for a second or subsequent time:

- Parents who do not engage and lack of consistency when to escalate and when to end
- Step-down processes not clear or are not followed
- Over-optimism (or lack of assessment) of the family's plan (e.g. care arrangements for a child or where an adult who poses a risk has left the family home)
- Over-optimism of vulnerable parents especially with young children
- Ending child protection plans where there are concerns about domestic abuse but no work has been done with the perpetrator and there has been insufficient safety planning.

b. Children subject of a CP plan for over 2 years

As of 31 March 2018 15 children (7 families) had been subject of a child protection plan for over 2 years. This number has remained relatively consistent over the past two years.

There is a process in place to review the plan for all children who have been subject of a child protection plan for over 12 months. The service managers and the QA service manager independently review the child's file and liaise with the team manager and CP chair. There is then a monthly panel where the cases are discussed. This has led to better scrutiny and challenge but this is still an area for development and a multi-agency panel has now been established.

There is evidence of drift and delay in a number of these cases due to a number of factors including high caseloads, a number of changes in social workers and managers and particular case complexity. However of the 13 children/6 families who had been subject of a CP plan between 18 and months and 2 years there is better evidence of the case being progressed and managed more appropriately. 3 families were within the PLO/pre-proceedings process, 2 were scheduled to stepdown at the next RCPC and 1 was due to end as the matter was now within care proceedings.

c. Review child protection conference timescales

In 2017/18 98.9% of review child protection conferences were held within timescales (within 3 months for the first review and within 6 months for subsequent reviews). This continues to be an area of good performance. There is a robust system in place which ensures that wherever possible the review takes place within timescales and this is evidenced by the reported performance.

Previously the tracking data did not always evidence this as the child's record did not always accurately reflect their child protection status in a timely way. There has been a lot of work undertaken by the CRS team, the performance team, the social work teams and Safeguarding and Quality Assurance to improve practice and the accuracy of recording and of the data and there has been a marked improvement in this area. This means that the outcome of a child's RCPC is recorded much more promptly on their record and the length of delay has reduced.

d. Initial child protection conferences held within 15 days of the strategy discussion

The percentage of initial child protection conferences held within 15 days of the strategy discussion continues to be an area where performance needs to improve. In 2017/18 the percentage of ICPCs held in timescales was 54% this is well below the average of the London Boroughs which is 75%.

In order to improve this Safeguarding and Quality Assurance took on the lead in monitoring this performance indicator Details of open strategy discussions and section 47 enquiries is provided to managers on a daily basis and this is also reviewed by the QA manager. As a result of this performance improved between April and September 2017. However due to the increase in the number of referrals, assessments and ICPCs after the inspection in July 2017 performance significantly dipped. In part this was due to the capacity of CP chairs but since January 2018 the main reason for delay is due to late notification to Quality Assurance.

Month	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
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% in time	70	90	81	75	84	48	28	26	26	47	45	62
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As a result of the decline in performance the QA manager reports weekly to service managers and monthly to heads on service on the numbers held out of time and the various reasons for the delay. This has enabled any trends or themes to be identified and remedial action taken. This has led to an improvement which is continuing.

4. Child participation

a. Attendance

It is important that young people aged 12 or over are supported to contribute to their child protection conferences and have the opportunity to attend if appropriate. Since January 2018 it is possible to audit if a young person attended their CPC. From 1 January 2018 12 young people attended their CPC. This is still a low percentage.

Since January 2018 there has been an advocacy service which supports young people aged 11 and over to participate in their conference. The advocate meets with the young person before the meeting to talk about how they would like to participate and obtain their wishes and feelings. The advocate then attends the meeting to either support the young person or attend on their behalf. They then visit the young person again to discuss what took place in the meeting. The service was still getting established during this period so it is not yet possible to demonstrate the impact of this service.

It was also identified that it was not possible to clarify on the child's record what efforts had been made to support the young person to attend by the social worker or the CP chair. The codes for recording how the child or young person's voice is heard in the conference have now been changed to reflect this so that future data will be available.

b. Consultation

All children aged 8 years or over should be invited to complete a consultation booklet before each child protection conference. This form is then used by the CP chairs in the child protection conference to ensure the child's wishes and feelings are heard.

