

MARCH 2024

Self-evaluation children and families service 2022-23

Six-month review



Context and purpose



This six-month review considers progress against the identified priority areas for development in the City of London Corporation's (City Corporation) children and families service self-evaluation (SEF) completed in September 2023. It allows for reflection on what has been achieved, the difference it has made and what needs to be the focus for the next six months.

Progress will be reviewed again at the year point and an update provided in the September 2024 SEF.

Overview of progress

- Successes include developing direct work with children, launching the Children in Care Council (CiCC) pledge and Care Leavers Compact, approving ring-fenced apprenticeships for care leavers and agreeing experience of care as a protected characteristic. Care leavers have also been guaranteed free bus travel.
- Significant progress has been made around strengthening the offer for care leavers and the early identification of need for global majority children and young people. As well as the Virtual School restructure, Virtual School Advisory Partnership and influencing national policy around educational outcomes for care leavers and kinship care.
- Work continues around reviewing the short breaks offer and piloting the NSPCC Neglect Tool.
- There will be a focus on the impact of new or revised offers and activities over the next six months.



Progress against areas for development 2022-23



My London artwork by a City of London Young Person

SEND – linked to SEF areas for development in the children’s social care service development plan



Actions	Progress and impact	Focus for the next six months
<p>1. Act on Aidhour audit May 2023 in particular expanding use of direct work with children through different tools to meet their communication needs, parent carers want redesign of parent carer assessments and benchmarking us against neighbours and statistical neighbours.</p>	<p>Tracking Aidhour audit recommendations monthly and confident that all are completed or in progress.</p> <p>Redesigned parent carer assessment aligned with neighbouring boroughs of Islington and Hackney. This has created one, holistic family assessment where a separate child and family assessment is only offered if requested.</p> <p>The parent carer assessment has been used once so far. The parent said that they were happy as it focused on their needs and that the City Corporation had listened and made changes.</p> <p>Created a shared drive for direct work resources which has provided a platform to share best practice examples and support continuous staff development.</p>	<p>Continue to build confidence in staff to implement learning.</p> <p>Further direct work training for all Children’s Social Care and Early Help team members.</p> <p>Use team meetings to share ideas on direct work to continue improving knowledge and sharing best practice.</p> <p>Continue to put training into practice and use resources to help autistic children to share their own experiences and wishes and feelings with us.</p> <p>Continue to use the parent carer assessment when appropriate and record impact.</p>



SEND – linked to SEF areas for development in the children’s social care service development plan



Actions	Progress and impact	Focus for the next six months
<p>2. Consider the development of a clinical lead within the team to support practitioners working with autistic children and young people.</p>	<p>The Clinical Lead has been in post since February 2024 and focuses on identifying unmet need early, particularly for children and young people with delayed speech or differences in communication. The Clinical Lead has also taken on the lead for short breaks ensuring children’s views are heard in reviews using creative tools. 11 children and young people who are receiving short breaks have been engaged this way. See case study on the next slide.</p> <p>Children’s Social Care and Early Help team have attended specialist training on communicating with autistic children (focus on non-verbal children).</p>	<p>Continue to ensure support is given across the Children’s Social Care and Early Help team so staff are confident in their skills to ensure that every child has the opportunity to share their thoughts and experience the activities they want to.</p> <p>Clinical Lead to facilitate group supervision, manage the children’s social care direct work lead and attend team meetings to share at tools for direct work.</p>

‘The training was helpful in understanding different techniques that can be used to aid my support of autistic children, and to ensure their voice is heard in assessments and interactions. What I’ve learnt will be used in my practice going forward.’
Social Worker, Children’s Social Care.



SEND – linked to SEF areas for development in the children’s social care service development plan



Actions	Progress and impact	Focus for the next six months
<p>3. Consider Saturday club for short breaks and for parents in the City of London.</p> <p>4. Explore short break activities within the City of London so that SEND children have access to good quality local leisure opportunities.</p>	<p>Due to the small cohort size of children and young people accessing short breaks in the City of London, short breaks are tailored to individuals, providing stability linked to what can be accessed and the funding provided.</p> <p>Within this context, the Children's Social Care team is working with commissioning colleagues to look at what could be offered, including implementing a Saturday club. This is part of a larger piece of work that will include co-production with the City Parent Carer Forum to ensure that the views of children with SEND are included in the decision-making.</p> <p>It is too early to assess the impact as the offer is still being developed but the intended impact is to co-produce a short breaks offer that meets families' needs.</p>	<p>Continue to review the short breaks offer to identify new opportunities to meet need.</p> <p>Early Help team to engage with the City Parent Carer Forum about what they would like to see in the City of London to inform the review of the offer.</p>



