

Committee:	Dated:
Safeguarding Sub Committee	08/02/2021
Subject: Service Development Plan	Public
Which outcomes in the City Corporation's Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?	1, 2, 3, 4
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	N
Report of: Andrew Carter, Director of Community & Children's Services	For Information
Report author: Rachel Green	

This report sets out the progress with the 2020/21 Service Development Plan for Children's Social Care and Early Help. A full annual self-evaluation of progress as at end September 2020 is appended.

Summary

The 2020/21 Service Development Plan (appendix 1) has driven forward excellence in social work and early help practice, from our judgment of 'outstanding' by Ofsted in March 2020. The aim is for excellence in all areas and to further strengthen our work with our resident children, families, children looked after and care leavers. The annual Self Evaluation (SEF) provides a thorough assessment of the service at end of September 2020 (appendix 2, Non-Public).

Recommendation

Members are asked to note the report.

Main Report

Background:

1. Ofsted judged Children's Social Care and Early Help in the City of London as Outstanding in March 2020. Judgements of outstanding were given for leadership, for children in care and children looked after. A judgement of good was given for children in need of support and protection. This report will provide focus on excellence within children in in need of support and protection. The service development plan moves us from April 2020 to March 2021 as we strive for excellence consistently.

2. Ofsted made two recommendations following their visit to the City: one was to ensure no delay in step up/step down between early help and children's social care, the other was to strengthen the management decision making at all stages of the child's journey. Both are complete: an automated process now tracks step ups/step downs, alongside a strengthened management hub, and a pilot Deputy Team Manager post has given more capacity as the team has grown. The growth has been in line with expanding numbers of Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC). This pilot has not been established, due to the ongoing COVID pressures and those of the Target Operating Model.

Current position:

3. A full annual self-assessment was completed in September 2020, providing narrative and data for each area of practice. This assessment is appended.

Excellence with Children in Need, and Children in Need of Protection

4. In the last quarter, we have increased the number of families supported as children in need and children in need of protection using our online trainee systemic family therapy clinic. Early help used the Clinic most in the first two quarters and supported children with disabilities in particular. The clinic is our flagship project in partnership with Kings College London, that we have developed this year; an opportunity arising within the context of the pandemic. Child and family feedback from our annual survey (October) shows how highly valued the systemic therapy has been. A detailed report on the clinic is planned for March 2021.
5. The service development plan shows strong progress with monthly management hub oversight of every child in need case. This offers a critical consideration of timely, smart planning, and has enabled managers to support families by chairing not only the first CIN review, but others as needed where there might need more grip/challenge. An example of this is with housing and negotiation.

Annual Survey

6. The children's social care and early help annual survey has been completed and report received since the last Safeguarding Sub Committee. The findings are exceptional for our Early Help Service, which shows the level of development from the Ofsted inspection which found this area to be 'good', and they are very strong for all other areas – well above national average. The feedback from children and families has been used to drive service improvement, with actions being created in line with wishes and feelings. We will write back to children and families, with a 'you said, we did' postcard, to ensure the feedback loop is complete.
7. The report was received end October 2020, only areas to improve are considered in the service development plan. The amber actions are:
 - Improving pledge awareness
 - Improving confidence making health bookings for UASC

- Overcrowding and housing
 - travelling to placement when UASC present at the police station overnight
 - Care leavers: loneliness and immigration support
8. The plan outlines the actions to improve. Immigration continues to be the main source of worry for our UASC, as uncertainty about country of residence affects every aspect of their lives. In the last year, we have found a very inconsistent response from the Home Office, with some young people having interviews quickly, and some taking longer. This having no bearing on the actions of their lawyer or social worker. We are working with the home office to begin using virtual interviews via Business Skype, which is a new offer they have made.
 9. For a young person it is difficult to understand the roles involved, the experience is one of frustrated waiting, with no timeframe for resolution. Therapy, social activities and relationship with a social worker strengthens resilience, but an answer, preferably a positive one, would be the strongest improvement of wellbeing for this cohort. Our work with a charity called 'Waging Peace', developed over the last quarter, aims to build such resilience and improve chances of positive immigration success for our Sudanese boys¹.
 10. Our contract for Independent Visitors (IVs) has been reviewed and re-awarded to Action for Children (January 2021). Contract monitoring has set out expectations as to the time and number of IVs for children in and leaving care, with the aim of reducing loneliness.
 11. Our joint project with Coram, to reduce the impact of trauma by improving sleep, should strengthen the work of our social workers and improve lives of our UASC.

Equalities implications: Anti-Racism and Black Lives Matter

12. National research has shown that black children are often not given therapeutic support of sufficient quality until crises and ill health become critical. Cognisant of this, we have ensured we prioritise black children and people of colour in our systemic therapy clinic² to intervene early and to meet need as it arises.
13. The service has continued to develop anti-racist social work practice. Evidence of our work has been shared (on request) to the DfE and to the London Improvement and Innovation Alliance.
14. Sadie Carnegie (Early Help lead) and Temitope Ademosu (systemic psychotherapist, and lead of the Col/KCL student family therapy clinic) shared a presentation and spoke to our work with the DfE Children's Social Care festival on 20 January 2021. CoL and London Borough of Camden worked together to present our shared good practice. The DfE gave really good feedback on our work and have invited us to speak next year and discuss the impact of our work and ongoing practice.

¹ <https://wagingpeace.info/> accessed 22 January 2021

² Note: Children's Social Care and Early Help Service have decided to use Black, and People of Colour instead of BAME (Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic), which is not preferred.

Conclusion

15. The Service Evaluation Framework (SEF) appended provides a full assessment of service effectiveness at end September 2020. The service has continued to provide an excellent service to children and families, with staff working diligently throughout the pandemic, seeing young people, children and families face to face and providing a duty service in the Guildhall.

Appendix:

1. Service Development Plan 2020/21, updated January 2021
2. Self-Evaluation Framework September 2020 (Non-Public)

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