London Children’s Social Care Practice Leaders Group

**Business Plan 2021 - 22**

**Introduction**

This Business Plan sets out what we will do, how we will do it and how we will know the difference we have made.

Our priorities are to:

* raise standards across the whole child and family practice system
* promote effective anti-racist practice and work so that senior and leadership roles in children’s social care reflect the workforce and communities we work with
* work effectively with partners on thematic improvement challenges
* respond effectively to service demand and financial pressures on children’s social care budgets
* apply learning from the Covid-19 emergency to inform resilience and improvement during the Covid-19 recovery period.

The Group will play a key role in implementing the London Innovation and Improvement Board work and, strengthening partnership arrangements with other regional groups and networks.

**Priority 1 - Raising standards across the whole child and family practice system**

We will strengthen leadership in children’s social care by

* Succession planning and support for aspiring practice leaders and DCSs.
* Peer support for new practice leaders.
* Peer learning about effective practice leadership.
* Working collaboratively to drive regional and subregional improvement.
* Modelling leadership behaviour that enables all aspirant leaders to progress their careers.
* Sharing best practice around performance reports, quality assurance and improvement.

We will improve the social work workforce sufficiency by:

* Sharing creative approaches to recruitment and retention.
* Sharing best practice around developing social work career pathways and meeting continuing

professional development need.

* Learn from case reviews and serious child safeguarding incident reports

We will work together to improve the quality of practice and improve the experience for people who use children’s social care services by:

* Sharing learning from the Children’s Social Care Innovations Programme (CSCIP) thematic evaluations and individual project reviews.
* Reviewing work undertaken on developing outcomes from children’s social care services identifying best practice that could be developed collaboratively within the region.

We will know we have made a difference when there is greater stability the children’s social care workforce, evidence of greater consistency in the quality of practice and a better understanding of how to use an outcomes framework.

**Priority 2 – promote effective anti-racist practice and tackle disproportionality**

We will share best practice and model leadership behaviour that facilitates effective anti-racist practice and makes London a region where all aspiring leaders have opportunities to realise their career ambitions.

We strongly support and will champion the London Innovation and Improvement Alliance’s work stream that looks to tackle disproportionality.

We will know we have made a difference when the profile of children’s social care senior leaders better reflects the profile of our workforce and the people it services, and we have reduced the significant disproportionality in who uses our services, the level and type of intervention and outcomes for children and families.

**Priority 3 - Work effectively with partners on thematic challenges**

Working with partner agencies we will strengthen the child and family practice system by:

* Working with the Metropolitan Police Service to review their Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub arrangements and interface with children’s social care.
* Learning from innovative and best practice around protecting and supporting people affected by all forms of child exploitation and abuse.
* Developing and improving adolescent safeguarding practice and arrangements.
* Learning from innovative and best practice around protecting and supporting people affected by domestic violence and abuse
* Strengthening arrangements and practice for preventing and responding to youth homelessness, especially in relation to our care leavers.
* Promoting effective pre-court practice and decision making for children on the edge of or in the family court process.
* Engaging with the independent review of children’s social care identifying systemic changes to the child and family practice system that would enable and accelerate practice improvement across the region.

We will strengthen arrangements for children in care and care leavers by:

* Supporting the work of the London Children in Care Council.
* Learning from innovative and best practice to drive improvement in working with older children on the edge of care or who enter the care system late in childhood.
* Working together to secure the right resources and pool knowledge about best practice in meeting the needs of unaccompanied asylum seeker children.
* Applying learning from historical abuse allegations and review findings.
* Contributing to regional and subregional work to secure placement sufficiency for children.

We will know we have made a difference when changes to the child and family practice system lead to fewer children being at risk of significant harm and more children secure timely security, attachment and a sense of permanence with their parents or carers.

**Priority 4 - Respond effectively to financial pressures on children’s social care budgets.**

Placement sufficiency:

* Contributing to regional and subregional work to secure placement sufficiency for children.
* Identify and share best practice around using child level data and children’s progress through the children’s social care system to inform forecasting of future placement need.

Other commissioned services for specific children / parents:

* Contribute to the regional and subregional work in developing community-based assessments to inform court decisions about children’s futures.

Staffing costs:

* Develop strategies for reducing the level and cost of qualified social workers provided by

 employment agencies through greater engagers with the providers and use of the existing

 protocol on using agency staff.

We will know we have made a difference when we have improved placement sufficiency in our region, can better evidence how we effectively use resources and make the case for additional resources.

**Priority 5 – apply learning from the Covid 19 emergency to inform resilience and improvement during the recovery period.**

We will share learning from what worked well during the pandemic and develop a shared understanding of the differential impact of the pandemic on children and families. We will contribute to the regional recovery plan and its implementation.

**Priority 6 – engage with the independent review of children’s social care.**

We will work with Directors of Children’s Services to develop a regional senior leadership position about the challenges in relation to the children’s social care practice system, what we are currently doing within the region to address these and what we would like to see in the review recommendations.