

City of London Corporation Committee Report

Committees: Achieving Excellence Board – For Information Safeguarding and SEND Sub-Committee – For Information	Dated: 11/06/2025 01/07/2025
Subject: Children’s Social Care and Family Help Service Development Plan 2025–26	Public report: For Information
This proposal: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • delivers Corporate Plan 2024–29 outcomes • provides statutory duties 	Diverse Engaged Communities Dynamic Economic Growth Providing Excellent Services
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	No
If so, how much?	n/a
What is the source of Funding?	n/a
Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain’s Department?	n/a
Report of: Executive Director Community and Children Services	Judith Finlay, Executive Director of Community and Children’s Services
Report author: Head of Service Children Social Care and Family Help	Rachel Talmage, Head of Children’s Social Care and Family Help

Summary

This report introduces the new Children’s Social Care and Family Help Service Development Plan for April 2025 to March 2026. The report draws on learning from children and their families, national research, views of practitioners, independent Ofsted findings, and external and internal audit.

Recommendation

Members are asked to:

- Note the report.

Main Report

Background

1. The Service Development Plan has been renamed the Children's Social Care and Family Help Service Development Plan in alignment with changes in the national agenda. The new Children's Social Care and Family Help Service Development Plan 2025–26 (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, performance information, Ofsted inspection, and work from the London Innovation and Improvement Alliance. The Children's Social Care and Family Help 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 in September 2024, Ofsted found our services to be 'Outstanding'. They made two recommendations for further improvement: the impact for children living in circumstances where there is domestic abuse; and the response to children who experience exploitation and youth violence.¹ This work has been further developed, and the areas are on the new Children's Social Care and Family Help Service Development Plan to ensure consistency of impact and maintain oversight. An update on our actions on this area has been provided to Ofsted in report form, along with a six-month update on our Self Evaluation. This was followed up with an engagement meeting between senior leaders in the Corporation and Ofsted, which went well. The inspection provided useful rigorous scrutiny on the work under the previous Service Development Plan 2024–25.
3. Key pieces of work completed in 2024–25 include the publishing and fulfilment of our Care Leaver offer, the socialisation of this with young people, training and use of non-verbal ways of working with those who do not use verbal language, the effective preparation of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children who moved out of the City via the National Transfer Scheme (good use of infectious disease screening, health screening, and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes), delivery of holiday programmes for children open to our service, including those with disabilities.
4. Further achievements include our fulfilling the 'just one thing' commitment of the Trailblazer Project. This joint project between the 12 local authorities that use the Central Family Court aims to reduce the length of care proceedings for children and their families. The main reason for delay in this area is court availability; other factors include the use of external experts such as psychiatrists and psychologists who often file reports late, affecting the court timetable. As a collective group it was agreed to focus on just one thing within our control – filing social work evidence on time. This has been achieved in the City of London, even

¹ [50260648](#) Ofsted: Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services published 5 November 2024

where external assessment has been very late and would likely have derailed the court timetable.

Current Position

5. The new Children's Social Care and Family Help Service Development Plan sets out our ambitions for the financial year April 2025-March 2026, considering learning from children and families, learning from within our staff group and partnership groups, and national strategy. The plan is a live document and learning from the recent annual survey will be included once a final report is received.
6. Work by Families in the City led by the Head of Children's Social Care and Family Help has its own detailed action plan and will be referenced, but not duplicated, here. This is one of the key areas of action this financial year.

Care leavers

7. Further significant actions include behaviour improvement. The service has noticed that the behaviour of some care leavers has worsened since granting of limited leave to remain, and again on award of tenancy. This has included racist behaviour to staff, which is unacceptable. This is an area that needs to improve. An anti-racist and trauma-informed approach needs to be taken. Staff must be believed and supported, and behaviour needs to be addressed. This is a key area to be strengthened this year. Staff support in relation to experiences of racism from service users is being reviewed at senior management level in terms of service response.
8. There will be better earlier support for tenancy planning, to be good neighbours and tenants. A mandatory programme is being considered, which must be completed before an individual is put forward for a tenancy.
9. Staff development/training will be procured to focus on the Care Leaver Covenant and Compact, to deepen the London-wide and national direction of travel.
10. Improving access to employment will be a continued focus, as many of our care leavers remain in low-paying work often on zero hours contracts. This access will be in line with recovery from harm and trauma informed.

Domestic Abuse

11. All staff have undertaken training for reducing parental conflict. Our service has worked with our newly commissioned partner, Domestic Abuse Intervention Services (DAIS) to support a family living with violence and emotional harm. Group supervision and joint learning with the police in this area is a key action to support this work.

Contextual Safeguarding

12. The Multi Agency Child Exploitation Panel has been reviewed and refreshed, and development work continues as part of this plan. The panel, along with the Heads of Quality Assurance and Children's Services joined the Metropolitan Police at their recent conference entitled County Lines & Child Criminal Exploitation, and tools to identify and respond to harm.

Options

13. There are no options for Members to consider.

Proposals

14. There is no proposal for Members to consider.

Key Data

15. Performance data will be brought to the Achieving Excellence Board and the Safeguarding and SEND Sub-Committee. Key data shows the increase in children accessing short breaks – our long-term Children with a Disability offer. The data shows a reduction of children with disabilities supported via a Child in Need Plan. This is due to the additional support to families via the Short Breaks offer – families can seek support from the Short Breaks practitioner – it is in line with what families want and does not necessitate full assessments, plans or visits. Rather, it is proportionate and responsive. The data for short breaks should be viewed in this context.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

16. **Strategic implications** – Diverse engaged communities; National Government reforms are driving transformational change in service delivery for children, young people and families.
17. **Providing excellent services** – Ofsted found our services to children and families to be 'Outstanding'. The Children's Social Care and Family Help Service Development Plan aims to develop our offer further with our community and voluntary sector partners for a cohesive, safe and enriching offer.
18. **Financial implications** – No additional funds are sought.
19. **Resource implications** – Venues are sought within the City of London Corporation to run an in-person family hub. This is in the exploration stage and is not requested in this report.
20. **Legal implications** – The change in immigration rules around citizenship are to be added to the Care Leaver offer, as well as any amendments around cessation of service in the very rare circumstance where staff safety is at risk.

21. **Risk implications** – there is a risk to children and their families if services are not responsive and of high standard.
22. **Equalities implications** – Care leavers receive support akin to protected characteristics – recovery, trauma and geography and movement are considered when looking at responding to behaviour. Staff emotional and physical safety are considered in respect of racist harm from service users. The Care Leaver post-25 offer reflects good lifelong parenting by the City of London Corporation – this will be tested and refined as needed.
23. **Climate implications** – none.
24. **Security implications** – none.

Conclusion

25. The new Children's Social Care and Family Help Service Development Plan sets out the development of the Children's Social Care and Family Help service for the financial year 2025–26. It is ambitious for children and families. Together with the Families in the City programme, the plan sets out change in line with national requirements that will work in our unique context.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Children's Social Care and Family Help Service Development Plan 2025-26

Rachel Talmage

Head of Children's Social Care and Family Help

T: 0203 834 7373

E: Rachel.Talmage@cityoflondon.gov.uk