

City of London Corporation Committee Report

Committee: Safeguarding and SEND Sub-Committee	Dated: 01/07/2025
Subject: City of London Safeguarding and Quality Assurance, 2024–25 Participation Annual Report	Public report: (with photos removed) For Information
This proposal: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • delivers Corporate Plan 2024-29 outcomes • provides statutory duties 	Providing Excellent Services, Diverse and engaged communities The 2007 Care Matters: Time for Change White Paper
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	N/A
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:	Judith Finlay, Executive Director of Community and Children’s Services
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Summary

The Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Service within the People’s Directorate oversees the participation offer to children in care and care leavers. It is a statutory expectation that all local authorities must provide the opportunity for children in care and care leavers to share their experiences through a Children in Care Council. However, to support young people to do this, the participation offer goes beyond formal meetings and consultation events, providing opportunities for children and young people to develop friendships with each other; foster relationships with senior leaders; and try new activities and cultural experiences which provide a sense of collective belonging and identity. It also serves as a conduit to share information with young people in an informal environment, signpost to services and professionals who can help, and act as bridge to support the engagement and interaction with new services and workers.

Recommendation

Members are asked to:

- Note the report.

Main Report

Background

1. To deliver services that meet the needs of our children in care and care leavers, it is fundamental that we receive their honest and individual feedback about what is done well and what can be improved. While there are the usual mechanisms for doing this, such as surveys and forms, it is nationally recognised that this isn't always the most helpful way for young people to share their views. Therefore, the Children in Care Council offers a space that is centred around the young person, and which is supported by workers not directly involved in operational social work practice and decision-making. This enables young people to come together to share their experiences and views in a safe, supportive and facilitated way.
2. We need to ensure that we are being proactive, sensitively persistent, and creative in the ways we communicate our offer and the activities that are available. We also need to demonstrate the impact that young people can have on service development and the support they receive.

Current Position

3. This year we have focused on creating more informal spaces for young people to come together and share their views and any worries, rather than formal meetings and consultations. With a range of online, drop-in, and in-person opportunities to meet different styles of engagement.
4. We have built on our inclusive practice and used the skills of a new apprentice to support translation of videos and documents. We continue to be mindful that events that are organised are cognisant of religious observances within the group: meals need to be halal, timings of events need to respect prayer times or provide space for these to be observed, periods of fasting need to be considered for timing of events and the impact that fasting may have on energy levels.
5. We have developed consistent monthly events, including an online information session with expert speakers, and a supper club. These have proved successful and have regular attendance, and young people are aware that these spaces are always available to them, as needed.
6. We held another successful summer residential trip, alongside varied holiday time activities. While young people can often be busy revising, working, or taking time to rest during academic breaks, we endeavour to offer activities that would interest them and provide a space to come together.

7. We continue to ensure that we have a consistent and comprehensive communication strategy, and that we have up-to-date contact details for all young people. We use a private WhatsApp group, group emails, and direct phone calls. We have also developed a communication email group with key workers and carers to ensure that they are consistently receiving information about opportunities available so they can promote these with our young people and support them to attend if needed. Social workers continue to be proactive in promoting and attending events to support their young people.
8. We recognise that our cohort of care leavers are getting older and often have busy lives with jobs, social networks, and children of their own. They don't necessarily have time or need to attend the events and activities that we provide. However, we continue to ensure that these opportunities are shared with them, so they know there are options available to them at those times.

Options

9. The participation work continues to provide a pre-planned calendar of Children in Care Council sessions and events throughout the year, which are shared in quarterly newsletters. The Council also links with partners that are also working in this space – such as the Virtual School, Prospects, and Partnership for Young London – to offer a wide range of opportunities that meet the variety of needs for our children and young people. See the appendices for more details about participation.

Proposals

10. The above arrangements continue through the Participation Officer who reports to the Head of Safeguarding and Quality Assurance within the People's Directorate. There will be a review to consider the remit of the role and where additional value could be added.

Key Data

11. There is no data related to this report.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

12. There are no strategic implications directly related to this report.

- Strategic implications – N/A
- Financial implications – N/A
- Resource implications – N/A
- Legal implications – N/A
- Risk implications – N/A
- Equalities implications – N/A
- Climate implications – N/A
- Security implications – N/A

Conclusion

13. The participation offer is continually developing to respond to the needs and interests for our children in care and care leavers. Those who access the offer provide positive feedback about their experiences and the opportunities provided, and so we will continue communication of the offer and promote attendance.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – 2024–25 Participation Annual Report Non-Public
- Appendix 2 – 2024–25 Participation Annual Report Public

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