

Committees: Safeguarding Sub-Committee – For Information Community and Children’s Services Committee – For Information	Dated: 23/11/2023 13/11/2023
Subject: Children’s Social Care Self Evaluation Framework	Public (this report) Non-Public (Annexe 1)
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
If so, how much?	£
What is the source of Funding?	N/A
Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain’s Department?	N/A
Report of: Judith Finlay, Executive Director, Community and Children’s Services	For Information
Report author: Ellie Ward, Head of Strategy and Performance	

Summary

Children’s Social Care and Early Help are subject to inspection by Ofsted under the Inspecting Local Authority Children’s Services (ILACS) Framework. These inspections take place every four to five years and, in between, there are shorter, specific ‘focus’ visits and an Annual Engagement Meeting (AEM) with Ofsted.

Each year the Department of Community and Children’s Services produces a Self-Evaluation Framework (SEF) report which is used for the AEM and also for inspections.

This report presents the Self-Evaluation Framework for Members to note.

Recommendation

Members are asked to:

- Note the report.

Main Report

Background

1. Children’s Social Care and Early Help are subject to inspection by Ofsted under the ILACS Framework. These inspections take place every four to five years and, in between, there are shorter, specific ‘focus’ visits and an AEM with Ofsted.
2. The City of London Corporation’s last full inspection was in 2020 when we were rated ‘outstanding’ overall. A focus visit took place in November 2022 to look at

front door services. Feedback was very positive and there were no recommendations for improvement.

3. Each year the Department of Community and Children's Services produces a SEF report which is used for the AEM and also for inspections.
4. Though there is no set format or template for the SEF report, it is designed to allow the local authority to reflect on their delivery and performance, their challenges, how they have responded, and the impact they have had on children, young people and their families.
5. As part of our work to drive excellence in Children's Social Care, in 2020 we also established the Achieving Excellence Board (AEB), which is independently chaired by a former Ofsted Inspector who provides challenge to us on our services and performance, and provides advice on where we could strengthen services or approach.
6. The City of London Corporation's SEF is built around the aims of the AEB:
 - Doing the core job to a consistent standard
 - Being creative, pioneering and having a 'can do' culture
 - Having a relentless focus on outcomes.
7. Each area of our work, such as contacts, assessments, Early Help, children looked after (CLA), and care leavers are considered under these three headings.
8. A copy of the SEF is provided as Appendix 1 in non-public items.

Current Position

Doing the core job to a consistent standard

9. Overall, our performance in delivering our statutory responsibilities has maintained excellent quality and performance, despite the challenges of the pandemic, the cost of living crisis and the financial constraints in which we operate.
10. The number of CLA has decreased in recent years after a large increase around four years ago. However, the number of care leavers we support (at an increased level compared to other local authorities) has been increasing. National policy proposes an increased focus on care leavers and their needs. The service already exceeds this in terms of the support offered.
11. Our Early Help Service consistently achieves positive feedback and outcomes and was particularly effective in supporting our guests who were placed in the City of London as part of the Afghanistan Resettlement Programme. Over the past two years, the Early Help Service has run an innovative parenting course, developed by the Race Equality Foundation. One of its impacts has been that parents have developed their own peer support network.

12. There have been ongoing challenges around provision of health services to looked-after children. Specific difficulties have been around accessing dentistry, and health review performance being less efficient than planned. In addressing this, we have collaborated with health colleagues and paid for some emergency dentistry where needed.
13. A stable workforce means that children are able to form and sustain meaningful, consistent and stable relationships with their workers.
14. There is robust governance around Children's Social Care, with Members routinely trained and engaged in their role as Corporate Parent.

Being creative, pioneering and having a can do culture

15. This year we developed a family therapy clinic with King's College London, which is proving effective and valuable.
16. This year we introduced the co-location of a Forensic Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (FCAMHS) clinician with members of the Social Care team.
17. The City of London Corporation's assets were utilised to create enrichment for our Children and Young People – for example, the project with the City's independent schools for Children who are Looked After (CLA) and care leavers to enrich their education. This also benefits young people at the City's schools.
18. A new programme of apprenticeships for our CLA and care leavers is being developed.
19. Secured Home Office immigration interviews to be conducted online with social worker support, which minimises stress and increases the speed and outcome of people's interviews.

A relentless focus on outcomes

20. External audits have been positive in terms of the impact for children and their families.
21. The SEF sets out some specific case studies illustrating the impact that the service has had.

Areas for improvement

22. The SEF sets out a number of improvements that focus on strengthening our existing robust work. These are included in our Service Development Plan which is monitored quarterly by the AEB and the Safeguarding Sub-Committee.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

23. Strategic implications – Our work in Children’s Social Care helps deliver on Corporate Outcomes 1–4 and the outcomes in a number of our other Departmental Strategies, including the Children and Young People’s Plan and the Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Strategy.
24. Financial implications – none
25. Resource implications – none
26. Legal implications – Children’s Social Care Service operates within a legal framework set out in a number of Acts.
27. Risk implications – none
28. Equalities implications – none, but equalities implications are considered throughout the service and, where a new service or initiative is instigated, an Equalities Impact Assessment will be carried out.
29. Climate implications – none
30. Security implications – none

Conclusion

31. This report presents to Members the annual SEF for Children’s Social Care.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 (non-public) – City of London Corporation Self-Evaluation Framework (SEF) for Children’s Social Care

Ellie Ward

Head of Strategy and Performance

T: 020 7332 1535

E: ellie.ward@cityoflondon.gov.uk