Children in care

Actions	Progress and impact	Focus for the next six months
<p>5. Children's Social Care and Adult Education continue to work closely to develop an extended pre-apprenticeship programme.</p>	<p>Heads of services and Virtual School staff have met young people around the flexibility and accessibility of apprenticeships. Young people attended an information event on 1 February 2024 and met the apprenticeship lead. This supported young people to be more aware of their options and jobs that are available to them.</p> <p>The Partnership for Young London has advertised two apprenticeships that our young people are being encouraged to apply for.</p> <p>Virtual School staff are supporting young people to submit expressions of interest for opportunities. The closing date for many of the opportunities is the end of March so it is too early to demonstrate impact.</p>	<p>Getting young people onto apprenticeships that have some flexibility based on need, e.g. allowing them to go to appointments.</p> <p>Virtual School to continue to support young people to complete applications, particularly care leavers who have English as a second language, and help them focus on what they would like to do and make more informed choices.</p> <p>Information to be added to the Children in Care Council (CiCC) website so it is consistent and can be accessed at any time.</p> <p>Track and support young people who successfully applied for apprenticeships or other opportunities through the interview process and into the position.</p>



Children in care

Actions	Progress and impact	Focus for the next six months
<p>6. Focus on work safety conditions and enrichment around work hours with the aim of supporting young people into better paid jobs.</p>	<p>Supported care leavers with managing immediate financial concerns and shown them what opportunities, e.g. apprenticeships, are available to help them develop a longer-term financial view.</p> <p>The Virtual School invited care experienced young people to bespoke sessions at the London Careers Festival in February/March 2024.</p> <p>Young people are now more aware of opportunities available and what they need to get there. It is too early to demonstrate any impact beyond this.</p>	<p>Further work with young people to help them make informed choices about their employment options. For example, 1:1 and small group sessions with care leavers to increase employment opportunities.</p> <p>Virtual School to work with the Adult Education Service to provide English and maths classes for all 16–25-year-olds with English as a second language.</p> <p>Identify and support young people who have progressed from being aware of opportunities to successfully taking them up.</p>



Care leavers



Actions	Progress and impact	Focus for next six months
<p>7. Continue to focus on strengthening the offer for care leavers including accessible publications and creating a robust housing offer for care leavers.</p>	<p>The Children's Social Care team is working with housing colleagues to progress the care leaver offer through internal sign-off before going to the Community and Children's Services Committee for approval in April 2024.</p>	<p>Care leaver offer to be agreed at the Community and Children's Services Committee and produce a young people's version.</p> <p>Publicise the offer at care leavers weekly groups so young people know what their rights and entitlements are.</p> <p>Incorporate the care leaver offer within the Sufficiency and Commissioning Strategy for Care Leavers and Children in Care.</p>
<p>8. Ensure all care leavers know about the CiCC pledge.</p>	<p>The CiCC pledge was formally launched on 1 November 2023 and attendees were able to take away a hard copy.</p> <p>Launched a CiCC website which promotes the pledge and care leavers' rights and entitlements. Promotional material has been sent to all care leavers and social workers, and information has been shared in commissioning meetings with care providers. This has increased awareness of the pledge.</p>	<p>Continue to promote the pledge through the website and information sharing.</p> <p>Pledge to be included in the welcome to care pack for any child entering care.</p> <p>Review of pledge including impact analysis.</p>



Care leavers



Actions	Progress and impact	Focus for next six months
<p>9. Children's Social Care to work with Adult Education colleagues to create ring-fenced apprenticeships for care leavers (including virtual school pupils).</p>	<p>The City Corporation funds 100 apprenticeships at level 2 and 3. 10% of posts will be ring-fenced for City of London care leavers creating targeted opportunities for these care leavers.</p>	<p>Go live with ring-fenced apprenticeships for care leavers and support young people through the application process into placements.</p> <p>Explore with care leavers apprenticeship opportunities that are not advertised if that is what they would like to do.</p>
<p>10. Explore the idea of adopting experience of care as a protected characteristic as part of the implementation of the Pan-London Care Leavers' Compact.</p>	<p>Experience of care was agreed as a protected characteristic by the Community and Children's Services Committee in December 2023.</p> <p>Greater London Authority launched the Pan-London Care Leavers' Compact on 5 March 2024.</p> <p>In March 2024, 36 (67%) of City of London care leavers had applied for the Transport for London's scheme giving them 50% off bus and tram travel. The City Corporation will cover the other 50% so City of London care leavers get free bus and tram travel. This will save around £800 per person compared to an annual bus and tram pass. Other care leavers have accessed a free bus pass via benefits to support them at college.</p>	<p>Implement the decision to make experience of care a protected characteristic and explore what difference this makes in practice.</p> <p>Continue to support care leavers to gain free bus and tram travel.</p>



Practice and strategic approach



Actions	Progress and impact	Focus for next six months
<p>11. Implement remaining training of social care and early help teams on the NSPCC neglect tool and implement learnings and tool in practice.</p> <p>12. Continue improvement work through the Neglect Focus Group run by the City and Hackney Safeguarding Children Partnership (CHCSP) and focus on the pilot looking at the effectiveness of the tool in practice.</p>	<p>The Children's Social Care and Early Help team has been trained to use the neglect tool and a one-minute guide produced to promote its use. The tool is now used as a reference when assessments are being completed. It has not been used fully on any case yet.</p> <p>Sent a report to the Neglect Focus Group on the efficacy of this tool compared to other neglect tools.</p> <p>Gained permission from the to extend the use of the tool as a pilot for nine months.</p> <p>It is too early to evidence impact of the use of the tool but it is intended that the scoring system within the tool will be used to evidence positive change for the child and/or family.</p>	<p>Continue with the nine-month pilot of the tool and use it fully in a case.</p> <p>Produce impact report by the end of 12 months.</p>



