Appendix 1

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Dear Judith

Focused visit to City of London Corporation Children's Services

This letter summarises the findings of the focused visit to City of London Corporation children's services on 17 and 18 June 2026. His Majesty's Inspectors for this visit were Sally Sinclair and Rebecca Dubbins.

The inspectors looked at the local authority's 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 and the response to children who experience exploitation and youth violence.

This visit was carried out in line with the inspection of local authority children's services (ILACS) framework.

Headline findings

Since the previous inspection in September 2024, children have continued to receive high-quality help and support with practice sustained and improved. The City of London demonstrates a strong and well-established culture of child-focused practice, underpinned by committed leadership, reflective management oversight and a workforce that remains focused on improving outcomes for children and families.

Across the areas of practice reviewed, practitioners consistently prioritise children's lived experiences, respond proportionately to risk and ensure that support is tailored to individual circumstances. Practice is characterised by thoughtful analysis, professional curiosity and a clear focus on achieving sustainable change for children.

A creative and reflective senior leadership team, strongly backed by the Corporation, continues to invest in and refine services for vulnerable children and their families, drawing on a good understanding of service strengths and areas for development. This is reinforced by fully embedded quality assurance processes, which enable

leaders to benchmark practice accurately and to identify opportunities for continuous improvement.

What needs to improve?

- The consistency with which feedback gathered from children and families is used to shape and develop services (enabler 2 national framework).

Main Findings

Children in the City of London benefit from accessible, culturally appropriate services that are available when needed. A well-coordinated approach ensures that support is responsive and proportionate to children's needs, helping families access the right help at the right time.

Practitioners skilfully balance immediate safeguarding concerns with purposeful longer-term planning, maintaining a consistent focus on children's safety, wellbeing and aspirations. Risks are thoroughly understood, regularly reviewed and critically evaluated throughout practitioners' involvement. This enables practitioners to respond effectively to changing circumstances, while helping families to understand the impact of their behaviours on children. As a result, positive changes are more likely to be sustained, leading to improved outcomes for children over time.

The timely completion of assessments and effective joint working with partner agencies contribute to reducing risks for children. Assessments are comprehensive and analytical, drawing effectively on historical, contextual and current information to develop a clear understanding of children's circumstances and daily experiences. A particular feature of practice is the strength of practitioners' and managers' focus on identity, culture, diversity and intersectionality. These factors are carefully considered when analysing children's experiences and family dynamics, resulting in assessments and interventions that are both reflective and responsive to individual needs. This strengthens practitioners' ability to understand children's lived experiences and tailor support accordingly.

Planning is purposeful, outcome-focused and enhanced by access to a broad range of services. Most plans are updated in a timely way and clearly demonstrate the progress being made. Practitioners and managers consistently reflect on the effectiveness of interventions over time, particularly when progress is slower or children remain subject to plans for extended periods. This reflective practice strengthens oversight, supports professional curiosity and helps ensure that interventions remain purposeful, responsive and focused on achieving sustainable change for children and their families.

Threshold decisions and transitions between services are considered carefully. Practitioners demonstrate confidence in working across a range of need, ensuring

that children receive the right level of support at the right time. Children, young people and their networks are actively involved in decision-making, and practitioners work effectively to strengthen family and community networks alongside professional support. Relationship-based practice is a notable strength, with continuity of worker frequently prioritised. This promotes stability and sustained engagement and reduces change and disruption for children. This makes a positive difference to families and is in line with 'Families First' ambitions.

Management oversight is a significant strength. Supervision is reflective, analytical and focused on children's lived experiences. Managers provide meaningful challenge and support, helping practitioners maintain momentum, address barriers to progress and remain focused on achieving positive change for children. Oversight is not simply about compliance, it is about outcomes for children and contributes directly to the quality of practice and decision-making.

Leaders have created a positive learning culture in which staff feel valued, listened to and supported to develop professionally. Strong cross-service collaboration enables flexible, coordinated responses to need. Practitioners describe leaders as visible, accessible and committed to improvement. Workforce stability, manageable caseloads and high levels of professional satisfaction contribute to consistent practice and positive experiences for children and families.

At the last inspection, practice for children living with domestic abuse and the response to children at risk of exploitation were identified as areas that needed some improvement. This visit found strengthened practice and increased practitioner confidence in these areas. Practitioners demonstrate a sound understanding of the impact of domestic abuse, exploitation and youth violence and they identify, assess and respond to risk appropriately. Investment in workforce development has supported these improvements.

Leaders have delivered training focused on domestic abuse and parental conflict across the Corporation, enhancing the ability to recognise and respond to the complexities of family relationships. The City of London is also working collaboratively with others to support practitioners in the use of a specialist assessment tool, reflecting a commitment to developing evidence-informed practice and further strengthening assessments of abusive relationships and parental conflict.

Although the number of children currently affected by exploitation in the City of London is relatively low, practitioners are alert to emerging concerns and demonstrate a proactive approach to prevention. Effective direct work with children and families helps to reduce vulnerability and build protective factors before risks escalate. This reflects a well-developed culture of early identification and intervention, where practitioners do not become complacent because of low numbers but remain focused on preventing harm.

Multi-agency working is strong. Practitioners work effectively alongside partner agencies to share information, assess risk and coordinate responses. This collaborative approach ensures that children receive timely and proportionate support, with their needs being met across the continuum of need. This focus on working with other agencies has supported a more coordinated and effective response to domestic abuse and exploitation risks.

Quality assurance arrangements are comprehensive and provide leaders with a detailed understanding of practice. Auditing and moderation processes are generally robust, reflective and focused on improving outcomes. Learning from audit activity informs practice development and strengthens oversight. Feedback from children and families is sought during the audit process, although this feedback is not used consistently to shape and develop services for children.

Overall, practice is impactful, child-focused and responsive. Children benefit from practitioners who understand risk, value relationships and work persistently to secure the right support. Leaders have successfully embedded a culture of learning, reflection and continuous improvement. The City of London demonstrates strong practice, effective oversight and a clear commitment to improving outcomes for children.

Ofsted will take the findings from this focused visit into account when planning the next inspection or visit.

Yours sincerely

Sally Sinclair
His Majesty's Inspector