

Corporate Parenting in the City of London

Annual Report – 2014/15

1 Introduction and context

- 1.1 This annual report provides an update on the City Corporation's role as a corporate parent, and the outcomes that have been achieved for the children in our care.
- 1.2 The City of London Corporation is a Corporate Parent to the children who are in its care. These looked after children are those children and young people aged 0 - 18 years who cannot safely remain with their family, or those for whom the City Corporation acts as a parent in the absence of family. Looked after children can include unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC), children with multiple disabilities and those who have suffered abuse and/or neglect. As such, looked after children and young people are one of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged groups in our community.
- 1.3 The City Corporation's legal and financial responsibility to the children and young people for whom it is a corporate parent extends into their lives as care leavers and as they transition to independence.

2 The children in our care

- 2.1 During 2014/15 the City looked after 11 children. Seven children were in care at the start of the year and a further four came into care during the year. One of those who came into care was looked after temporarily and subsequently returned to their home. Two others reached the age of 18 and continued to receive the support of the City Corporation as care leavers (both living in semi-independent accommodation).
- 2.2 The City's looked after children are predominantly older, with only one under the age of ten years at the beginning of the year. Four looked after children were aged 17 or 18 years, three were aged 14 or 15 years, and three were aged 12 or 13 years.
- 2.3 Ten of the 11 children looked after during 2014/15 were male.
- 2.4 The age and gender profile of the City's looked after children reflects the dominance of children who are Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) among this group. Seven of the 11 children looked after in 2014/15 were UASC, as were three of the four children who came into care during the year. Nationally, 89 per cent of UASC children are male and 76 per cent are aged over 16 years.
- 2.5 The number of UASC in our looked after population is also reflected in the diversity of ethnicities and countries of origin. Children of Asian origin represent the largest cohort (four of 11 children), three are of mixed origin and four identified as either white British or white other (Albanian). Although households of Asian origin are significant proportion of the City's population, such households are south Asian (Bangladeshi) in origin and diverse from the children of Asian origin in our care who are Afghani or Iranian.

- 2.6 During 2014/15 the City supported 13 young people who had left care – including the two young people mentioned above who at the age of 18 years became care leavers.
- 2.7 Five care leavers are aged between 21 and 25 years, and are being supported in full time education. The remaining eight are aged 18 to 21 years.
- 2.8 Twelve of the 13 care leavers supported by the City were male.
- 2.9 Our care leaver population is very ethnically diverse, and as with our looked after children, is markedly different from that of the City's resident population. This reflects their route into care, which for 12 out of 13 care leavers was as an unaccompanied asylum seeking child.

3 Corporate Parenting Board (Safeguarding Sub Committee)

- 3.1 Within the City Corporation the function of Corporate Parenting Board is undertaken by the Safeguarding Sub Committee which reports to the Community and Children's Services Grand Committee.
- 3.2 The Safeguarding Sub Committee meets four times each year, and in its capacity as the Corporate Parenting Board it is responsible for:
- achieving improved outcomes for children in care and care leavers;
 - developing and overseeing implementation of the City Corporation's Corporate Parenting Strategy to drive improved outcomes;
 - providing challenge to ensure that the Council's duties as Corporate Parent are carried out effectively and consistently.
- 3.3 Membership includes the lead member for children, and the Chairman of Community and Children's Services Grand Committee. Over the past year the Sub Committee has considered reports on topics including:
- safeguarding
 - child sexual exploitation
 - participation of children
 - educational progress of looked after children
 - health of looked after children
 - participation and engagement of looked after children
- 3.4 The Sub Committee formally received the Annual Report of the City and Hackney Safeguarding Children Board and the City Corporation's renewed escalation policy for safeguarding concerns.
- 3.5 A development session for members was also held during the year to highlight the City's role and responsibilities as a corporate parent. This took place alongside Member engagement sessions focussed on safeguarding as part of the City's "Notice the Signs" campaign.