At present it is not possible to report on the number of booklets which have been completed, which is reported to be low, but when they are done they are very useful documents. As stated above the codes for recording how the child or young person's voice is heard in the conference have now been changed to reflect this so future data will be available.

c. The voice of the child

The Strengthening Families Framework for conferences makes explicit reference to the voice of the child and it is one of the four domains. Audits have demonstrated that the quality of information recorded in the social worker's report and the minutes is

variable for young and pre-verbal children. This continues to be an area for improvement.

5. Multi-agency working

a. Quoracy

There is no accurate annual data available for this period. However, an audit was carried out of all child protection conferences held over a 4 week period in June/July 2018.

Of the 104 CPCs held 65 were quorate and 39 were not, however it was felt that there was sufficient information for the conference to go ahead in those cases. It is not possible to measure the number of RCPCs which were rearranged due to the original RCPC being inquorate, but there is evidence that this happens on occasion. Of the 33 ICPCs 26 were quorate (79%) but of the 69 RCPCs only 38 were quorate (55%). This is mainly due to the police prioritising attendance at ICPCs.

b. Attendance and reports

It was not possible to routinely provide data on professionals' attendance at child protection conferences and the provision of a report. However as stated above an audit was completed and the findings are outlined below.

Police

Type of CPC	Attended with report	Attended but no report	Did not attend but submitted a report	Did not attend or send a report
ICPC (33)	15 (45%)	1 (3.5%)	11 (33.5%)	6 (due to no invite) (18%)
TICPC (2)	1 (50%)	0	0	1 (due to no invite) (50%)
RCPC (69)	15 (22%)	0	34 (49%)	20 (29%)
All (104)	31 (30%)	1 (1%)	45 (43.5%)	27 (25.5%)

Health

Type of CPC	Attended with report	Attended but no report	Did not attend but submitted a report	Did not attend or send a report
ICPC (19)	5 (26%)	11 (58%)	0	3 (16%)
TICPC (2)	0	2 (100%)	0	0
RCPC (49)	22 (45%)	8 (16%)	2 (4%)	17 (35%)
All (70)	27 (38.5%)	21 (30%)	2 (3%)	20 (28.5%)

Education

Type of CPC	Attended with report	Attended but no report	Did not attend but submitted a report	Did not attend or send a report
ICPC (25)	13 (52%)	11 (44%)	0	1 (4%)
TICPC (1)	0	0	0	1 (100%)
RCPC (57)	26 (45.5%)	23 (40.5%)	2 (3.5%)	6 (10.5%)
All (83)	39 (47%)	34 (41%)	2 (2.5%)	8 (9.5%)

Attendance and provision of reports by other agencies

Type of CPC	Attended with report	Attended but no report	Did not attend but submitted a report	Did not attend or send a report
All (52)	7 (13.5%)	23 (44%)	2 (4%)	20 (38.5%)

This data identified that attendance and provision of reports by multi-agency partners is an area for improvement. The full report outlines some of the blocks and barriers to attendance and the provision of reports and identifies recommendations to improve practice. This is being addressed by the work of a task and finish group.

6. CERP/CP chairs' footprint

One of the key roles of the CP chair is to support, scrutinise and challenge social work practice with children subject of a child protection plan.

This includes a range of informal activities as well as the formal Croydon Escalation and Resolution Protocol (CERP) which is the process by which a CP chair can raise concerns that have not been resolved using the informal stages.

The CP chairs are required to record the following on the child's record:

- Summary of case discussions and consultations (under the heading of 'QA case note')
- Case discussions where the CP chair has concerns (under the heading 'IRO/CP chair case of concern')
- Informal-CERP activity (under the heading 'IRO/CP chair case of concern')
- CERPs (formal CERP level 1 and above forms)

CERPs were completed with 22 families (26 CERPs) during this period by CP chairs which is a significant increase as only one was raised in the previous year. There were 285 IRO/CP chair case of concern case notes recorded on the child's file which also demonstrates the CP chairs' footprint. The Ofsted inspection that took place during this period indicated that the CP chairs should have been identifying areas of drift and delay and poor practice. It is also of note that the inspectors identified there was insufficient evidence of the CP chair's footprint on the child's file. This is an area the service is addressing.

