

<b>Committee:</b> Safeguarding Sub-Committee – For Information	<b>Dated:</b> 10/10/2022
<b>Subject: Self Assessment and Service Development Plan</b>	<b>Public Cover Report Non-public appendix 1</b>
<b>Which outcomes in the City Corporation’s Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?</b>	<i>Contribute to a flourishing society sections 1-4</i>
<b>Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?</b>	<b>N</b>
<b>If so, how much?</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>What is the source of Funding?</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain’s Department?</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>Report of:</b> Andrew Carter, Director of Community and Children’s Services	<b>For Information</b>
<b>Report author:</b> Rachel Talmage, Head of Service	

### Summary

This report introduces the self-evaluation for the City of London Corporation’s Children and Families Service for 2022. It also includes the Service Development Plan (SDP) that sets out practice developments to improve the daily lives of children in need of help, support, and protection.

### Recommendation

Members are asked to:

- Note the report.

### Main Report

#### Background

1. The Service Development Plan (SDP) sets out practice improvements and is the key means of driving improvement across social care practice. It contains actions that will be taken forward to deliver improvements that have been identified from a range of sources – including external audits, thematic audits, case reviews, research, and user feedback. It sets in place a dynamic, ongoing approach to continuous improvement, which is overseen, scrutinised, and challenged by the Safeguarding Sub-Committee and the Achieving Excellence Board. It is reviewed quarterly to reflect changing needs and emerging priorities for improvement. Areas for improvement last year and for this year going forward are considered in the self-evaluation form (SEF) and are from the SDP – see Appendices.
2. Areas for improvement that were identified in the Ofsted inspection report in 2020 are included in the SDP so that we do not lose sight of these, even if they have

been achieved. This ensures oversight of sustained improvement. The SDP has an ongoing focus on enhancing our understanding of the lived experience of our children and young people and measuring the impacts that our work has.

3. The SEF covers the period September 2021 to August 2022 and builds on previous self-assessments, the most recent being in September 2022. The SDP runs in line with the financial year April 2022 to March 2023, which aligns with our monthly and quarterly data production. The SDP is a 'live' document and is updated at least quarterly following audit/surveys/national panel reviews, the social care review and other sources that compel innovation or action.
4. The SEF and SDP sit within the wider context of the pandemic recovery, Afghan Resettlement Programme and several Ukrainian resettlement schemes during the period.
5. The City of London Corporation is only satisfied with delivering excellent services for children and families, building on our existing outstanding service as noted in the Ofsted Inspection of March 2020.

### **Current Position**

6. Guests at Afghan Resettlement Programme hotels have been helped throughout this last year with accommodation, practical and emotional support, cultural orientation, parenting help and consistent kind Early Help support via twice weekly drop-ins. Staffing was increased with an Afghan Project Lead social worker, additional administrative capacity, and an additional social worker. The project has helped families leave the hotel, either to move to their new permanent accommodation, or to their next accommodation provided by the home office. Support was offered to help understand new areas, transfer of schools and health services, as well as basic tasks such as buying bags/suitcases. This project is coming to an end as guests relocate. The project lead has capacity to further strengthen our Children in Need work. The SDP sets out the programme of work designed to boost clarity and impact.
7. The Homes for Ukraine Resettlement Scheme is underway, and the service responds to safeguarding enquiries and follow-up work where needed, in line with our thresholds of need.
8. The recent Action for Children Survey had a high number of respondents and found exceptional service satisfaction with our Early Help, looked-after child and care leaver population. The survey had mixed feedback on our Children in Need work to reduce harm at home. This is not unexpected given the nature of some of the involvement. The negative feedback has been heard by the service, and an immediate response was instigated to strengthen the family offer.

### **Proposals**

9. The SDP sets out the plans for this financial year, and some outcomes that have been reached – such as the successful move of Afghan guests to permanent

homes, health outcomes being met and good timely transfer of information to their incoming local authorities.

10. The SEF, and the SDP (in more detail) set out current improvement work and future development work. One staff member from each of Early Help and Social Care is learning British Sign Language this term, in response to a parental request. The household support fund is being used in both service areas to mitigate the cost-of-living crisis. Work on the cost-of-living progresses, with a staff away day focusing on the topic, a review of care leaver finances, and ideas being obtained from a conference in October. A strategic group across the Department of Community and Children's Services is now in place given the scale of the crisis. The impact of these initiatives will be to help reduce anxiety, mental and physical ill health and reduce the potential dependency on statutory provision where possible.

### **Key Data**

11. Children's Service level data is available to the Committee. The data shows the increase in both Early Help and Children in Need numbers over the last two quarters, which corresponds with the Afghan and Ukrainian resettlements. As the guests have moved, these numbers have reduced and the caseload is not markedly different to previous years. Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) remain our highest proportion of work, although there has been a small increase number of resident children in care, due to the risk of significant harm, which has been part of care proceedings.

12. Caseloads remain within the London average.

### **Corporate & Strategic Implications**

13. Strategic implications – This report and appendices align with all four elements of the corporate strategy:

Contribute to a flourishing society:

- People are safe and feel safe.
- People enjoy good health and wellbeing.
- People have equal opportunities to enrich their lives and reach their full potential.
- Communities are cohesive and have the facilities they need.

All children in care are now provided with an advocate, unless they opt out. This works well with our Children in Care Council, and it is hoped this will strengthen their confidence and experience.

14. Financial implications – Care leaver finances are being reviewed in the light of the cost-of-living crisis. This will likely have financial implications that are not covered by the Home Office grant after age 18. Providing additional financial support in the short term is likely to avoid incurring additional cost long term. The additional spend for the Afghan project has been offset by specific Home Office funding.

15. Resource implications – Staffing is at the right level, increased for the Afghan project, and this will decrease. One Early Help social worker has finished their work as the project winds down. The Target Operating Model has meant the successful establishment of the deputy team manager, and three extra social work posts, and permanent post-holders have been in place since April 2022.
16. Legal implications – None.
17. Risk implications – There is a risk that, if the service drops in quality, children will not be safe and cared for. The service consistently expects excellence for every child and has a range of mechanisms, including the Achieving Excellence Board, to identify any areas for improvement quickly to ensure speedy remedy.
18. Equalities implications – The Public Sector Equality Duty under the Equality Act 2010 applies to the service. The Social GRACES (gender, race, age, class, culture, employment status, education, sexual orientation, spirituality, among others) are a core part of our systemic social work practice. Equality and equity are at the heart of supervision, work with families and with each other. The SDP explores equality across each of the service areas, with a responsive service to our Afghan guests, and seeking to further develop, for example, mental health work for our Sudanese care leavers.
19. Climate implications – None.
20. Security implications – None.

## **Conclusion**

21. The SEF sets out where we are as a service and our ambitions for every child known to or potentially new to our service. The service is strong, and seeks to continuously learn and improve. The service away day on 23 September 2022 brings together staff to review our cost-of-living context and the direction of travel. The SDP details how we plan to deliver improvements to our children.

## **Appendices**

- **Appendix 1** – Self Evaluation Form August 2022 (non-public)
- **Appendix 2** – Service Development Plan 2022–2023 updated September 2022 (public)

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