4 Corporate Parenting Strategy

- 4.1 During the year the City Corporation developed a new Corporate Parenting Strategy which was approved by the Safeguarding Sub Committee. The Corporate Parenting Strategy sets out how the City will fulfil its commitment and ensure that children and young people have the support, care and encouragement to reach their full potential.
- 4.2 To achieve this, and deliver the City's role and responsibilities as a corporate parent the strategy sets out a number of actions and commitments grouped under the following headings:
- healthy and safe
 - learning, achieving and enjoying
 - listening and contributing
 - independence and working
 - individual and community.
- 4.3 Within the Strategy the City has developed a "Pledge" for its looked after children, young people and care leavers. The Pledge is the City's promise to provide the care and help that children and young people in its care have told the City they want. It also includes the commitments the City has already made in signing up to the Government's "charter for care leavers".
- 4.4 The Pledge to looked after children and care leavers was developed through consultation with children and young people and agreed at the first meeting of the City's Children in Care Council (see Engagement below). It sets out a number of promises that children and young people have identified which, if delivered, would make the City a good parent and carer.
- 4.5 Our Children in Care Council also developed a young person friendly version of the Corporate Parenting Strategy, which together with the Pledge, will help the children and young people in our care hold the City to account for the commitments it has made to them.
- 4.6 Once approved, the Corporate Parenting Strategy was presented to the Community and Children's Services Grand Committee. It has subsequently been presented to the full Court of Common Council in order to highlight both the responsibility of Members as corporate parents and the importance of this role. The strategy was also presented by the Director of Community and Children's Services to the City Corporation's Chief Officer Group, which identified two Chief Officers to act as champions for our looked after children.

5 Health and wellbeing

- 5.1 As corporate parents the City takes responsibility for assessing and promoting good physical and mental health among the children and young people in our care. This is achieved through annual assessments of health and dental health, and by ensuring children and young people are fully immunised. We have also changed the delivery of mental health services for this group, to better meet their needs, and we support

children to be happy and thrive. The City's performance in achieving health and dental assessments and immunisations exceeds national performance. Our children's emotional wellbeing is better than that measured nationally among other looked after children.

- 5.2 During 2014/15 all looked after children had a health assessment performed by a paediatrician. The latest reported national figures show that only 88 per cent of children were looked after for at least 12 months had had an annual health assessment.
- 5.3 Health reviews were also undertaken by the designated nurse for looked after children, who visits children and young people in their placements. All children looked after by the City for at least twelve months had been fully immunised, compared to 87 per cent of looked after children nationally. Of those who came into, and have remained in care during the year, one has received an immunisation booster package for UASC, and two remained outstanding at the year end.
- 5.4 Annual dental checks were conducted during the year for all those who were in care at the start of the year, compared to nationally reported performance of 84 per cent. Of those entering care, one was temporary and did not have a dental check-up during the period in care, two have had a dental check, and one remained outstanding at the year end.
- 5.5 The City's Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) supports children and young people in our care. Our looked after children were all placed out of borough in 2014/15, but the CAMHS service specification was amended during the year so that it is now commissioned to provide support to our looked after children in their placement (wherever they are placed). Under this service all looked after children and care leavers receive a CAMHS assessment. These are undertaken in their placement and include the mental state of the child or young person. All relationships are also assessed. Assessments include diagnosis of common conditions such as ADHD, and Autistic Spectrum Conditions can be screened for and diagnosed if appropriate. Support is also given to foster parents and carers for crisis management on a case by case basis, as is teaching and training to foster parents and carers.
- 5.6 Seven of our looked after children were referred for CAMHS assessments during the year. Following assessment, two cases required no further intervention or support for mental health issues, one child was referred for support from local CAMHS services in their home area, and the remaining four received on-going therapeutic and medical support.
- 5.7 No looked after child, young person or care leaver was identified as having a substance misuse issue, and there were no conceptions.
- 5.8 Five of our children aged 4–16, who had been in care continuously for a year or more, completed "strengths and difficulties questionnaire (SDQ) during 2014/15 to assess their emotional wellbeing. A higher SDQ score indicates more emotional difficulties with a score of 0-13 range considered normal. The average SDQ score for City looked after children was 4.8 and all children fell into the normal range. This compares to a national picture where the average score is 13.9 and only just over half of looked after children fall into the normal range.

6 Safeguarding our children

- 6.1 The City Corporation is committed to keeping children and young people safe. During 2014/15 the City rolled out its “Notice the Signs” safeguarding campaign. This thought provoking and conversation-led approach sought to raise awareness of the signs of abuse and neglect of children and adults. The campaign, sponsored by the Town Clerk, engaged staff, Members and residents to make them aware of what we mean by abuse, who can be an abuser, where abuse can take place, and what anyone in the organisation can do in response to their concerns.
- 6.2 All our looked after children are allocated a fully qualified social worker.
- 6.3 During the year no allegations were made by children in our care of neglect or abuse by their carers or others, and consequently no referrals to the Local Authority Designated Officer from or in relation to this group. The City has received no complaints from the children or young people in its care or its care leavers. None of the children we look after have had engagement with the police or criminal justice system during 2014/15
- 6.4 Over the period two looked after children went missing from their foster placements. One of these young people has frequent missing episodes. The Children and Families team has worked with the police, carers and the independent reviewing service to provide support and take actions to prevent or minimise further missing episodes.
- 6.5 Children who go missing can be at risk of serious harm. There are particular concerns about the vulnerability of missing or runaway children to sexual exploitation or other exploitative harm such as violence crime, gang exploitation or drug and alcohol misuse. Looked after children who go missing from placements are at particular risk and vulnerable to sexual and other exploitation. Therefore the children in the City’s care who went missing were considered vulnerable to Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) and were reviewed by the Multi Agency Sexual Exploitation group. This resulted in vulnerability factors being addressed in case planning and multi agency meetings.
- 6.6 CSE has been introduced as an important issue within the strategies that support the operation of Children’s and Families as they have been revised. Each renewed strategy is presented and approved by the Safeguarding Sub Committee to ensure Member awareness and support. This focus is evident in the renewed Thresholds document, and the renewed Corporate Parenting Strategy which commits to:
- provide specific training for staff to identify the risk and/or experience of child sexual exploitation that may be experienced by unaccompanied asylum seeking minors
 - ensure our foster carers are able to identify the risks of child sexual exploitation and can support online safety that includes the risks specific to children looked after
 - establish a targeted preventative and self-protection programme on child sexual exploitation for looked after children.

