

Corporate Parenting in the City of London

Annual Report – 2015/16

1 Introduction and context

- 1.1 This annual report provides an update on the City of London 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 2015/16 the City Corporation looked after 17 children. This is an increase from the previous year, during 2014/15 the City Corporation looked after 11 children in total. In 2015/16 eight children were in care at the start of the year and a further nine came into care during the year. Two of those who came into care were looked after temporarily and subsequently repatriated to their home country with their parents. 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). A further two looked after children in the City left our care during 2015/16 because their former foster carers were awarded Special Guardianship Orders, which offered permanency to the children outside of the care system.
- 2.2 The City Corporation's looked after children are predominantly older. 65% of the children cared for during this period were 15 years or older and none of the three that were ten years or younger were still in care by 31st March 2016.
- 2.3 14 of the 17 children looked after during 2015/16 were male and 14 of the 15 care leavers supported by the City were male.
- 2.4 The age and gender profile of the City's looked after children reflect the dominance of children who are Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) among this group. 12 of the 17 children looked after in 2015/16 were UASC, as were seven of the nine children who came into care during the year, the other two children whilst they were not UASC were also not City of London residents. 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. In 2015/16 White British and White Other represented the largest cohort (eight) with two children of white British Origin, four of White Albanian, and 2 Gypsy/Roma (Romanian). Six of the 17 children were of Asian origin. 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. One child was of mixed origin and two children of Black African origin.
- 2.6 During 2015/16 the City supported 15 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 Our care leaver population is 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 14 out of 15 care leavers was as an UASC.

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
 - missing 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 Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) Annual Report and an evaluation of the Notice the Signs Campaign.
- 3.5 In February 2016 a briefing session was delivered to members of the Safeguarding Sub Committee by senior management within DCCS. This was to highlight how the department will support them in their safeguarding role. Materials were produced to support this including a bookmark of key safeguarding terms for children and adults.

4 Corporate Parenting Strategy and Action Plan

- 4.1 The Corporate Parenting Strategy sets out the City Corporation's commitment to ensure that children and young people have the support, care and encouragement to reach their full potential. The Corporate Parenting Action Plan has been developed as part of the wider Children and Young People Action Plan in order to aid the delivery of this commitment. During the year the City Corporation substantially revised its new Corporate Parenting Action Plan to better reflect what is required to fulfil the commitments set out in the Corporate Parenting Strategy.
- 4.2 To achieve this, and deliver the City Corporation's roles and responsibilities as a corporate parent the plan includes actions such as:
- Develop a 'Coming into care' pack, in consultation with the Children in Care Council, to provide information to looked after children and foster carers on healthy lifestyles, exercise, sexual health, drugs and alcohol learning, achieving and enjoying
 - Provide looked after children with local leisure centre membership, equipment for sports activities and musical instruments so they are able to participate in extracurricular activities independence and working
 - Use the views of looked after children to influence planning and help us shape their futures through regular review meetings and meetings with their social worker
 - Train social workers and foster carers to be able to undertake life story work specific to UASC.

5 The Children in Care Council (CiCC)

- 5.1 During 2014/15 the City developed a Children in Care Council (CiCC), which met for the first time in November 2014. The CiCC has met in each holiday period throughout 2015/16, as planned. Meetings take place in the Guildhall which provides an opportunity for young people who are living beyond the City boundaries to come into the City and connect with their corporate parent. Each child receives Spice Time Credits for their attendance at the meetings to acknowledge the contribution they are making.
- 5.2 Participation has meant more than meetings. Meetings are generally followed by an activity which enables informal time together, which was a request by CiCC members. More recently the CiCC members have had lunch in the Guildhall following their meetings which has provided the opportunity to meet staff members informally including the Service Manager, Virtual School Head as well as their Social Workers and IRO (Independent Review Officer). In December 2015 two CiCC members were also invited to attend the Safeguarding Sub-Committee and had the opportunity to meet members and staff informally and within the meeting.
- 5.3 The CiCC has been involved in a number of activities throughout the year. In summer 2015 eight children took a week long boat trip from Portsmouth along the south coast. In December 2015 the CiCC members used Time Credits to travel by boat from London Bridge to Greenwich and explored the World Map in the Maritime Museum

which stimulated conversations about some of the journeys they made from home countries to the UK. In February 2016 the CiCC went bowling together. A private CiCC Facebook group has now been set up to enable ongoing contact between CiCC members.