Of the 26 CERPs completed 16 were resolved at stage one with the relevant service manager and a further 4 were resolved at stage two with the relevant head of service. 2 CERPs were raised immediately at stage 2. There were no CERPs raised above level two.

The main reasons for the CERP were due to visits not being within timescales, plans not being progressed, core group meetings not being held, lack of robust management oversight and delay in case transfer. There was also a number where there was a delay in convening a legal planning meeting, implementing the PLO/pre-proceedings process or initiating care proceedings. In all cases the manager agreed with most of the issues raised. In a small number of cases there was evidence of increased risk.

4 CERPS were escalated from stage one to stage two. The reasons were:

- No response to the stage one x 1
- The CP chair was not satisfied with the response x 1
- No evidence of follow up x 1
- The reason was unclear x 1

Of the 2 which were initiated at stage 2 one should have been raised initially at stage 1 and the other was appropriately raised at the higher level.

7. Data performance management

There is still information and performance data which is not reportable from the child's record system and there has been limited capacity to collate this data manually which includes:

- Attendance and provision of reports – social worker and the multi-agency
- Evidence of the child's voice.

However the continued improvement of the working relationships and reporting systems between the CRS team, the performance data team, the social work teams and Safeguarding and Quality Assurance has enabled better availability of data to enable performance management. For instance there are various daily reports which enable managers and Safeguarding and Quality Assurance to track the progress of work with children (e.g. visits, assessments and ICPC and RCPC data).

This has enabled Safeguarding and Quality Assurance to contribute to both the improvement of data accuracy and practice improvement. For instance the QA service manager has led on tracking the section 47 process to ensure that initial child protection conferences are held within timescales and also to ensure that recording on the child's records accurately reflects that the initial child protection conference has taken place.

The daily reports now provide the data for RCPCs. This has enabled Safeguarding and Quality Assurance and the social work managers to track and address any blockages to outcome being recorded on the child's file and enable feedback on any themes or patterns. The focus will now be on ensuring the social work report is completed and shared with the family prior to the child protection conference.

8. Practice development

a. Linking roles

A CP chair is linked to each of the social work teams in the assessment, care planning and permanence services. The aim of this role is to improve working relationships, increase understanding of each other's roles and to provide advice, information and training. This includes attending team meetings, meeting safeguarding leads, running workshops and being available for consultation.

b. Consultation and case oversight

The QA service manager and CP chairs provide consultation to social workers, team managers and other professionals. This is well used by the social workers. The CP chairs are aware that their role is not to provide case supervision or make management decisions but are keen to continue to offer social workers and their managers the opportunity to have a reflective case discussion.

This will be further developed by the increased use of midway reviews. Since the 1st August the CP chair is carrying out a midway review for all children subject of a child protection plan with the social worker and manager between the review conferences. This enables oversight of the progress with the plan to be gained and any necessary changes to the child protection plan to be identified.

c. Training

The QA manager delivers multi-agency training on the Strengthening Families Model and its use in child in need and child protection work.

Some of the CP chairs have been involved in providing training as part of the ASYE training programme.

d. Strengthening families approach

In order to improve practice and ensure there was a clear approach underpinning work with children and their families the strengthening families approach was adopted for all early help and social care intervention. Whilst the framework had been used in child protection conferences since April 2013 it was not fully embedded and a review of the approach in conferences was undertaken.

This led to a number of changes:

- Social worker's report for the conference was redesigned to focus on the domains
- The multi-agency report has been updated
- The domains have been developed. There are now 4 domains and the conference discuss what is working well first to enable parents to feel valued and listened to at the start of the meeting. This enables better communication and acceptance of child protection concerns. The plan has been restructured

to be outcome focussed and identify how the family and the professional network will know when the outcomes have been achieved.

A survey will be undertaken in December 2018 with young people and parents once the new approach has been in place for 6 months to obtain feedback.