- 6.7 The City and Hackney Safeguarding Children Board published the *City and Hackney CSE Strategy* in February 2015, and subsequently a specific *City of London CSE Operating Protocol* was developed and is being implemented.

7 Education and employment

- 7.1 The City is committed to, and ambitious for, the educational progress and attainment of children in its care. This ambition is driven by our Virtual School Head who during the years has reviewed the Personal Education Plans (PEP) of all our looked after children and attended the majority of PEP meetings. These meetings set PEP targets that are clearly focused on improving academic outcomes and measure progress. Sharp focus is given to the expected end of Key Stage outcomes. PEPs are now subject to close scrutiny by the Targeted Educational Resource Panel (TERP) to quality assure and drive up standards around the PEPs for our looked after children and care leavers. Social workers have received training during the year to support the completion and effectiveness of PEPs.
- 7.2 Six of our looked after children are school based, of whom half are pupils of English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL). Two pupils are exceeding the national curriculum levels of attainment in end of Key Stage tests, and expected to exceed these levels in the next assessments. One ESOL pupil, is working to improve the current assessed levels and grades and is already expected to attain at least the nationally expected number of GCSE grades A*-C including English and mathematics. One other pupil who was subject to Key Stage tests did not achieve the expected national curriculum levels in literacy and numeracy, but is making significant improvements.
- 7.3 Attendance for all of the school based pupils was well above 90 per cent. One pupil was internally excluded for one day within school and one pupil was externally excluded from school for one day. School mentoring support has been provided in both instances and both pupils are keen that such incidents do not recur.
- 7.4 Pupil premium expenditure in the schools is being monitored by the virtual school head to ensure that the funding is specifically spent to improve academic outcomes and targets identified by PEPs. Specific areas that are supported by the grant in the schools include additional one to one support in literacy, numeracy and ESOL teaching, additional science and mathematics tuition on a one to one basis or in small groups, learning support assistance across the curriculum, and mentoring is provided to support specific behavioural needs that arise.
- 7.5 Four looked after young people attend college based provision. Two young people are currently without college places having been permanently excluded from their placements. Both students were making good educational progress and social workers are working closely with the careers service to secure new college places.
- 7.6 The City also has high aspirations for the achievement of its care leavers. There is comprehensive support to minimise the risk of care leavers being not in employment, education or training (NEET). Educational participation among care leavers is excellent. The Virtual School Head co-ordinates a multi-agency meeting to review the progress of Care Leavers up to the age of 25 and supports social workers to review the educational/training part of the Pathway Plan. Support is also given to plan work

experience placements to develop skills for the work place. The multi-agency group agrees bespoke work packages for, and with, each young person, particularly those at risk of being NEET.

- 7.7 Eleven of 13 care leavers are attending college or university. Three care leavers are following career based courses in cookery, vehicle repair and maintenance and accountancy. One care leaver is in full time employment, and one was NEET at the end of the year.
- 7.8 Those at university (two) benefit from higher education bursaries and the City fund their accommodation and in one case have kept open their fostering placements for holiday periods. Our university students attend Portsmouth and Hertfordshire universities.
- 7.9 The planned establishment (both in 215/16) of a Virtual School Attainment Group, and the Care Leavers Education, Employment and Training Strategy, will further enhance our support to children and young people to ensure they achieve the best educational outcomes they can.

8 Assessments, case planning and permanency planning

- 8.1 The implementation of a Quality Assurance Framework in August 2014 has ensured the review and scrutiny of assessments, care planning and permanency planning for the children in our care.
- 8.2 Scrutiny of the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) service during the year has prompted a change in the delivery of this role, which will be brought in house in 2015/16.
- 8.3 A permanency policy and Panel has been developed to strengthen process, practice and oversight of permanency planning. This ensures that our children in care continue to be subject of Permanency Panel review on a quarterly basis until they are in a permanent placement, and six monthly once they are in placement to ensure that the permanency plan is working.