- 5.4 CiCC meetings have involved members discussing ideas for education, employment and training plans along with work experience opportunities. In February the group were consulted on the development of a health passport for care leavers. CiCC members participated in the recruitment of the new Service Manager by developing interview questions and participating in the interviews.
- 5.5 The CiCC helped finalise the welcome pack for newcomers so that every young person now receives a backpack containing essential items for the first days as well as information sheets outlining The Pledge and opportunities available to them.
- 5.6 Within the Corporate Parenting Strategy the City has developed a Pledge for it's looked after children 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 in order to thrive. The CiCC began work in 2015/16 to review progress of items and promises in the City's Pledge to its young people who are looked after or care leavers.
- 5.7 CiCC member's Learning and Development included sessions on substance misuse, radicalisation and exploitation which were supported by the Substance Misuse Partnership, City of London Police and colleagues from the Safer London Foundation.

6 Health and wellbeing

- 6.1 As corporate parents the City Corporation 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. The City Corporation's performance in achieving health and dental assessments and immunisations exceeds national performance.
- 6.2 During 2015/16 all 17 looked after children received their statutory health assessment. Every child who came into care in 2015/16 received their initial medical assessment by a paediatrician and all those who had been in care 12 or more months received their annual review by the LAC health nurse. The latest reported national figures show that only 90¹ per cent of children were looked after for at least 12 months had had an annual health assessment.
- 6.3 All children looked after by the City immunisations are fully up to date, compared to 88¹ per cent of looked after children nationally.
- 6.4 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 86 per cent.
- 6.5 The City and Hackney Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) enhanced service in the City supports children and young people in our care. Our looked after

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https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/483718/SFR34_2015_Text_AdditionalTables.pdf

children were all placed out of borough in 2015/16, but the CAMHS service 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 were offered a CAMHS assessment in 2015/16 and all but one took this offer up. Of this cohort two children have continued to receive services from CAMHS.

- 6.6 No looked after child, young person or care leaver was identified as having a substance misuse issue, and there were no conceptions.
- 6.7 Four 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 8.75 and all children fell into the normal range. For comparison in 2015 the average score for our statistical neighbours was 12.88 and nationally 13.9.

7 Safeguarding our children

- 7.1 The City Corporation is committed to keeping children and young people safe. The 2014/15 Corporate Parenting Annual Report identified child sexual exploitation (CSE) as an area of development for the year ahead. In March 2016 the City rolled out its “Say Something If You See Something” safeguarding campaign jointly with the City and Hackney Safeguarding Children Board. This was aimed at helping people understand the signs of exploitation (CSE, gangs and radicalisation) and what to do with any concerns. As well as running a billboard campaign in Liverpool Street/Cannon Street stations and phone boxes across the City, we ran a range of activities including a leaflet drop at key stations, which saw the Town Clerk coming along to Liverpool Street Station to support the team. We promoted the campaign via social media, produced various materials including a film made by young people for young people and blogs to reach business community, distributed materials to all City residents on our estates and launched a new CSE online training module as well as holding an information stall for City Corporation staff.
- 7.2 All our looked after children are allocated a fully qualified social worker. Social workers offer support in areas such as identity, health, leisure, education and friendship.
- 7.3 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 were made to the LADO from or in relation to this group. The City Corporation 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 been involved in the criminal justice system during 2015/16.
- 7.4 Over the period four 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 Children’s Right Service to provide support and take actions to prevent or minimise further missing episodes.
- 7.5 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 Corporation'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.

