

Committee	Date:
Safeguarding Sub Committee	25 September 2015
Subject: Children's Safeguarding Review	Public
Report of: Director of Community and Children's Services	For Information

Summary

This review presents to Members the progress made by the City of London's Community and Children's Services to improve the quality of the City of London's safeguarding services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers.

Since May 2015, a Service Improvement Board chaired by Ade Adetosoye, Director of Community and Children's Services, has overseen a number of recommendations and agreed priority actions against each of these areas, which are incorporated into the Service Improvement Plan.

Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to:

- note the report.

Main Report

Background

1. In May 2015, the City of London Corporation's Community and Children's Services produced a Service Improvement Plan to set out the recommendations and agreed priority actions to improve the quality of the City of London's safeguarding services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers. The Improvement Plan incorporates a range of single-agency and multi-agency recommendations, including those for the City and Hackney Safeguarding Children Board (CHSCB), as well as CHSCB police and health partners.
2. This review is being presented to Members of the Safeguarding Sub-Committee to enable the scrutiny of the improvements made to the City's safeguarding service and oversee any future improvement priorities.

Current Position

3. This report provides an overview of the key recommendations and agreed actions to ensure the effective safeguarding of vulnerable children in the City at all stages from the early help point through to care leavers.
4. The report also reflects a number of key service improvements that relate to new statutory requirements for safeguarding children, including:
 - children and young people at risk or who are known to have suffered FGM;
 - the effectiveness of the local authority in meeting the 'Prevent Duty' in relation to safeguarding children.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

5. Once the Service Improvement Board completes its safeguarding review, any on-going improvement priorities will be embedded within wider service improvement planning.
6. A Communications Plan incorporating the main service improvements, as well as standalone communications plan for CSE, Private Fostering and the Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP), will raise awareness among partner agencies as these improvements are embedded into the service.

Conclusion

7. In completing this Safeguarding Review, the City of London continues its improvement journey as a learning organisation, ensuring that it provides effective safeguarding services for children and young people from the early help point through to care leavers, and that it complies with statutory requirements in this area.

Appendices

- Appendix 1: Children's Safeguarding Review: May 2015 – September 2015

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Children's Safeguarding Review: May 2015 – September 2015

In May 2015, the City of London Corporation's Community and Children's Services produced a Service Improvement Plan to set out the recommendations and agreed priority actions to improve the quality of the City of London's safeguarding services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers.

The Improvement Plan incorporates a range of single-agency and multi-agency recommendations, including those for the City and Hackney Safeguarding Children Board (CHSCB), as well as CHSCB police and health partners. It also includes new improvement priorities to ensure compliance with statutory requirements for safeguarding children, including the experience and progress of children and young people at risk of or who are known to have suffered female genital mutilation (FGM) and the effectiveness of the local authority in meeting the 'Prevent duty'.

Governance of the Service Improvement Plan is conducted through the Service Improvement Board on a fortnightly basis, chaired by Ade Adetosoye, Director of Community and Children's Services. The Service Improvement Board members are:

- Chris Pelham, Assistant Director for People
- Pat Dixon, Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Service Manager,
- Shaista Afzal, Children's Social Care and Early Help Service Manager
- Ivy Alexander, Children and Families Team Manager
- Sham Kidane, Independent Reviewing Officer and Principal Social Worker
- Jim Gamble, Independent Chair, CHSCB
- Rory McCallum, Senior Professional Advisor, CHSCB
- Moushumi Bhadra, Improvement Planning Programme Coordinator
- Gemma De La Rue, Inspection and Improvement Project Manager

The recommendations and agreed priority actions were organised into the following categories:

1. The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection

The following actions have been taken to improve the experiences and progress of children who need help and protection in the City of London:

Knowledge and application of thresholds

- Following concerns about the low referral rate to children's social care services, the City of London produced a new Thresholds of Needs document to provide guidance to partner agencies on the process for identifying children who need to access early help and children's social care services using the Thresholds of Needs matrix, with particular guidance relating to Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) and the Prevent duty.
- The significant rise in referrals and contacts reflects the work undertaken to address the low referral rate, demonstrating that thresholds for referral for children's services are now known and appropriately applied across the City.

Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)

- LADO referrals are dealt with in accordance with statutory requirements.

- Although the numbers of LADO referrals are low, training and briefing sessions have increased awareness of the role of the LADO, meaning that staff and partner agencies know to refer to the local authority if they come across concerns about the suitability of staff working with children.

Private Fostering

- Although we have not identified any Private Fostering arrangements in the City for the last three years, City staff and partner agencies have received training on Private Fostering, meaning that they know how to refer appropriately.
- A 12 month communications plan is in place to promote Private Fostering in the community and with key agencies to increase awareness.

Engagement with Children and Young People

- Our annual consultation for 2014/15 with all children and young people accessing our services shows that they felt their views were listened to and they were treated with respect. Most children felt safe or safer after social workers had become involved.
- A framework has been developed to enable the meaningful engagement and participation of children and young people in children's social care services.

Advocacy Services

- The City has commissioned Action for Children to provide a specialist advocacy service for children from the early help point through to care leavers, as well as for children with disabilities. This will serve to raise awareness among our children on their entitlements to provide feedback on our services and to access an advocate.