9 Accommodation

- 9.1 Stable and caring home environments help children in care. All the children the City Corporation looks after benefit from living with foster carers rather than residential children's homes. Foster placements are carefully commissioned on an individual basis in order to meet the needs of children and young people and we systematically monitor these arrangements to ensure they provide stable placements that meet the physical, emotional and social needs of children. Where it is appropriate to do so, siblings that are looked after (as was the case in 2014/15) are placed together.
- 9.2 Children are only placed with independent fostering agencies that are judged Good or Outstanding by Ofsted. Placement stability is excellent – with four out of five children whose care has been long-term, having been in their current placement for more than two years, which is a better performance than our statistical neighbours. There were no placement moves during 2014/15.

- 9.3 Care leavers are supported in a range of accommodation suitable to their needs. One hundred per cent of City of London care leavers are in suitable accommodation – a performance which is above the national and statistical neighbour averages of 88 per cent and 77 per cent respectively.
- 9.4 The City already supports young people to remain in foster care arrangements post 18 years - prior to new Government's guidelines. This reflects our commitment as a corporate parent to deliver for the young people that we look after the security and outcomes we would want for our own children. The "staying put" arrangements were formalised into a policy during the year. Three of our care leavers were staying at the outset of the year, one of which moved on into their own independent accommodation during 2014/15. Six other care leavers were living in independent homes of their own with the rest sustaining either semi-independent or university accommodation.
- 9.5 Young people are supported in independent accommodation through a joint protocol between housing and the Children and Families team which ensures clarity about roles and responsibilities. Young people have also benefited from increased tenancy sustainment provision during the year.

10 Engagement and participation

- 10.1 During 2014/15 the City developed a Children in Care Council (CiCC), which met for the first time in November 2014. The role and focus of the CiCC was decided by young people through a residential trip in the summer of 2014 for the City's children in care and care leavers. Three further meetings of the CiCC occurred in 2014/15 during which young people discussed, agreed and signed off their terms of reference, as well as writing the Pledge, agreeing the City's Corporate parenting strategy and a producing a young people's version of that strategy.
- 10.2 Participation has meant more than meetings. CiCC members have joined in a number of activities to get to know each other, form as a group and have fun together. These have included a pizza making session and bowling. Young people also attended a celebration lunch at the end of March 2015 with elected members of the safeguarding sub-committee, during which a speed 'get to know you' session ensures that every member of the CiCC got to meet and engage with the elected members present.
- 10.3 Our social workers have formed trusting relationships with the children we look after through regular contact. This has helped ensure children and young people have the confidence to share their views, and that these views can inform the planning of their care.
- 10.4 Through the year, social workers have supported our children and young people to meet their social and recreational needs. We encourage and support sporting, musical and other recreational pursuits. The City has used personal education awards to fund school skiing holidays and music lessons. Two children in care have been supported to pursue their interest in cricket by joining local teams, with the City funding their equipment. Young people have also been supported to attend cultural and religious groups to help build their sense of community and relationships with others.

11 Areas of development and priorities for the year ahead

11.1 The Corporate Parenting Strategy sets out the City Corporation's commitment to ensuring the children in and leaving its care meet their full potential and have lives in which they thrive. We will continue to drive the achievement of this in 2015/16 through continuing and enhanced services, and the delivery of targeted actions. These included:

- delivering a Care Leaver Education, Employment and Training Strategy to achieve 100 per cent participation in EET
- maximising participation of young people in service planning and delivery through individual review meetings, the CiCC and other initiatives
- delivering a new in-house IRO service to support and ensure the representation of the views of looked after children
- implementing the new Missing from Care, Home and Education procedures and practice guidance to minimise the risk and incidence of missing episodes
- work with the CiCC to develop a "coming into care" pack
- develop a "health passport" for our care leavers as a record of their health care
- ensure that our staff and partners remain trained to meet the health needs of children looked after, including sexual health, mental and emotional health, child sexual exploitation and substance misuse issues
- provide specific training for staff to identify the risk and/or experience of child sexual exploitation that may be experienced by unaccompanied asylum seeking minors
- establish a targeted preventative and self-protection programme on child sexual exploitation for looked after children
- develop a Looked After Children and Care Leavers Service Improvement Group to provide co-ordinate and seamless services that deliver clear and measurable outcomes for children
- safeguard our children and young people from radicalisation and ensure staff and partners can identify and respond to such risks through the implementation of the Prevent Strategy
- completing "life story" work for all out looked after children.