Practice and strategic approach



Actions	Progress and impact	Focus for next six months
<p>13. Strengthen early identification of need and speed of service provision for global majority children and young people.</p>	<p>In February 2024, members of the Children's Social Care and Early Help, Education Strategy Unit and Education and Early Years teams attended anti-racist training which considered identifying racism and how it affects the early identification of need in children. This facilitated helpful cross-team discussions and a shared understanding of, and advocating for, global majority children. It also provides a framework for challenge.</p> <p>Strengthening this area has been put into all service plans, the early help action plan and the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) self-assessment (SEF).</p> <p>It is too early to evidence impact in terms of outcomes for children but confidence has grown among practitioners to advocate for services, e.g. speech and language services, for global majority children and young people at an earlier age.</p>	<p>Identifying need early and ensuring individual needs of global majority children are met.</p> <p>Tracking progress and outcomes for children.</p>



Practice and strategic approach



Actions	Progress and impact	Focus for next six months
<p>14. Evaluate commissioned out-of-hours clinical family therapy support so that fathers are better able to access support.</p>	<p>The Clinical Lead has started an evaluation of the clinical family therapy support which is due to go to the Children's Senior Management Team meeting in June 2024.</p>	<p>Focus for next steps to be agreed in June 2024 after the evaluation has been completed and taking on board findings.</p>
<p>15. Heads of Children's Social Care, Quality and Assurance and Workforce Development to strengthen the offer to staff around lead roles.</p>	<p>Scoped out resources and support available in each lead area to ensure workers are clear about how to progress their expertise in these areas. Shared this with leads to support their knowledge and development.</p>	<p>Ensure that staff are accessing the resources and support identified and that this is supporting them to feel confident in their lead areas.</p>



Virtual School



Actions	Progress and impact	Focus for next six months
<p>18. Restructure of the City Corporation's Virtual School.</p>	<p>Good temporary structure in place and delivering all statutory duties with flexible agency staff and overtime. Proposal for permanent solutions going through governance process for agreement.</p>	<p>Complete governance process to agree a permanent structure and funding. Implement structure delivering a highly responsive service within a constantly changing context.</p>
<p>19. Deliver the Virtual School Advisory Partnership (representatives from Adult and Children's Social Care, housing and homelessness, safeguarding and quality assurance, health and education).</p>	<p>The Partnership has met twice - December 2023 and March 2024 - and aims to bring partners together to improve outcomes for children with a social worker including care leavers up to 25.</p> <p>The Partnership has agreed to focus on apprenticeships and work experience. For example, partners are working together to provide care experienced young people with work experience and support with applications for educational bursaries.</p>	<p>Focus on apprenticeships and work experience with all representatives on the Partnership continuing to offer work experience and supporting engagement with apprenticeships.</p> <p>Funding from education service to run an increasing reading attainment programme for children aged 3-11 years old with a social worker.</p> <p>A preliminary evaluation report on the Partnership is due to go to the City Corporation's Achieving Excellent Board (AEB) in Summer 2024. AEB helps drive the transition to excellence and to sustain excellent practice.</p>



Virtual School



Actions	Progress and impact	Focus for next six months
<p>20. Play a strategic leadership role around Virtual Schools; the Virtual Headteacher will continue to sit on two national working parties - one on improving outcomes for UASC led by Frazier Stroud and the other on the extended role of Virtual Schools led by the National Association of Virtual School Headteachers.</p>	<p>Virtual Headteacher attended meetings with Department for Education to influence policy around increasing educational outcomes for age 18-25 care leavers and Kinship Care. A national Kinship Care Strategy was launched in December 2024.</p> <p>Virtual Headteacher working with the Share Foundation to ensure that young people get access to their Child Trust Funds. It is too early to assess the impact of the Child Trust Funds for City of London children and young people.</p>	<p>Consider in more detail implications of policy for practice and discuss funding arrangements around increasing educational outcomes for care leavers age 18-25.</p> <p>Virtual Headteacher to present on Child Trust Funds at the Virtual Headteachers National Conference to share information and increase awareness so more young people get access to their money.</p> <p>Identify City of London children and young people who are eligible to apply for the Child Trust Fund by May 2024 and support them to do the applications.</p> <p>Impact to be measured through increase in applications for Funds and follow-up with City of London young people who have accessed their Funds.</p>



'The Virtual School Advisory Partnership includes colleagues from education, health, social care and adult learning and each bring a perspective on the lives of children in care. The partnership is acting as a forum to share information, new policies and consider projects and ideas to effectively strengthen the work of the virtual school'

Tony Gallagher , Independent Chair Virtual School Advisory Partnership

'We are delighted that information [on Child Trust Funds] has gone out nationally through the City of London Virtual School Headteacher to all UK Virtual Schools to assist eligible care experienced young people to access their child trust funds.'

Share Foundation - Sharefound inspiring young people in care