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

- A joint FGM strategy with Hackney is being developed under the City of London Executive Group to ensure that the City is identifying children and young people who are at risk of and who are known to have suffered female genital mutilation (FGM).

Prevent duty

- The Assistant Director for People will act as the departmental lead to ensure that the local authority is compliant with the Prevent duty in relation to safeguarding children and will be the main point of contact for any referrals to the Channel panel.
- The Children's Social Care and Early Help Service Manager will act as the operational lead for the Prevent duty and will regularly attend the Corporation-wide Prevent Delivery Plan Meetings.

Missing and Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)

- The City has a local CSE strategy in place, which is led by the CHSCB.
- Any children who are considered to be vulnerable or at risk of CSE are discussed at the monthly Multi-Agency Sexual Exploitation (MASE) meetings.
- A CSE Communications and Engagement Strategy is in place to raise awareness among partner agencies and for early identification of young people at risk of CSE.

2. The experiences and progress of looked after children and achieving permanence

The following actions have been taken to improve the experiences of children looked after in the City of London, as well as ensuring that they achieve permanence in their placements:

Missing from Home, Care and Education

- The City has an effective and well co-ordinated multi-agency approach to protect children who go missing from home, care and education, which are localised from the Pan London procedures. This is underpinned by the CHSCB Missing Strategy and Action Plan.
- We have updated our Missing from Care Protocol and ensured that it is fully implemented.
- Although the majority of the City's secondary school age population are educated outside the local authority and in independent schools, the City has sought to improve its monitoring and tracking of City children in order to identify children missing from education. Electively home educated children are visited twice a year by education officers to ensure the curriculum is suitable and to screen for safeguarding concerns.

Achieving permanence for children looked after

- Our Children and Families Team are committed to achieving permanence for the children in our care. We have a new Permanency Policy and Procedure in place to ensure close tracking of permanency as part of the way the child's care plan is reviewed.
- Our Permanency Panel reviews all children looked after.

Children Looked After and Care Leavers Service Improvement Group

- A Children Looked After and Care Leavers Sub-Group, led by the Children's Social Care and Early Help Service Manager, acts as a strategic multi-agency group and is attended by all key lead partner agencies.
- The City of London's Pledge has been disseminated to all children looked after, ensuring that they are aware of the promises that the City has made to help and support them.

Independent Fostering Agencies (IFAs)

- The City closely monitors the performance of the Independent Fostering Agencies where our children looked after are placed.
- The performance team records Ofsted inspection ratings for all IFAs and feeds back to the Children and Families Team when an agency's rating is changed.
- The Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Service Manager holds an annual monitoring meeting with all Independent Fostering Agencies, assessing the agency against national minimum standards, using evidence provided by the IFA and taking into account relevant feedback from social workers.

3. Adoption performance

The following actions have been taken to improve adoption performance in the City of London:

Commissioned services for adoption

- Although the City has not had any adoptions for a number of years, it has commissioned Coram for its adoption services, a provider rated as Outstanding by Ofsted that brings specific expertise to the recruitment of adopters and family finding.
- The City has nominated a designated social worker to attend the City and Hackney Adoption Panel.

4. The experience and progress of care leavers

The following actions have been taken to improve the experience and progress of care leavers in the City of London:

City of London Pledge

- The Children in Care Council supported the development of the City of London Pledge to Children Looked After and Care Leavers, enabling them to have oversight and awareness of the promises that the City has made to help and support them.

Education, Employment and Training Strategy

- A City of London Care Leavers Education, Employment and Training Strategy is in place to provide greater job opportunities and work experience placements for care leavers within the local authority.

5. Leadership, management and governance

The following actions have been taken to support continuous improvement of leadership, management and governance in the City of London:

Knowledge of frontline practice

- The Lead Member for Children's Services has shadowed social workers, attended the children's centre, linked up with a lead member from another borough and attended the Lead Member's development programme.
- Senior leaders in the local authority, including the Lead Member for Children's Services, the Director for Children's Services and the Assistant Director for People, have met the Children in Care Council (CiCC).
- Corporate Parent training has been rolled out for Chief Officers to ensure that they are adequately engaged.

Quality assurance

- Our Independent Reviewing Officer is now in-house, which has ensured that an effective quality assurance framework is in place.
- The Early Help Sub-Group is chaired by the Assistant Director for People, operating as a sub-group of the Children's Executive Board, seeking to align the work of the multi-agency partnership with the Early Help Strategy and

address the strategic objectives set out in the Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP).

6. City and Hackney Safeguarding Board

The following actions have been taken by City staff to improve services provided by the City and Hackney Safeguarding Board:

Missing and CSE

- The CHSCB Missing Children and CSE Strategies have been completed and City-specific action plans have been developed and monitored.

Safeguarding training

- The CHSCB provides high quality multi-agency training and awareness-raising, which ensures it embeds learning from reviews and audits

Think Family protocol

- The CHSCB have developed a 'Think Family' protocol to encompass adult substance misuse, mental health, neglect and domestic abuse, setting out the arrangements for the City and our partners.

Conclusion

Once the Children's Safeguarding Review is completed in September 2015, any on-going improvement priorities will be embedded into wider service improvement planning.

A Communications Plan incorporating the main service improvements, as well as standalone communications plan for CSE, Private Fostering and the Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP), will raise awareness among partner agencies as these improvements are embedded into the service.