

<b>Committee:</b>	<b>Dated:</b>
Audit and Risk Management Committee	23/03/2021
<b>Subject:</b> CR17 Safeguarding Risk Deep Dive	<b>Public</b>
<b>Which outcomes in the City Corporation's Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?</b>	1,2 & 4
<b>Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?</b>	N
<b>If so, how much?</b>	N/A
<b>What is the source of funding?</b>	N/A
<b>Has this funding source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department?</b>	N/A
<b>Report of:</b> Andrew Carter, Director of Community and Children's Services	<b>For information</b>
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## **Summary**

This report is to update members on the work undertaken to mitigate the Corporate Risk - CR 17 Safeguarding, relating to the protection of children and adults at risk, defined as an adult with social care needs, who is or may be at risk of significant harm.

Failure to follow the safeguarding polices and the arrangements in place designed to prevent harm to children and adults at risk may result in harm to service users and risks to the City of London's reputation, possible investigation and a reduction in public confidence in the services provided.

The City of London is a strategic partner alongside the London Borough of Hackney in relation to safeguarding and the City and Hackney Safeguarding Children Partnership (CHSCP) and the City and Hackney Safeguarding Adult Board (CHSAB) monitor the effectiveness of work to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and adults, championing good practice and analysing data to inform service planning. The Director for Community and Children Services and the Assistant Director (AD) People Services sit on both Boards. The City specific sub-committees, which meet bi-monthly, for both children and adults and report on the work of the sub-committees into the main Boards, are Independently chaired and have representation from the City of London Corporation, City of London Police, Health, Education and other agencies, for example from the Voluntary Sector, who work across the City of London.

Community and Children Services Grand Committee has a Safeguarding Sub Committee for Children and Adults. This sub-committee oversees the City of London's responsibilities to safeguard children and adults at risk. Annual reports

on both Children and Adults Safeguarding are presented to this sub-committee, these reports provide background information regarding the governance arrangements, membership, partnership engagement and performance information in respect of safeguarding activity for Children and Adults. These reports have also been presented to the Health and Wellbeing Board and safer City Partnership.

The number of child protection investigations and adult Safeguarding alerts is very low compared to other local authorities. The City of London aims to be proactive in the response to safeguarding and is seeking to promote a broader understanding of safeguarding. This is reflected in a focus on the prevention of abuse as well as a robust response to incidents of abuse. The importance of strong strategic links with other key partners such as the City of London Police, Education and Health is recognised as essential in order to ensure that all our residents are safeguarded both within the community and in their homes.

The Covid-19 pandemic has affected the way services have been delivered and a significant part of this report addresses how safeguarding has continued to addressed despite the impact of the pandemic.

Mitigating actions include the delivery of safeguarding training programmes, the Adoption of a Corporate Safeguarding Policy, the appointment of Safeguarding Champions across the City of London and campaigns to raise awareness.

The gross risk is currently assessed as AMBER with the likelihood rated as rare and the impact serious, see appendix 1. Despite a range of mitigating actions to protect children and adults at risk, they cannot entirely eliminate the risk and the potential impact on individuals, public confidence and the reputation of the City of London and this is reflected in the risk score assigned to this important statutory duty.

## **Recommendation**

Members are asked to:

- Note this report

## **Main Report**

### **Background**

1. The Adults and Children's Social Care teams continue to meet Care Quality Commission (CQC) and Ofsted performance targets in respect of children and adults and work has been done to develop a performance framework that places more emphasis onto qualitative data available rather than focusing solely on the quantitative information to measure the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements across the partnership.

2. Ofsted carried out an inspection of Children's Social Care Services in March 2020, this resulted in an 'Outstanding' grade. An action plan has been produced to ensure that the needs of children continue to be consistently prioritised
3. A Safeguarding in Education Forum has engagement from all City of London Schools. This meets on a termly basis and provides updated information regarding national/regional and/or local policy and practice requirements regarding safeguarding in schools. Membership of the Forum includes representatives from the City of London Academies.
4. The City of London Safeguarding Policy was implemented in 2014 and is reviewed on an annual basis. Audit mechanisms have been put in place to ensure sufficient oversight of the City of London's safeguarding responsibilities, including those outside of the Local Authority area and those which apply to its charitable elements.
5. The network of Safeguarding Champions to fully embed safeguarding responsibilities across the organisation has been relaunched. Some of the existing champions have moved on or no longer perform this role. Chief Officers have been asked to nominate a Safeguarding Champion for their departments, and to report to the Director of Community and Children's Services every six months on the discharge of their safeguarding responsibilities. Work on these actions has been delayed due to demands relating to the Covid-19 response and to the impact of the Target Operating Model (TOM) which will lead to some departmental restructures.
6. Work will continue on ensuring Safeguarding champions are identified in each department once the full impact of the TOM has been implemented. This action is highlighted on the risk register with a new target date of May 2022.
7. Business continuity arrangements relating to Mosaic (Adult and Children Information system) reliability issues have been reviewed in the light of the Hackney Council cyber-attack which resulted in the out of hours service commissioned from Hackney being unable to access records on the City of London system.
8. Special arrangements have been put in place to ensure the out of hours service has access to City of London client records as regular downloads of clients and contact information can be made available. Although investigations are ongoing discussions with our own Information Technology team have identified that due to the architecture of City of London systems, a similar attack would not result in the range of issues encountered by Hackney.
9. Work continues on raising awareness of the role of the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) role. The LADO has delivered training to the Early Years Provider Forum which is well attended by managers from nursery settings across the City. The department also hosted the National LADO conference in May 2019, this has significantly raised the profile of the City nationally and may well have been the reason for an increased number of referrals from other agencies outside the City of London since the conference.

