

<b>Committee:</b> Safeguarding Sub-Committee	<b>Dated:</b> 02/07/2024
<b>Subject:</b> Children’s Social Care and Early Help Service Development Plan 2024-25	<b>Public</b>
<b>Which outcomes in the City Corporation’s Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?</b>	Contribute to a flourishing society  1. People are safe and feel safe.  2. People enjoy good health and wellbeing.
<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>Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain’s Department?</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>Report of:</b> Judith Finlay, Executive Director of Community and Children’s Services	<b>For Information</b>
<b>Report author:</b> Rachel Talmage, Children’s Social Care and Early Help, Head of Service, People Department, Department of Community and Children’s Services	

### Summary

The Service Development Plan has been fully refreshed for 2024–25 and sets out the overarching programme of work for the Children’s Social Care and Early Help Service.

Key pieces of work include achieving every commitment from the Care Leaver Covenant and the Care Leaver Compact. Our Care Leaver Offer has been fully transformed and will be published in July 2024.

The purpose of this report is to enable Members to see the array of work supporting resident children in need of help and protection in the City of London.

### Recommendation

Members are asked to:

- Note the report.

## **Main Report**

### **Background**

1. The Service Development Plan 2024–25 (see Appendix 1) sets out objectives to improve outcomes for children and their families. These are drawn from listening to children and families, from staff, audit, the Achieving Excellence Board, Serious Case Reviews, Ofsted inspections, and work from the London Innovation and Improvement Alliance. The Service Development Plan sets out how we will achieve excellent outcomes for every child and young person, and is in alignment with our annual self-evaluation.
2. In their Inspection of Children’s Social Care Services 2 March 2020 to 6 March 2020, Ofsted made two recommendations in their judgement on our practice (published April 2020).<sup>1</sup> These recommendations remain in the plan to ensure due focus and attention. No recommendations were made in their focused visit in November 2022 on our ‘front door’ offer, this means how calls and referrals and notifications are received, responded to and progressed.

### **Current Position**

3. The new Service Development Plan 2024–25 takes into account the actions from the previous plan. Key achievements include:
  - those captured in our self-evaluation, the six month achievements are presented in a separate document
  - Two care leavers were offered apprenticeships with the City of London, and there are ring-fenced interviews for apprenticeships for care leavers
  - Parents and carers were spoken to in the recent audits
  - The Transport for London bus pass has 50% off for care leavers and City of London top-up the rest of the fare to ensure that every care leaver has free bus travel
  - Care leavers are recognised in a similar way to a protected characteristic
  - The Care Leaver Offer has been fully redesigned and refreshed with our care leavers, fully incorporating the Care Leaver Compact ambitions
  - Short Break Direct Payments have had formal reviews so that parent/carers better understand the offer and have the freedom to spend the money for the benefit of their children within clear guidelines.

### **Key Data**

4. Performance data for the service is being considered separately within the Safeguarding Sub-Committee. Data is used to drive the actions in the plan and to evaluate progress for children.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://files.ofsted.gov.uk/v1/file/50149902> accessed 18 May 2024

5. By the end of Quarter 4, 95% of pathway plans, and 100% of initial health assessments for children in care were within timescale.
6. 100% of Education Health and Care Plans had input from social workers.

### **Corporate & Implications**

7. Across every department, the Corporation is a parent to our children in care and care leavers. The ringfencing of interviews for care leavers, and the increase of apprenticeships available has led to two job offers for care leavers, one of which has been accepted.
8. Adult Education is supporting the apprenticeships. It is hoped that more areas across the corporation open up apprenticeships and our young people become employees in their parent organisation.
9. The Care Leaver Offer that has been developed includes use of the Corporation's facilities, such as the Barbican Centre, the Museum of London, Epping Forest and Hampstead Heath. The ambition is that young people feel a sense of belonging and have wider access to the City to increase their idea of what is possible.

### **Strategic Risk Implications**

10. Child safeguarding involves assessment and mitigation of risk. The service aims to protect and support the most vulnerable children in our society. The Achieving Excellence Board is in place to further scrutinise and extend our work for these children.
11. Our service development plan is in alignment with the Corporate Plan 2024–29, with the aim to improve the safety and daily lives of children and their families.

### **Equalities implications**

12. The 'Social GRACES' (gender, geography, race, religion, age, ability, appearance, class, culture, ethnicity, employment status, education, sexual orientation, spirituality) framework is used in individual and group supervision, looking at the similarities and differences in every piece of casework. Equalities implications are central in every interaction. Systemic relationship-based practice is central to our work, and the Social GRACES offer us a framework for considering disproportionality and inequity.
13. Equity is considered throughout the Service Development Plan as a core part of our work. Staff have advocated for minoritised children to access Special Educational Needs (SEN) support and Education, Health and Care Plans to ensure that their needs are met early on.

14. 'Care leaving' now has recognition in the Corporation akin to that of a protected characteristic, and it is hoped that care leavers will be included in the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion reporting for the Corporation.

### **Financial implications**

15. Children's Social Care is a statutory service. If, for example, children arrive in the City with additional needs, and/or are at risk of or experiencing significant harm, then a service must be provided. If risks escalate, then court action might be required. These unexpected needs will have financial implications and, in some areas, this is difficult to anticipate which makes a difference in a very small service department.

### **Resource implications**

16. Staffing is currently at the right level to meet need and demand.

### **Legal implications**

17. Statutory social work is entirely covered by law and accompanying guidance. This work is tested and challenged in supervision, via audit, by a review of data and via our Achieving Excellence Board.

### **Climate implications**

18. N/A

### **Security implications**

19. N/A

### **Conclusion**

20. The Service Development Plan 2024–25 sets out the actions for the next year, with an overall ambition of providing the right help in the right place at the right time, to promote the safety and wellbeing of children and their families. This is a live document and will grow in response to: family and staff feedback; national research; learning from the pathfinder local authorities involved in the National Care Review; and from independent audit.

### **Appendices**

- Appendix 1: Service Development Plan 2024–25.

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