

Overview of Services for Children We Care For in Tower Hamlets

Leo Major

Head of Service

Children Looked After & Through Care



Context



- In June 2019, Ofsted rated services for children in care and care leavers as Good, stating that children we care for benefited from collaborative and thorough planning and multiagency work, and practice leaders who modelled excellent child-centred practice.
- In the intervening 2.5 years since that time, the borough like all parts of London and indeed the country has faced the Covid-19 pandemic and its impact on our communities, especially cared for children and young people. Since being appointed 1st September 2021, my challenge has been ensuring that as engaged Corporate Parents, high quality service delivery is maintained despite this.



Challenge & Opportunity



- Constructive relationships grounded in respecting and engaging with children in care and care leavers and the sectors with which they interact is critical to ensuring they achieve positive outcomes.
- At the same time, we recognise that disengagement from services is related to increasing risk factors, including behavioural and relationship problems, substance misuse, and difficulties with mental health or wellbeing. This includes learning feedback from our children and young people that disengagement is often linked to a perceived lack of support from social workers or personal advisors, financial or housing problems and low self-esteem or confidence (From Care to Independence, May 2017).



Service Model



- Children Looked After (CLA) consists of 4 Teams.
- Works with children and young people up to 14 who become looked after either through court intervention (e.g., EPO or ICO) or are by parental agreement under s.20.
- Children allocated from 1st hearing if in proceedings, or 1st statutory review if not in care proceedings.
- Through Care (TCS) consists of 5 Teams.
- Works with children and young people from age 14 once care proceedings are concluded, or who enter care after this time, up to age 25.
- Prepares young people to leave our care by trying to ensure they have skills for independent living and are in suitable accommodation.



Service Model (cont'd)



- Each CLA Team is led by a Team Manager and has up to 6 Practitioners who are a mix of Advanced Practitioners, Social Workers, and New Qualified Workers in their ASYE. Occasionally there will also be Student Social Workers in the Teams. Each child or young person is at all times allocated to a SW-qualified practitioner.
- Each TCS Team is led by a Team Manager and has up to 6 Practitioners, who will be a mix of Advanced Practitioners, Social Workers, and Personal Advisors. All children and young people under 18 are allocated to a SW-qualified practitioner, whilst most over-18's will be allocated a Personal Advisor.



KPI's



- For CLA, includes:
 - -Timeliness of visits to children we care for;
 - -Timeliness of initial care plans, health assessments, and statutory reviews;
 - -Timeliness of care proceedings;
 - -Placement stability.
- For TCS, includes:
 - -Timeliness of pathway planning;
 - -Timeliness of 'keeping in touch';
 - -Care Leavers in suitable accommodation;
 - -Care Leavers in employment, education, or training.



Audit Findings



- Last area focus in April 2021.
 - Findings of 35 moderated audits:
 - 6% (2) graded as Outstanding
 - 60% (21) graded as Good
 - 17% (6) graded as Requiring Improvement
 - 3%(1) graded as Inadequate
- Strong partnership working;
 - Practitioners had established relationships with our children and young people as well as their parents and carers;
 - Skilled Foster Carers caring for our children and young people;
 - Strong IRO oversight;
 - Practitioners being knowledgeable about their children and young people;
 - Strong permanency planning oversight through Perm Summit;
 - SMART care planning;
 - Children and young people's wishes and feelings being obtained and acted upon.



Upcoming Audit Focus and Development Areas



- Next area focus in December 2021.
- Key lines of enquiry will include, in post-lockdown context:
 - -Quality and impact of supervision on practice effectiveness;
 - -Direct work and influence of child/young person's voice;
 - Practitioner engagement with the child/young person's network;
 - -Effectiveness of interventions for emotional and mental health and wellbeing.



Future Priorities



- Ensuring access to timely and effective emotional and mental health and wellbeing support, increased placement stability, and skills for independent living for children and young people we care for;
- Stronger and more effective engagement with all levels of our CLICC and Foster Carers;
- Revitalised Local Offer 2022-23;
- Embedding learning from audit activity, QMUL workshops and other feedback;
- Increased proportion of care experienced young people achieving at least one qualification at Level 2 for Maths and English.



Questions?