## **Covid-19**

### **Adult Social Care**

10. Adult Social Care delivery and a duty social care system have been maintained throughout and has included face to face contact where that is necessary. Where appropriate additional resources have been made available.
11. The independent Chair of the Adult Safeguarding Board has advised that the regular meetings of the City sub-group (quarterly) and the City and Hackney Safeguarding Adult Board Executive (monthly) have been and continue to provide effective mechanisms for reporting by partners, monitoring the impact and obtaining assurances regarding responsiveness, since March 2020.
12. In terms of specific issues for safeguarding adults in the City, there are the ongoing challenges of safeguarding homeless people and learning from practice over the past months to inform work over the next phase. A dedicated social worker to work in this area has been appointed with the aim of improving safeguarding practice, prevention of abuse and protection for this client group.
13. There are regional and national concerns about increases in domestic abuse (including intergenerational abuse), COVID-19 related scams, and mental health impact which relates to increasing levels of self-neglect and potentially suicide. There are also infection control and quality issues regarding care provision (not only in Care Homes) that interface with safeguarding. These areas have been, and continue to be, discussed and addressed at the meetings described above. We have continued to review the data and augmented this with a 'deep dive' into a sample of casework from a range of partners to understand better the impact of COVID-19 on risks in peoples' lives, and will continue to seek appropriate responses from partner agencies.

### **Children social care, early help, early years and education**

14. Multi agency engagement in strategic and operational delivery of children's social care has improved significantly due to the whole system implementation of virtual working.
15. Whilst this new way of working will not fully replace some key meetings benefiting from face to face engagement (such as child protection conferences and supervision meetings), the ability to maintain a line of sight and grip on areas of casework has been enhanced through the use of virtual working arrangements. The service has found that some young people prefer this way of communicating.
16. Throughout the pandemic the service has been able to ensure that all children and young people known to Children Social Care have been contacted, either virtually or face to face, at greater levels of frequency than prior to the pandemic.
17. Delivery has benefitted – and the service learnt – from better triangulation of data across services areas to identify vulnerable children across Education, Early Years, Early Help and Children Social Care. This has helped the department to retain line of sight on the most vulnerable children in the City and ensure they are engaging in learning opportunities both in school and where applicable, virtually.

18. The approach ensured that all the identified vulnerable children in the City were confirmed to have access to learning both during the first wave and remains in place to address issues in the situation ahead. This system will be retained as a key information sharing tool to support improved partnership working with vulnerable children and families in the City.
19. The department has written to all care leavers offering advice and guidance re: COVID 19 and sees ongoing communication and engagement with vulnerable children and young people as key to understanding their lived experience of COVID and how we can best support them.
20. The department continues to work with children looked after and care leavers via the City of London Children in Care Council and the London Children in Care Council. The department has raised with the DfE concerns about the impact of COVID on the employment opportunities for care leavers. The department is looking internally within the Corporation and externally to see how we might offset any economic pressures and increase opportunities for vulnerable children and young.
21. The Corporate Parenting Strategy and Annual report was presented to the Community and Children's Services Grand Committee in March 2021 and a member briefing event on the role of the Corporate Parent will be taking place in June 2021.

### **Rough sleeping services**

22. The department's rough sleeping service acted urgently to secure the government's commitment to "everyone in". Direction and considerable pressure came from the relevant government department and Greater London Authority.
23. The department has leased the Youth Hostel Association building on Carter Lane to provide emergency accommodation. Securing this accommodation and agreeing the lease was complex. Mobilising and co-ordinating the inputs of several departments was challenging in the face of competing priorities faced by those colleagues and led to delays. There is very little capacity in the department to secure and mobilise unplanned services, and staff worked excessive hours to achieve this.
24. Documentation requiring completion by partner departments in relation to this service has been huge, and often required professional expertise to complete. The corporate approach to risk management was also hampering when the focus needed to be on delivering the required outcome.
25. The department also mobilised additional health and support services and has acted as the lead commissioned for a pan-London Homeless Drug and Alcohol Service.
26. The flexibility and responsiveness of the service has secured additional resources and delivery during an unprecedented time. In doing so it has saved lives among some of the most vulnerable in the City's communities.
27. Members have shown pro-active leadership in pushing for expanded and better pathways to sustainable accommodation and supporting officers at this unprecedented time.