8 Education and employment

- 8.1 The City continues to be committed to, and ambitious for, the educational progress and attainment of children in its care and care leavers. The establishment of the Attainment in the Virtual School group has enhanced the support for our young people and allowed the team to develop agreed principles and practices for the Virtual School.
- 8.2 Five of our looked after children are in schools. The three children in Year 11 completed their GCSEs this summer with two students gaining five GCSE Grade A*-C including English and Maths, one of whom was an UASC. The two students in Year 9, who are both UASC, are making good progress although they are not at National Standards. The five students at College are studying a range of ESOL courses (English for Speakers of Other Languages). These courses provide a limited amount of maths which is supplemented with private tuition provided by the City Corporation to ensure their maths progresses appropriately.
- 8.3 Attendance of our looked after children is very good. Behaviour is generally good although there have been two fixed term exclusions for two different students, one for one day and the other for three days. The school and authority have provided support to address the issues identified as a result of the exclusions.
- 8.4 Four of our looked after children were eligible for the Pupil Premium Grant of £1900 which is to improve academic outcomes and targets identified by Personal Education Plans. All of our looked after children have been offered additional tutor time funded by the City Corporation and all but one of the students have accepted and benefited from the offer. The City Corporation funded and delivered a summer school for four of our English Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) students to improve their English and enhance an understanding of British culture.
- 8.5 The City Corporation has continued to provide significant support to our care leavers to ensure progression and support into employment. Thirteen of our 15 care leavers are in education. Two care leavers completed their final year at University and gained good maths degrees. Eight are completing ESOL courses at College with three of these students following career based courses and two are in employment. The Virtual head identifies support and work experience for care leavers that are not in employment or training (NEET).
- 8.6 Three students attended an introductory day for Apprenticeships. A consultant has been employed to support our young people into apprenticeships.

- 8.7 The City Corporation has provided a number of work placements for our young people. One looked after child has attended work experience for a day with the Police. Care leavers have attended five different work placements ranging from reception duties to working in the finance department in the Chamberlain's office. The placements not only develop skills for the work place but are aspirational and a great benefit to the young people.

9 Assessments, case planning and permanency planning

- 9.1 During 2015/16 the quality of assessments, care planning and permanency planning have been kept under review and scrutiny through supervision, tighter scrutiny of the IRO service and the Quality Assurance Framework.
- 9.2 A Permanency Policy and Panel has being developed to strengthen process, practice and oversight of permanency planning. Every child looked after will be the 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. A biannual audit cycle takes place to review every case and provides scrutiny and challenge to case planning. This has led to improved supervision, tighter scrutiny over statutory visits and the quality of planning.

10 IRO service

- 10.1 The independent reviewing officer's statutory task is to ensure that the care plan for the child fully reflects the child's needs and that the actions set out in the plan are consistent with the local authority's legal responsibilities towards the child.
- 10.2 Scrutiny of the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) service during the year 2014/15 prompted a change in the delivery of this role, which was be brought in house for 2015/16. There is now one full time IRO who is responsible for carrying out the functions of the role to all children in the care of the City Corporation.
- 10.3 The IRO sits away from the Children's Social Care Team and is not involved in the preparation of the child's care plan, management of the child's case, or the control over resources to ensure their independence.
- 10.4 The Children's Social Care Team notifies the IRO of all children received into care within 72 hours. The IRO conducted 40 visits to meet children in 2015/16. The purpose of these visits was to introduce the role of the IRO to newly accommodated children and in all cases to consult children and monitor the quality and progress of their care.
- 10.5 Bringing the IRO service in house has led to improvements in the quality and timeliness of care planning, case monitoring and review meetings.

11 Accommodation

- 11.1 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 in 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 2015/16) are placed together.
- 11.2 With regards to placement stability, of the 17 children looked after during this reporting period, seven were newly accommodated UASC and five of them experienced placement breakdown within the first six months. A 6th placement breakdown concerned a child who was in a stable placement for 17 months. UASC are often initially placed under time pressure often with little information about the child which is the reason for placement breakdown within the first 6 months.
- 11.3 Children are only placed with independent fostering agencies that are judged Good or Outstanding by Ofsted. At 31st March the three children whose care has been long-term (over 2.5 years), had been in their current placement for more than two years.
- 11.4 Care leavers are supported in a range of accommodation suitable to their needs. One hundred per cent of City Corporations care leavers were in suitable accommodation during the year.

12 Areas of development and priorities for the year ahead

- 12.1 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 2016/17 through continuing and enhanced services and the delivery of targeted actions. These included:
- develop a children's domestic abuse strategy
 - review our Staying Put Policy
 - develop a "health passport" for our care leavers as a record of their health care
 - ensure all looked after children and care leavers have adequate sexual health advice and information
 - improve our Pathway Planning to set out the route to the future for our looked after children.
 - employment Education and Training for looked after children. Provide work experience opportunities for our looked after children.
 - 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