

Q&A event 21 November 2018

It was agreed that due to time constraints, and the large number of questions that had been submitted, those questions not addressed would be answered by the panel after the event. It has unfortunately not been possible to capture all contributions made on the day.

Social care

Caroline Baxter – Assistant Director, All Age Disability Service (until 2pm)

Michael Brown – Head of Children with Disabilities

Carol Ann James – Head of Early Help (after 2pm)

Eligibility criteria

When will the new eligibility criteria for the Children with Disabilities team be available?

These are almost ready for publication – just awaiting forward from new Director of Children's Services, Robert Henderson. He starts in role on 27th November.

Engagement responses have been sent out directly to those who responded to the recent consultation.

If a family wants to request an assessment, how should they currently go about that? Many families have experienced the referral to SPOC (formerly MASH) as a barrier, given its emphasis on safeguarding and lack of understanding of disability.

Assessments can be made via SPOC, school or through a health professional.

All referrals made via SPOC will be directed to the CWD (Children with Disabilities) team if appropriate.

The new eligibility criteria will support staff within the SPOC (Single Point of Contact) to direct families to appropriate services. If SPOC are unsure, they will liaise with Children with Disabilities and the duty system for advice and guidance.

All families can request an assessment.

If a family doesn't agree with the outcome of a social care assessment, what is the formal process for challenging the decision and where is that published?

It is hoped that this would be a very limited issue as assessments are drafted in partnership with children/young people, families and the Children with Disabilities team. If, however, there is a dispute, families should raise their concerns with the Head of Service in the first instance and then, if still unhappy, make a formal complaint via the Council's complaints process. That process is published on the council website.

Short breaks/respite

Should every family with a disabled child receive respite/short breaks?

Every child with a disability is eligible for short break and that support can be provided in different ways, either through assessed need after a full child and family assessment or via support and advice to assist children/young people and their parents to identify a short break/respite option that meets the individual's needs or wishes.

If there is a significant disability (i.e. it is severe and profound), an assessment will be made by the CWD team and recommendations made regarding short breaks. There are services in Croydon that can offer a range of support e.g. overnight break or playscheme.

Mike Brown apologised for the legacy where things were not done properly and the service had been unacceptable. When he joined 18 months ago over 200 children were not allocated and since then there has been an increase in resources and a noticeable improvement in the service. There has been an increase in support packages offered to families.

A parent expressed their concerns about those children who don't meet the CWD criteria who still need respite.

A parent acknowledged that there had been an improvement in the service.

At what point did the commissioner decide that NAS's social skills groups should exclude the children with an ASD diagnosis attending specialist provision from those activities? Do they not deserve to practise their social skills too?

Caroline Baxter responded that those children attending special school and/or with an EHCP identifying social skills should receive social skills teaching as part of their school curriculum. This specific after school club would offer this opportunity to mainstream SEN pupils.

A parent expressed her concerns that her child had no opportunity to socialise outside his limited school peer group at special school – which he would be able to do if allowed to attend this after school club. Caroline explained that due to financial constraints the opportunities to extend this resource to all were not feasible. The commissioning decision was based on the new (NAS) service supporting those children in mainstream school who would otherwise not have access to specialist social skills support. The objective of the service is to provide social skills to this group of children supporting them to be able to remain in a mainstream school environment for as long as possible and provide equity of provision to all.

What is being done to provide more opportunities for school aged pupils with autism and/or learning disabilities to access school holiday schemes with appropriate adult:child ratios and sensory environments etc?

Social Care are currently reviewing the Croydon Short Breaks Statement and children, young people and parents will be engaged in this process. That will provide the opportunity to highlight it as an area of development for Croydon.

When will Croydon LA review its current poor social breaks provision?

Caroline explained that there would be a review of the Short Breaks Statement in January with input from parents and young people. They are in the process of drafting documentation and will actively engage with all stakeholders including children, young people and parents. A new Short Breaks statement will be published in the spring.

