



Children's Social Care Commissioning Overview Report



CITY OF LONDON CORPORATION

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES

September 2024

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Approvers	Head of Commissioning Assistant Director Commissioning and Partnership
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1. Introduction

1.1 This report provides a summary of the Department of Community and Children's Services (DCCS) Children's Social Care (CSC) Commissioning and Quality Assurance (QA) arrangements. The report covers the breadth of CSC commissioning, which includes provision of services, participation, statutory functions, and placements for looked after children within Foster care, Semi-Independent Living, Residential, and arrangements for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities. This report aims to summarise the commissioning workstream and provide evidence and assurance of good practice. Service data included within the report is to be updated annually, in April of each year.

2. Executive Summary

2.1 There are currently 15 commissioned services within the CSC and QA clusters. These services are commissioned in line with the City of London Corporation's Procurement Code, often structured on a call-off arrangement, reflecting our small scale and size.

2.2 There are currently no block contract arrangements for placement provision due to nonavailability within the City of London, and the low volumes of demand and needs across groups within the Corporation's CSC and UASC population. For this reason, there is no in house fostering service.

2.3 The Commissioned service provision is summarised below:

- **Procured:** 15 services are secured via a procurement or Service Level Agreement.
- **Placements:** As of March 2024, there were seven Children In Care, four were unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people and three Children in Need. There were 55 Care Leavers, with the majority being semi-independent accommodation for UASC.
- **Participation:** Two commissioned services aim to facilitate participation of Children and Young People and contribute towards our joint vision that *'The City of London is a place where children and young people feel safe, have good mental health and wellbeing, fulfil their potential and are ready for adulthood whilst growing up with a sense of belonging'*.

3. Background

3.1 The DCCS Commissioning Team lead on the key commissioning activities within the Department, including within the CSC and Safeguarding QA clusters. The team manages all elements of the commissioning cycle, including the analysis, planning, implementing and reviewing of services. The team seeks to address QA at each stage, with importance placed upon service user involvement and the coproduction.

- 3.2 The Commissioning Team is responsible for the completion and management of sourcing, commissioning timelines and maintaining the service's contracts register. The teams work extends to ensuring sufficiency of service provision. It seeks to secure effective services and cost efficiency for the Corporation and those who use and receive its services.
- 3.3 The team ensures legal, safeguarding and equalities are addressed within commissioned services, securing providers with the ability to meet the diverse needs of service. The team manages contract performance against Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) to deliver the service area aims and provide quality to service users.

4. Commissioned Services

- 4.1 The strategic approaches to commissioning and procurement are informed by the level of need across the CSC client group, the volume, forecasted cost and the market's capacity to deliver. Our commissioning and service requirements are reflective of the demand of the City of London's small residential population of just 8,600, of which of whom just over 700 are aged from birth to 18 years.
- 4.2 To strengthen our presence in the market, we often work in partnership with other Local Authorities either through joint service delivery, or as part of collaborative consortiums. Whilst there are no consortiums within the CSC and Safeguarding and QA clusters, the low level of need and small service delivery sees two of our services managed by neighbouring Local Authorities. These include the Emergency Duty Team, delivered by the London Borough of Hackney and The Youth Justice Service, delivered by the London Borough of Tower Hamlets.
- 4.3 The Commissioning Team's procurement activity is governed by the Corporations Procurement Code and Public Procurement Policy, resulting in many services undergoing a competitive procurement process. The majority of CSC and Safeguarding QA services are procured either via the Operational Purchasing route (whole life costs <£100k) or the Strategic Purchasing route (whole life cost >£100k). For low value contracts, the Commissioning Team completes the procurement process in line with the team's Request for Quotation Guide and for those contracts over £100k the team works with the Corporation's Commercial Services team. The Department's Category Board provides oversight and governance of Strategic Purchasing activities.
- 4.4 The Commissioning Team retain the ability to spot-purchase low value, one-off services under £10,000 in total value. This agile and flexible approach in relation to need and the market mitigates the risk of insufficiency. Commissioning review spends and needs to ensure continued adhere the Corporation's Procurement Code and to secure best value.
- 4.5 There are currently 15 CSC services currently commissioned within the Corporation's Operational or Strategic Purchasing routes. All services are logged on the DCCS Commissioning contracts register, with CSC and Safeguarding QA services summarised in the table below:

Contract Title	Supplier	Description	End date if extended
Family Support Services	Fenix Recruitment Solutions Ltd	The provision of fully-trained support workers for City of London children and families, as appropriately referred by a City of London social worker. The duration and support level of each support package will be as determined upon referral by the social worker's assessment of the child and/or families' needs	28/11/2024
Regional Adoption Agency- Adoption and Permanent Support Function	Coram	Childrens adoption and placement support service - part of a consortium led by LB Harrow	31/03/2024
London Children in Care Council	Partnership for Young London	Multi borough partnership support young People in Care / Care Leavers, through engagement, joint working and policy development	02/10/2024
Out of Hours Service Children's	London Borough of Hackney	The Emergency Duty Team Service for Children and young people at risk	16/02/2027
Systemic Therapy	Ademosu Temitope	To provide the highly specialist clinical model of systemic therapy to our Looked After Children	03/06/2024 (to be extended)
Independent Visiting / Advocacy, Return to Home Interviews	Coram	Advocacy, Independent Visitors and Return home interviews services for looked after children and young people	04/06/2026
Youth Justice Service	London Borough of Tower Hamlets	A support service for young people who have either entered the criminal justice system or who are at risk of doing so	31/03/2025

Independent Chair of the Achieving Excellence Board	Marcellina Taylor	To Chair, and to support the effective delivery and functioning of, the Achieving Excellence Board (AEB), supporting the local authority to achieve excellence in its Children's Social Care and Early Help and SEND practice, and in the outcomes secured for children.	21/03/2026
Appropriate Adult Service Juveniles, includes supplementary section on Appropriate Adult to attend Age Assessments	The Appropriate Adults Service Limited	Independent support for young people and vulnerable adults who have been arrested, and who do not have family or friends available to support them at the police station	01/10/2025
Provision of LAC Consultation Tool	Mind of My Own Ltd	An online tool to help young people improve the way that they express their views and are listened to	07/11/2024
'PEP for Success' for Virtual Schools	ASSET	An online tool to help young people improve the way that they express their views and are listened to	21/01/2027
Assisting Young People in Custody	The Appropriate Adults Service Limited	A support service for young people or vulnerable adults who have been arrested and are in custody	01/10/2025
Quality Assurance & Adhoc Case Reviews Service and Spot Purchase of IRO	Aidhour	Audit of service provision for Looked After Children and Young People	03/10/2026
Kinship and Foster Care Assessments	Achieving for Children	To perform a one-off fostering assessment for a City carer, in line with Achieving for Children's own policy and procedures To provide ongoing support and training when required to the foster carer, following	30/04/2025

		assessment and approval	
Online Procedures Manual for Children's Services	Signis Limited	The service helps Young People and Families to work through significant issues, such as historical trauma and other negative life experiences, with the aim for them to engage with communities and become active members of society	31/10/2024
City Finance Services	Barrie Bookkeeping Ltd	Social Care Direct Payments and Appointeeship payments provider	31/03/2025

4.6 The Department also commissions services to support Children and Young People to participate, be involved within the community and shape the delivery of services that they receive. Service providers are required to work in partnership with the Corporation, be represented at partnership meetings, have robust safeguarding policies and procedures, with clear understanding how to make safeguarding referrals, including into Early Help service, when appropriate.

4.7 Examples of this service provision includes Universal Youth and Play and City Youth Forum, are set out in the table below:

Contract Title	Supplier	Description	End date if extended
Youth Participation (City Youth Forum)	Prospects	Coordination of the City Youth Participation, and provision of the City Youth Forum for people aged 13-19 years, chaired by the Member of Youth Parliament	31/01/2025
Universal Youth and Play Service	Society Links Tower Hamlets	Provision of Youth and Play Service for people aged six to 19 years old (25 years old for young people with SEND)	31/03/2026

5. Placements

5.1 The Department's Sufficiency and Commissioning Strategy For Children in Care and Care Leavers in the City of London sets out that there is no registered children's placement provision and extremely limited scope for semi-independent placements within the Square Mile. This is predominantly due to its size (1.12 square miles) and

the subsequent limits and impacts on commercial and residential property availability, square footage and value.

5.2 Sufficiency and sustainability in the market is ensured, despite it broadly being shaped by demand and supply factors beyond the City's direct influence, through retaining the ability and flexibility to spot purchase placements. Not being reliant on any one provider ensures that there is no single point of failure and enables greater choice to meet service user's needs. It enables a choice of location, which is determined following consultation with service users.

5.3 In 2021, the Commissioning Team implemented the use of the Commissioning Alliance framework to source Children's Placements via the CarePlace portal, securing several benefits in comparison to the previous spot purchased approach.

5.4 This framework has a set of Dynamic Purchasing Vehicles which hold a panel of pre-qualified and experienced care providers which have been pre-approved and appointed in accordance with national procurement governance and regulatory body requirements.

