

<b>Committee:</b>	<b>Dated:</b>
Community and Children's Services Committee	11 May 2018
<b>Subject:</b> Association of London Directors of Children's Services Sector Led Improvement	<b>Public</b>
<b>Report of:</b> Andrew Carter, Director of Community and Children's Services	<b>For Information</b>
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## Summary

This report presents a self-assessment of the effectiveness of the City of London (CoL) Children's Services functions and an evaluation of strengths and areas that require development. It will be used as part of a peer challenge process with other local authorities to enable sector-wide learning and service improvement.

## Recommendations

Members are asked to:

- Note the development and outcomes of the self-assessment.

## Main Report

### Background

1. The CoL is part of the Association of London Directors of Children's Services (ALDCS), a regional body representing London's statutory Directors of Children's Services.
2. As part of the ALDCS annual programme of sector-led improvement, an assessment of children's services has been introduced as an opportunity for local authorities to:
  - receive peer challenge within the region
  - share good practice
  - identify emerging regional priorities.
3. In line with a departmental commitment to be developmental and impact focused, the self-assessment has been welcomed as a timely opportunity to challenge our performance and identify opportunities to improve and excel.

## **Peer review process**

4. Each local authority in London has been tasked to submit a completed self-assessment by 30 April 2018.
5. CoL has been grouped into the east sub-region with the London Boroughs of:
  - Barking and Dagenham
  - Havering
  - Newham
  - Redbridge
  - Tower Hamlets
  - Waltham Forest

The east region will be split into two groups of three local authorities. Each group will come together and undertake a peer challenge discussion in May 2018.

6. From the peer review, a summit will be convened in summer 2018 to extract themes and priorities for the sub-region. The sub-regional themes will then be submitted to the wider London group. A London-wide summit will be held in autumn 2018 and a programme of London-wide and sub-regional improvement work will be confirmed.

## **Development**

7. All local authorities were provided with a template to complete the self-assessment. This required outlining a description of current provision and performance of children's services functions, along with an evaluation of strengths and areas for development. A data set was provided to inform the narrative of the self-assessment.
8. Development was undertaken through a series of departmental workshops and one-to-one sessions. A draft version of the self-assessment was presented and reviewed at the Children's Service Improvement Board and comments have been incorporated accordingly.

## **Key outcomes**

9. The self-assessment required a summary of:
  - outcomes we are proud of achieving this year
  - what we most need to improve
  - top risks for the future
  - innovation and good practice.

This summary is set out below.

10. Outcomes we are proud of achieving this year:

- Early Help  
The Early Help offer continues to impact on the low number of cases escalating through to Child Protection status. Very few children from the CoL need to go on a Child Protection Plan or come into the care of the local authority due to the quality of the universal and Early Help offer.
- Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers  
Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers benefit from a high level of consistency, support, advocacy and intervention that has helped them achieve their potential and aspirations.
- Service Improvement Plan  
A comprehensive Service Improvement Plan captures the learning from Quality Assurance and independent audits of our entire case load. This demonstrates rigour and openness to challenge and sets in place a dynamic, ongoing approach to continuous improvement.
- Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND)  
We are delivering good outcomes for children and young people with SEND. The March 2018 Inspection of SEND services identified: good self-awareness and knowledge of our services; strong and clear leadership; a clear commitment to support families; and excellent quality of reviews.

11. What we most need to improve:

- Co-production  
Co-production needs to become integral to service design and policy development. There are some good examples of co-production – such as the work carried out by the SEND team to develop the Local Offer – but we want to do more to improve the collaboration between staff, service users and partners and make best use of one another's knowledge and resources to achieve better outcomes.
- Measuring performance  
Our small cohorts of service users mean it is difficult to establish accurate benchmarking against, for example, national performance data. We need to consider bespoke, practical means of measuring performance that ensure we are able to use data to reliably inform service performance and provide insight to identify emerging issues and risks.

- Systemic Practice

We need to strengthen a systemic approach to practice.

- Measuring impact

Given our size, and that there is one maintained school in the CoL, our residents are likely to use children's services at our neighbouring authorities. Our challenge is monitoring the services CoL children are receiving from other local authorities and the impact this has on the CoL.

## 12. Top risks for the future:

- Capacity

Given our size, our capacity to deliver our statutory duties for all children has been challenged as a result of delays with the national transfer of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC). The risk is that further arrivals of UASC could compromise our ability to meet statutory duties in a timely way.

- SEND services provision

There are fewer places for specialist SEND services in London and an increasing risk that we will not be able to commission SEND services.

- Support for social workers

The CoL needs to provide commissioned resources for accreditation of social workers. There is a risk we could lose social workers if we don't have the right support in place.

## 13. Innovation and good practice:

- Innovation

We have commissioned research by Goldsmiths University into the links between affluence and neglect. The findings were shared at a launch event attended by more than 200 social workers from across the country. They are shaping a current programme to identify training and development required to respond to and manage issues arising from the research.

- Good practice

We have developed and implemented a campaign to raise awareness of and respond to the issue of a lack of regulation where nannies and au pairs are working with children and might pose a risk. We also designed robust and independent scrutiny of services and cases by establishing an independently

chaired Service Improvement Board and external audit of all casework. This provides challenge and supports a learning and continuous improvement culture.

## **Conclusion**

14. Appendix 1 presents a self-assessment of services provided to CoL children and families. It highlights strengths and areas that require development. It will be presented to neighbouring local authorities to be used as part of a peer challenge that will inform a programme of London-wide and sub-regional improvement activities.

## **Appendices**

- Appendix 1 – ALDCS Children's Services Self-Assessment

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