## **Mental health and wellbeing**

28. The department has worked with partners to mitigate and prevent impacts of the pandemic on mental health and wellbeing, and ensure essential services continue for those who have a mental health diagnosis.
29. A range of initiatives have been put in place by the department directly, or through its work with partners – notably City and Hackney Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) – to deliver support for those experience mental ill health during the pandemic.
30. Kooth – a specialist mental health service for young people – was commissioned by the CCG. GP services promoted this to their young patients and the service promoted across a range of local channels, including social media.
31. Mental health services and support targeting frontline workers during the pandemic – such as Frontline19 – have been promoted in a joint approach involving the department, LB Hackney, Bart's Health, East London Foundation trust, Homerton University Hospital Trust and the CCG. Similar initiatives exist in the neighbouring local authority and CCG areas.
32. The Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) and community mental health services for adults have continued to operate throughout.

## **Schools**

33. Throughout the pandemic, schools received regular updated COVID guidance and resources that can be distributed to parents, staff, and pupils to provide general guidance. These resources were in different languages, for SEND pupils and available in many forms included printed material, videos, animations, and phone messages.
34. Advanced training for leadership occurred in risk assessment and assurance and in equalities analysis. Schools worked closely in partnership including working collectively to ensure all pupil premium children and others without online access were quickly able to access computers with data and a range of high-quality online lesson material.
35. In the City of London, the department was able to quickly secure provision of education hubs for both primary and secondary pupils if they were needed. Most schools across the family of schools remained open throughout the crisis and provided high quality education to vulnerable pupils and those of key workers. Attendance was generally low, but the pupils who did attend have benefitted from the provision in terms of both social and academic development. All schools offered virtual provision, and this was most successful when it was a timetabled provision with very clear and consequential expectations around attendance.
36. Additional mental health support services are available to both pupils and teachers. All school have access to mental health training and have designed post-trauma recovery curricula. Additional training and support have also been provided to manage any behavioural challenges as pupils returned to school.

37. The City of London Safer Schools App was launched in May 2020 to promote increased safety online and will be reviewed after half-term to capture and learning and future developments. It is of note that Ofsted identified Aldgate School as a pilot site for an assurance visit in early September due to the positive feedback they had received regarding the work of the school during the pandemic. The school has been open throughout.
38. The City of London Corporation has provided vouchers to city resident children who are eligible for free school meals and officers and members continue to explore the viability and effectiveness of ongoing support. This builds on extensive support provided during lockdown (wave 1) and impressive work by Aldgate School. The department is reviewing the impact of current approaches to child poverty to see how these could be improved.

### **Digital inclusion**

39. The reliance on digital platforms for most communication and service delivery has been significant during the pandemic period.
40. The department acted ahead of government support to ensure children and young people at risk of missing education and learning due to digital exclusion were supported. Over 50 children and young people were identified and supported with devices and data to ensure they could access their education. Those targeted include children in care, those with special education needs and disabilities, children and young people engaged with Early Help services, and those identified by the Aldgate School.
41. Access to free internet services was hampered by the closure of libraries and community centres. For households required to shield, internet access could provide a means to shop and have social contact. At the suggestion of Members a scheme was mobilised to provide free data to low income shielding households.
42. The challenge of digital inclusion has been widely reported and recognised locally, regionally and nationally. The department is reviewing initiatives and best practice to identify how it can overcome device, skills and data poverty, and how such approaches may support wider objectives to tackle financial exclusion and social isolation.

### **Adult Education and Skills**

43. The Adult Skills and Education Service (ASES) is small team and there is a focus on building relationships with learners to promote a culture of openness, where individuals feel comfortable raising concerns with staff. Despite the size of the team, all education providers are required to create Designating Safeguarding Leads (DSLs). There needs to be at least two, and ideally a small team of people with a minimum of Level 3 safeguarding training. However, there is currently a potential single point of failure for safeguarding arrangements within ASES due to there being one DSL. ASES management are recruiting a safeguarding consultant and a safeguarding training provider organisation to instigate a programme of rapid training

to at least Level 3 for a new DSL and a small group of people including a deputy safeguarding lead to ensure sufficient coverage.

44. Updated training is being sourced across the service to ensure up to date safeguarding training of staff and sufficient members of the Advisory Board.

## **Conclusion**

45. The owner of this risk is the Director of Community and Children's Services, however every department has a responsibility to ensure that staff are aware of the risk and how they should recognise and respond to safeguarding issues. The corporate safeguarding audit recommendations will drive forward a work plan of raising awareness and understanding of child and adult safeguarding across the organisation.
46. Social Care staff are fully trained and have the knowledge to enable them to detect signs of abuse, ill treatment and exploitation. It is essential that this awareness is continued across the organisation as many other departments come into contact with children and adults at risk.
47. The pandemic has had an impact on delivery of services and have had to adapt to the changing context. Therefore, there are plans to keep under review the new ways of working to ensure needs continue to be identified and met.
48. Risk of abuse is an ongoing risk and whilst the City of London has taken a series of mitigating actions there is always a degree of uncertainty due to the nature of this risk.

## **Appendices**

- Appendix 1: CR17 Risk and current actions