City of London Corporation Committee Report

Committees: Community and Children's Services Committee – For Information Safeguarding and SEND Sub-Committee – For Information	**Dated:** 8 September 2026 9 November 2026
Subject: Ofsted Focus Visit Inspection of Children Social Care and Early Help	**Public report:** For Information
Which outcomes in the City Corporation's Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?	• People are safe and feel safe • People enjoy good health and wellbeing.
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:	Judith Finlay, Executive Director of Community and Children's Services
Report author:	Rachel Talmage, Head of Children's Social Care and Early Help

Summary

On 17 and 18 June 2026 Ofsted undertook a two-day Focus Visit of Children's Social Care and Early Help services to look at arrangements for children in need of help and protection with particular focus on practice responding to children experiencing domestic abuse, child exploitation and youth violence.

As part of the Ofsted inspection framework, a Focus Visit does not generate a judgement but instead identifies strengths and areas for improvement which are set out in a published letter. The letter was published on 17 July 2026.

The visit generated positive feedback across all areas that were inspected. Ofsted described a committed and creative leadership team, supported by the Corporation, driving continuous service improvement for vulnerable children and families.

This report summarises the main findings with the published letter provided as Appendix 1.

Recommendation

Members are asked to:

- Note the report.

Main Report

Background

1. On 10 June 2026, Ofsted contacted the Director of Community and Children's Services to confirm that the organisation would be undertaking a two-day Focus Visit of the services for children in need of help and protection via the 'front door' for Children's Social Care and Early Help services. This took place on 17 and 18 June 2026.

2. The visit was undertaken as part of the Local Authority Children's Services Inspection Framework (see link at Appendix 2). The Inspection in September 2024 resulted in an overall judgement of 'Outstanding'.

3. The visit did not result in a graded judgement but instead generated a published letter that sets out the findings about strengths and any areas for improvement. This letter was published on 17 July 2026 – see Appendix 1.

4. The visit focused on the following areas:
   - arrangements for children in need or subject to a protection plan
   - with a particular focus on practice for children living in circumstances where there is domestic abuse (from ILACS inspection September 2024)
   - and the response to children who experience exploitation and youth violence (from ILACS inspection September 2024)
   - how the implementation of Families First Social Care reforms is going relating to Children in need and Child Protection. (As agreed at the Annual Engagement Meeting)

Current Position

5. The Inspectors considered a wide range of evidence via: review of case notes; data; meetings with Social Workers and Managers; audit reviews; and meetings with the Leadership within the Department for Children and Community Services. In particular, the inspectors reviewed
   - Child protection enquires such as strategy discussions or section 47 assessments
   - The effectiveness of planning, plans and interventions for children in need/children in need of protection (including pre-birth planning and children neglected)
   - Step-up/step-down between children in need and child protection

6. Full details of their findings can be seen in the published letter at Appendix 1. The letter sets out the following overarching headlines:
    - High-quality practice sustained and improved since the previous inspection in September 2024.
    - Strong and well-established child-focused culture, with children's lived experiences consistently at the centre of practice.
    - Highly effective management oversight, with reflective supervision focused on achieving positive outcomes for children rather than compliance alone.
    - Robust quality assurance arrangements fully embedded, enabling accurate benchmarking and continuous improvement.
    - Accessible and culturally appropriate services providing the right help at the right time.
    - Skilled practitioners who balance immediate safeguarding concerns with longer-term planning to achieve sustainable change.
    - Comprehensive, analytical assessments that effectively consider historical, current and contextual information.
    - Purposeful, outcome-focused planning supported by a broad range of services and regular review of progress.
    - Strong professional curiosity and reflective practice, particularly where progress is slower or risks remain.
    - Effective involvement of children, young people and their networks in decision-making and support planning.
    - Relationship-based practice identified as a notable strength, with continuity of worker prioritised to improve stability and engagement.

7. Furthermore Ofsted found that:
    - Workforce stability, manageable caseloads and high staff satisfaction contributing to consistent, high-quality practice.
    - Significant improvement in responses to domestic abuse, exploitation and youth violence.
    - Strong investment in workforce development and specialist training, increasing practitioner confidence and expertise.
    - Proactive, preventative approach to exploitation, with effective early intervention and risk reduction.
    - Excellent multi-agency working, ensuring coordinated, timely and proportionate responses to children's needs.
    - Strong learning culture, where staff feel valued, supported and professionally developed.

    Overall practice described as impactful, child-focused and responsive, with a clear commitment to improving outcomes for children and families.

8. There was one recommendation for additional action set out by Ofsted, which was to strengthen the consistency with which feedback from children and families is used to inform, shape and improve services, ensuring their experiences directly influence service development and continuous improvement. This recommendation has been taken forward in the Children's Social Care and Early Help Service Development Plan and the Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Service Development Plan. This work

has had the benefit of scrutiny by the Achieving Excellence Board, held on 17 July 2026.

Resource implications:

9. There are no resource implications linked to this report.

Legal implications:

10. There are no legal implications linked to this report.

Risk implications:

11. There were no risk implications linked directly to this report. There were no recommendations or a requirement to report back to Ofsted on an improvement plan. The service will continue to drive its improvement agenda forward via the use of the Service Development Plan, with support and oversight via the Achieving Excellence Board, the Safeguarding Sub-Committee and the City and Hackney Safeguarding Children Partnership.

Equalities implications:

12. No implications regarding equalities are linked to this report. Ofsted found an outstanding focus on identity, culture, diversity and intersectionality, leading to more personalised and responsive support.

Climate implications:

13. There are no climate implications linked to this report.

Security implications:

14. There are no security implications linked to this report.

Conclusion

15. Ofsted carried out a two-day Focus Visit of the children in need of help and protection, focussing on practice with children experiencing domestic violence, serious youth harm and exploitation within Children's Social Care and Early Help services, alongside evaluating progress with the national Family First Reforms. The findings of the visit were published in a letter which is appended to this report.

16. The inspection found that the City of London continues to deliver high-quality, child-centred services, characterised by strong leadership, excellent management oversight, reflective and relationship-based practice, effective multi-agency working, and a culture of continuous improvement that is achieving positive outcomes for children and families.

17. Ofsted noted that leadership and management enabled a culture of learning and that corporate support has been a key enabler of success, providing strong

backing for senior leaders' continued investment in, and development of, high-quality services that improve outcomes for vulnerable children and families.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Letter from Ofsted
- Appendix 2 – Local Authority Children's Services Inspection Framework (link)

Background Papers

None

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