With regards to respite for adults there is a meeting on 5th December at Croydon Mencap. Details of this event are on the Local Offer.

Disability Register and 'I-count' cards

It's been 3 years since Sutton stopped managing 'I-count' cards for Croydon. Please can you give an update on whether this scheme will be re-introduced in Croydon? And if so, when?

A new card should be available from mid-December. If parents have already applied, they do not need to reapply.

Mike agreed to find out the age range eligibility for the new card. This is subsequently been confirmed as 0-25.

Employment/housing

What is being done in Croydon to improve support for young people with additional needs finding employment and support with independent living?

The LA is trying to get local employers on board.

An attendee introduced herself as a transition worker from the Gateway Service working in schools and colleges. She explained that she runs groups for ages 16+ looking at employment, educational opportunities and setting up businesses.

Another attendee recommended the Disability Confident Action Group (contact Emma Shepherd).

There are dedicated staff working to support young people around employment, education and housing to develop a strong offer for post-19s. Please contact the council for more information.

Whose responsibility is it to involve young people themselves in this?

Everybody. Parents and professionals must work together to ensure that the loudest voice in this area is that of the young person.

Transition to adulthood

What is the role of a social worker in ensuring a successful transition from children's services to adult services?

It was explained that respite for young people entering adult services had proved problematic and the LA were looking at creative ways that this could be delivered.

The role of the social worker is to support the young person and family to achieve positive and assessed outcomes as they move from children's to adult services.

Carol Ann advised that they are looking at a locality based model with partnerships with Early Help, schools, the Local Authority, police etc. This pilot would be rolled out from January .

Budgets

How much is the overspend on children's services since they were judged 'inadequate' by Ofsted? What are the knock-on effects?

There has been £11 million of additional investment already made and the current understanding is that there will be a further £7 million in the year 19-20.

All the information is in the public domain via the Cabinet papers which can be found on the Council website.

Personal budgets and direct payments

Do you have any data to demonstrate how many people receive either or both of these in Croydon? There seems to be much confusion. What can be done to eradicate misconceptions about what these payments are for?

As of October 2018:

246 children for whom their parent/carer receives a Direct Payment

506 Adults receive a Direct Payment

205 Carers receive a Direct Payment

Personal Health Budgets – Our colleagues at the Clinical Commissioning Group will be able to provide you with this information.

PDA/VCB

Does the panel recognise the impact Violent Challenging Behaviour (VCB) in children and young people with SEND can have on families, including those with Pathological Demand Avoidance (PDA), especially when it's undiagnosed and unsupported? Where is the support and respite for these families?

Who is helping raise the profile of PDA in the Local Authority?

We are aware of the profile and impact of challenging behaviour and we are keen to support families who are managing situations which we recognise as extremely difficult. We are and will continue to work with colleagues from all the relevant professions to develop appropriate multi-disciplinary support packages for an individual as appropriate.

If you feel you need support in this area please make a referral via the SPOC (Single Point of Contact).

Local Offer

Having checked out the Local Offer for 25+ I was very disappointed to see the paucity of information and above all that almost all entries were Croydon Council/CCG services. Given the current strengths-based commissioning focus and the ethos of supporting people to access mainstream/community facilities, is there any work on widening the Local Offer information available for adults? Who is leading on this?

The local offer website is a growing asset and more information is being added all the time.

Adult information is on the website and on the Council's website. We are also in the process of developing an E-market place that will provide information on how adult service users can purchase support via direct payments for example. We will keep you updated as to the "go live" date for this new system. You will be able to access the E market place via the Local Offer Website.

Voice of young people

How will you ensure that the voices of children and young people with additional needs and disabilities are truly heard in Croydon?

As a service we are passionate about the voices of young people being heard and we are committed to including children and young people in as many aspects of engagement, participation and consultation around all aspects of their assessments, care, future, service, development and delivery as possible. We want to work with parents and all other professionals involved with children and young people to support us to deliver on this work.