5.5 The framework also provides a complete package of administrative tasks, QA monitoring functions and offers the best value for money. The Commissioning Alliance complete the following QA of providers, prior to accessing the framework:

- Trading information
- Self-declaration of past criminal convictions
- Economic and financial standing
- Parent org. details (where appropriate)
- Confirmation of £10mil employer liability insurance
- Confirmation of £10mil public liability insurance
- Confirmation of £2mil professional indemnity insurance
- Uploaded health and safety policy (updated within a minimum of 12 months)
- Uploaded equality and diversity policy
- Information on safeguarding lead
- Evidence of DBS checks up to date
- Evidence of monthly supervisions for staff
- Familiarity with LADO and processes for reporting
- Up to date data protection policy
- IFA and Residential providers are also asked to provide Ofsted evidence. The minimum accepted rating is 'requires improvement', but we can filter by rating on CarePlace when searching.
- Full selection questionnaire available upon request to the commissioning team

5.6 The Commissioning Alliance Framework remains our primary source for securing placements. Despite access to a wide provider market, the need to source placements off framework occasionally remains, with secondary sources and/ or contingent approaches summarised below:

Placement Option	Primary Source	Contingent Approach	Contingent Source
IFA	Commissioning Alliance Framework	Short-term residential	Commissioning Alliance Framework NEL LAC Residential provision
Residential	Commissioning Alliance Framework	Short-term residential	NEL LAC Residential provision Residential searched and sourced by Commissioning
Semi-independent (16–17-year-olds and new UASC)	Commissioning Alliance Framework for accommodation based support	Short-term residential or IFA	Commissioning Alliance Framework NEL LAC Residential provision
Semi-independent (18+)	Commissioning Alliance Framework for floating support or accommodation based support	Short term accommodation based support; Hotel with floating support and subsistence support	Commissioning Alliance Framework Commissioning search

5.7 The diagram below sets out the placements referral and sourcing process, including governance and decision making by the Home Panel.



5.8 15 placements were commissioned within the financial year 2023-2024. 12 placements came to an end within that period as summarised in the table below:

Placement Type	Number Commissioned	Number Decommissioned
Residential	3	2
IFA	1	1
Semi-independent	11	9

5.9 QA approaches include the implementation of our senior leadership visit programme and regular review meetings with providers, which take place either quarterly, bi-annually, or annually dependent on the number of residents placed with the respective provider and the level of complexity of the placement.

6. Quality Assurance

6.1 The Commissioning Team complete QA throughout the commissioning cycle. Work ensures legal, safeguarding, and equalities are addressed, reducing inequalities of experience and outcomes.

6.2 Analysis:

- Needs assessments utilises available service data and strategies completed within the Department. Service reviews include consultation to understand service user feedback and the types of inequality and service needs.
- Feedback: Arrangements to support inclusion and accessibility, including feedback obtained from people about their experience of assessment and care provision.

6.3 Procurement:

- Minimum expectations of our providers: The Core Specification issued with each Addendum Service Specification details of the legislation, regulations and guidance on which commissioned services are based.
- Safeguarding: The requirement of providers to have a Safeguarding policy in alignment with, or adoption of, the requirements of the City and Hackney Safeguarding Children's Board's Safer Commissioning Minimum Expectations. The commissioning Team works with providers to ensure that they have safeguarding policies and procedures, including processes to refer into the Early Help Service.
- Quality: Bids are evaluated against quality criteria at tender stage, which includes the submission of method statements to meet identified service standards.
- Contract examples and anonymised case studies: Ensuring providers have the relevant experience delivering services of similar requirement and scale.
- Placement providers: Seek to commission providers that have achieved the QA and onboarding requirements.
- Equality and Diversity: Requirement of providers compliance with Equality and Diversity policy, ensuring the Corporations Public Sector Duty (Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010) is achieved through commissioned providers in the delivery of services.
- Key Performance Indicators: Prioritisation of needs and equalities considerations within service specifications, informing service delivery and KPI's.

6.4 Contract Management:

- Monitoring meetings: Commissioned services are contract managed via quarterly (or defined periodical depending on complexity or as deemed appropriate) contract monitoring meetings involving the Commissioning Team, the Service Provider, the CSC Service Area and QA leads. The CSC Commissioning plan details of the contract monitoring meetings.
- Standard Agenda: The team's standard agenda includes service delivery against KPIs, Complaints, Safeguarding, Health and Safety, Finance and partnership working.
- Policies and procedures: The Core Specification includes details which providers are required to deliver a schedule of renewal for its policies and procedures.
- Poor Performance and Transfer of Care Process: This sets out the Commissioning Team's approach to managing provider failings and is available on request. To date, no contracts within CSC have had to be terminated or have been handed back by the provider.