9. Review of child protection categories

The London Councils undertook a consultation exercise about proposed amendments to the London child protection procedures in summer 2017. The consultation concerned the use of the four categories of abuse (neglect, physical, sexual and emotional abuse) as the basis of the decision to make a child the subject of a child protection plan. It was argued that the use of these categories does not reflect the complexity of the circumstances of the families that we work with and that it can lead to a somewhat detached and artificial debate about categorisation not focussed on the actual risks to the child. Also that families can find this process of categorisation unpleasant and difficult resulting in disengagement from the plan.

The consultation asked whether the London child protection procedures should be amended to allow child protection conferences NOT to decide a category of abuse but close with the identification and analysis of the family's risks and/or strengths. This process could take different forms according to the practice model adopted in the local authority area. However it would still be possible to use the current categories of abuse in the conference if that was preferred.

The use of the four categories of abuse is not a statutory requirement. However it is data which is collected annually by the Department of Education. The categories can also provide an overview of the harm or risk of harm experienced by children and, hence, the consultation asked whether and how the data could be collected separately from the conference.

Despite there being agreement to this in principle it was not progressed pending the publication of Working Together 2018. This has now been published alongside some further guidance which does allow flexibility about how the categories are being used and as a result of this the proposed changes are being revisited.

It is hoped that details of the process for progressing this will be communicated soon. If the decision is made to allow local authorities to identify risks in a different way a more detailed piece of work would need to be undertaken locally to develop a model that fits with how we use the strengthening families approach.

Croydon currently uses multiple categories of abuse in Child Protection Conferences where it is felt appropriate which has been queried in SCRs and by the findings in the neglect audit. This practice is therefore currently being reviewed.

10. Involvement in other activities

a. Quality Assurance, Practice and Performance Subgroup

The QA service manager sits on the QAPP subgroup of the Croydon Safeguarding Children's Board.

b. London child protection managers forum and editorial board

The QA service manager is the chair of London child protection managers' forum which is facilitated by the London Councils. This is a useful opportunity to network and share practice issues and developments as well as to explore changes to processes and procedures.

As the chair the QA service manager also sits on the editorial board for the London child protection procedures.

11. Summary and areas for development in 2018/19

This period has been a challenging time for the service as a result of the outcome of the Ofsted SIF inspection but it continues to remain committed to working with families, social workers, their managers and other professionals to keep children safe. This annual report has identified the progress made but has also raised the following areas for development over the coming year:

- Pre-birth ICPCs

There needs to be early referral and assessment processes in order to ensure that where needed the initial child protection conference is held in order to ensure early planning and intervention. This will be raised at QAPP as a possible area for audit.

- Youth risk planning

Whilst there is evidence of the increased recognition of the need to manage risk with adolescents where the main concerns for the young person are due to the risks in the wider community it is recognised that the current model of child protection conference needs to be developed to explore risk contextually and develop youth risk planning. This is currently under consideration.

- CP chair support, challenge and scrutiny role

It is recognised that whilst there is evidence of increased challenge and scrutiny by the CP chairs this is still an area for improvement. The service is exploring how restorative practice can add to the effectiveness of its 'challenge' and 'Support' role. This will build on the changes that are already underway:

- New CERP approach. This has been adapted to be more outcome focussed and there are changes to how the informal process is recorded.
 - Midway review process
 - CP chair's role in providing feedback on social work reports and giving an Ofsted grading
 - Linking roles – there needs to be greater focus and more priority given to embed these.
- Oversight of children subject of a child protection plan for more than 12 months

As well as the current approach to reviewing these children a multi-agency panel has been set up to enable key agencies to contribute to the review, planning and decision making. It is also proposed that this could include children who have transferred in where the total period of the child protection plan is over a year.

- ICPC timescales

This is still a performance indicator where there needs to be improvement. Tracking and feedback systems are now more robust so it is hoped that the percentage held in timescales will increase to be in line with the target and local and comparator local authorities.

- The voice of the child

As outlined in the report there are measures in place to ensure the voice of the child is heard in child protection conferences. This includes increased use of the advocacy service, increased use of the consultation booklets, better recording in minutes and improved data collection about how the child's voice is heard.

- Multi-agency attendance and provision of reports

The recent report has identified this as an area of improvement and is being addressed by the child protection task and finish group. It is vital that there is an improvement in multi-agency working and this will be assisted by increased involvement in child protection conferences and better information sharing via the provision of reports.