

Committee:	Dated:
Safeguarding Sub-Committee – For Information	19/09/2018
Subject: Corporate Parenting Strategy Annual Report 2017–18	Public
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Summary

This report informs the Committee of the performance of the City of London as a Corporate Parent, and the outcomes that have been achieved for the children in its care over the past year. It provides a summary of the full report which is attached as Appendix 1.

Recommendation

Members of the Safeguarding Sub Committee are asked to:

- Note the Corporate Parenting Report and the progress of its annual objectives.

Main Report

Background

1. The City of London Corporation is a Corporate Parent to the children who are in its care. These looked-after children are children and young people aged from 0 to the eve of their 18th birthday who cannot safely remain with their family, or those for whom the City Corporation acts as a parent in the absence of family. children in care (CIC) can include unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC), children with multiple disabilities and those who have suffered abuse and/or neglect. As such, looked-after children and young people are one of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged groups in our community.
2. In 2016 the City of London Children’s Services was rated ‘Good’ with a number of ‘Outstanding’ features, and the City and Hackney Safeguarding Children Board was rated ‘Outstanding’.

Current Position

Children in our Care

3. In 2017/18 the City Corporation looked after a total of 26 children and young people under the age of 18. This was the largest recorded annual intake. In comparison, the Corporation looked after a total of 17 children and young people in 2016/17. Of the 26 children looked after across 2017/18, 93% were UASC. Of the eight young people who had been in the City's care at the start of the year, seven transitioned into a City Corporation's care-leaver's service, and one was transferred to another local authority.

Corporate Parenting Board (Safeguarding Sub-Committee)

4. Over the past year, the Sub Committee has considered reports on topics including: how social workers engage neglectful parents from affluent backgrounds in the Child Protection System, and in suicide prevention.

Corporate Parenting Strategy and Action Plan

5. The Service Improvement Plan for 2017–2018 was developed in line with the Corporate Parenting Strategy and includes actions such as: ensuring that every young person seeking asylum is linked with a community refugee organisation; ensuring that young people are supported fully in respect of their immigration situations; that every young person has the opportunity to participate in at least one organised leisure activity; and that all care leavers are exempt from Council Tax.

Children in Care Council (CiCC)

6. A new CiCC Officer and Deputy CiCC Officer were elected in 2017. The Director of Community and Children's Services joined the CiCC meeting in December 2017, providing an opportunity for informal discussion about the CiCC's activities and focus.
7. The main issues addressed during the year included: keeping safe; consultation on changing the pathway plan approach; contributing to the City's Children and Young People's Plan; learning and discussion on preparing for independent living. In addition, members participated in Whitehall Takeover Day and the new London-wide CiCC.
8. Activities during the year included: an activity week in South Wales; celebration of achievement event; and a boat trip on the Thames.

Health and Wellbeing

9. In 2017–2018, all 25 children who remained in the City's care for more than one week received their statutory health assessment. Discounting the UASC who removed themselves from our services within one week, every child who came into care this year received their initial medical assessment by a paediatrician, and all those who had been in care for 12 months or more received their annual review by the looked-after children (LAC) health nurse. All children looked after

by the City at 31 March 2018 had up-to-date immunisations or were in the process of undertaking the UASC Booster programme at year end.

10. As the majority of our CIC are UASC who have often experienced journeys to the UK that increase risks of health conditions, we introduced a new health offer this year of automatic referral for infectious disease screening. We have also improved our sexual health recommendations on CIC reports, as this was identified as an area needing improvement.

Safeguarding

11. There was one allegation made by a child in City's care, against their previous foster carer. This was subsequently dealt with by the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) in the relevant local authority. The City of London has received no complaints from the children or young people in its care, or from care leavers.
12. Over the year, three UASC, aged between 15 and 17 years, went missing from their placements, with a total of four episodes between them. One, who had just come into our care, did not return. Of the other three missing episodes: two returned within 24 hours; but one was missing for an extended period of five weeks.

Education and Employment

13. The report covering the 2017–2018 academic year is due for circulation in November 2018. The attainment in the virtual school meeting now forms a part of the Children and Social Care Team meeting. This is to ensure full contribution from the children's social workers, to review processes, discuss cases, and develop policies. In 2017–2018, all UASC and their foster carers are provided with a toolkit to support language development. The first celebration event for our young people was held, praising their educational and employment successes.

Assessments, Case Planning and Permanency Planning

14. A Permanency Policy and Panel continued to strengthen the oversight of care planning in 2017–2018. This included a new record of decision whether to issue care proceedings or not. The Permanency Panel has led to a young person having a formal celebration to recognise that his foster placement would be for the remainder of his childhood.

Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) Service

15. The IRO conducted approximately 60 visits to meet children in the last two years. The purpose of these visits was to introduce the role of the IRO to newly accommodated children and, in all cases, to consult children and monitor the quality and progress of their care.

Accommodation

16. UASC are often initially placed in accommodation under time pressure, often with the providers receiving little information about the child. These children are often, therefore, subject to placement changes within the first few months. As so many of our CIC are UASC, placement instability is a challenge for us.
17. Of the 26 children looked after during this reporting period, 13 were newly accommodated UASC. Of those, 12 new UASC remained in our care for more than one week: four had one temporary foster care placement each before transfer to another local authority; and one older new UASC was placed in a supported shared residential placement awaiting transfer to National Asylum Support Service (NASS) accommodation. Of the other six new UASC during the year: one remained in their original foster care placement; three remained in their second foster care placements (all three having moved from emergency provisional foster care placements); but two were in their third placements by 31 March 2018. The one non-UASC coming into care remained in the same foster care placement throughout their period in care.

Areas of development and priorities for the year ahead

18. In order to continue achieving the City Corporation's commitment to ensuring the children in and leaving care reach their full potential, and have lives in which they can thrive, we will continue to enhance services and deliver targeted actions in 2018–19, including:
- dedicated placements officer in place to help reduce placement breakdown
 - improved recording of young people's views, including within pathway plans
 - specific measures in place to safeguard UASC
 - care leavers to have a trusted friend/adult they can talk to
 - care leavers to have access to a peer mentor
 - improving our work where we think young people are working illegally
 - LAC reviews to be triggered if a young person is at risk of being excluded
 - training for social workers to ensure that plans are consistently SMART (that is, Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Timely)
 - further develop our expertise around education and employment for UASC
 - social workers to attend London Asylum Seekers Consortium training
 - service entitlements for CIC and care leavers to be published on our website and shared with care leavers.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Corporate Parenting Annual Report 2017–18

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