- Quality: Quality Alerts, Issues and Complaints are logged on the Placements Log. All elements are investigated with updates and resolutions reflected at service contract management meetings.
- Service Impact: Impact is measured at a service level, with performance measured against established KPIs, including Equality and Inclusion data sets. Service performance is discussed at the service area meetings.

6.5 Governance and oversight

The Commissioning work stream is overseen by management through the DCCS, with the following approaches:

- Children’s Senior Management Team: A representative of the Commissioning Team attends the monthly cross Departmental Senior Management meeting, to provide project developments, key timelines, good news, and service risks.
- Departmental Leadership Team: The Commissioning Team develop a quarterly dashboard, which is shared with the DLT on a quarterly basis captures high-level service information, including performance and RAG rated risks. Additionally, the bi-annual Commissioning Update to Community and Children’s Services Committee providing an overview of the Department’s commissioning work programme and successes.
- Commissioning timelines: These are developed setting out the key dates for decisions and actions for CSC services.
- Commercial Services: Sourcing Plans are developed in partnership with Commercial Services, planning the Department’s sourcing requirements for the financial year, ensuring that the appropriate resources are allocated to delivering procurement activities.
- Service area meetings: Quarterly service area meetings are held between the Commissioning Team, CSC and the QA lead.

6.6 Equalities:

The redesign and commissioning of services approach ensures the compliance with the Corporation’s Public Sector Equality Duty as set out within the Equality Act 2010. This includes the use of the Corporation’s respective Test of Relevance and Equality Impact Assessment templates. The following outlines the commissioning approach:

- Analysis: engagement to understand Children and Young People and their family’s needs, analysis of service user and demographic data and equalities considerations.
- Pre-procurement: Completion of an Equalities Impact Assessment of protected groups.
- Engagement: Completed to identify priorities of service users.
- Procurement: Service Specification communicating the Corporation’s Public Sector Equality Duty, testing provider’s ability to achieve this requirement on our behalf, evidencing how the service will be accessible to all and respectful of service user’s needs.
- Person Centred: Wherever possible, enabling parents/ guardians to choose to receive direct payments to purchase their child’s care or service provision, rather than using the Corporation’s commissioned service.

- Contract management: Reviewing service user data, outcomes and key performance indicators and reporting at quarterly contract monitoring meetings.

6.7 Coproduction:

The Department values the importance of co-production and the participation of service users, including children, volunteers, parents/ guardians. The retendering of the Children in Care Council in 2024- 25 will provide the opportunity for coproduction, as outlined below:

- Stakeholder engagement: Coproduction approaches to inform the service design, using analysis and insight gained from the existing service as well as feedback from the Independent Visiting and Advocacy survey.
- Pre-procurement: Close working and upskilling of participants to enable involvement in the development of the new service.
- Procurement: Co-produced service specification (including ‘you said we did’ actions), addressing feedback and priorities. The development of the technical questions, procurement strategy and technical evaluation weightings, scoring of technical questions and representation and scoring of bidder presentations.
- Contract management: Where possible, representation of service users at quarterly contract monitoring review meetings with the service provider or annual service reviews, enabling the ability to shape service delivery and hold providers to account.

7 Areas for Development

7.1 The following table identifies areas for development within the CSC and Safeguarding and QA commissioning work programme, required to improve practice and strengthen evidence of quality. This will be reviewed on a bi-annual basis, with reviews being completed in April of each year.

Area	Explanation
Sufficiency Strategy	Oversight and delivery of Our Plan within the Sufficiency Strategy 2024-27
Commissioned service impact	Strengthen approaches to ensure evidence of impact is built into the commissioning cycle, to better demonstrate the impact activity is making to service users
Co-production	Develop the Commissioning Guide to include resources and reference to resources developed within the Department, to support the team with co-production approaches
Inequalities	Strengthen contract monitoring approaches to address inequalities within Commissioning
Careplace extension	To complete a market review of framework provision to inform our future commissioning approach, or extension to the existing Commissioning Alliance provision

Recommissioned Services	To complete the review redesign and recommissioning of services incorporating the themes as outlined throughout this report
Placement processes	Redesign and develop a Mosaic based referral form and work-step process to improve efficiency within the referral and placement ratification process
Quality Alerts and Issues process	Standardise the reporting methodology in line with process within Adult Social Care services to ensure a consistent Directorate approach