

Overview & Scrutiny

Children & Young People Scrutiny Commission

Date of Meeting: Monday 24th February 2020

Title of Report: Children and Families Service 2019-20 Mid Year Report to Members

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Authorised by: Anne Canning, Monday 10th February 2020

Brief

The Children and Families Service Mid-Year Report is produced to update elected councillors on developments and key performance trends within the Children and Families Service in Hackney during the first half of 2019-20. The report has been tabled for discussion at the Corporate Parenting Board and the Children and Young People Scrutiny Commission.

Overview of developments and areas of note:

- Hackney Children's Services inspection under the Ofsted Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) framework in November 2019, followed a two-day focused visit in Hackney on arrangements for children in need and those subject to child protection plans in February 2019. The focused visit in February identified some significant weakness in services and recommended priority actions for the service.
- The inspection in November 2019 found that Hackney Children and Families Services 'Requires improvement' and provided constructive feedback on some areas of practice where we have not reached the standard we aim for. This is a deterioration from our previous Ofsted grading of 'Good'.
- The inspectors also recognised the positive progress which has been made since their visit in February 2019. The inspectors recognised and commented on the high morale amongst our practitioners and the commitment to working at Hackney and improving children's lives. However, inspectors also identified areas they felt needed improvement and made six recommendations which will form the basis of the service's action plan. An action plan with strong governance and oversight is being developed to support Hackney in providing the best possible support to children and families within the borough, at a time of rising demand and reduced funding.
- Following the implementation of the action plan, it is Hackney's aspiration that services will perform at a level which would be judged 'good' within one year and 'outstanding' within two years. It is an ambitious target but one which the whole Council is committed to
- Hackney's Trusted Relationships project continues to work to create an innovative and effective outreach and detached youth work project with embedded clinical support. This work aims to reach young people who may perceive a barrier to accessing services or be reluctant to use them by being present in the community. The project has now received funding to continue this work for three years.
- Hackney is in the process of implementing the Safe and Together model of responding to domestic abuse. The model seeks to improve social care interventions in families who are experiencing domestic abuse, placing responsibility firmly on the

perpetrator to change their pattern of behaviour while also ensuring that children are safeguarded. The model has been successfully implemented in a number of locations around the world and is proven to be effective.

Key performance information:

- Demand for services continues to increase.
- 2,129 referrals were received between April-September 2019 – a 10% increase compared to the same point last year.
- 2,504 assessments were completed between April-September 2019 – a 17% increase compared to 2,148 at the same point last year.
- 277 children were on Child Protection Plans as at 30th September 2019 – a 43% increase with the 194 children on Plans at 31st March 2019.
- 78,009 young people attended Young Hackney provisions, including commissioned services, between April-September 2019 – a 2% increase compared to 76,267 during the same period last year.
- 413 children were looked after as at 30th September 2019 – a 2.2% increase with the 404 children in care as at 31st March 2018.
- 296 care leavers aged 17-21 were being supported by the Leaving Care Service as at 30th September 2019, a small decrease compared to the 303 being supported at 31st March 2019.
- Between April and September 2019, 52 young people entered the youth justice system for the first time. 2018/19 saw a historic low of 82 young people entering the youth justice system for the first time (111 young people entered the youth justice system in 2017/18).

The Children and Families Service priorities for 2019-20 (the first five of these are recommendations from the Ofsted inspection in November 2019):

- Work to improve the quality of information sharing with partners and ensure partners are fully involved in making decisions within strategy meetings.
- Ensure our practice is authoritative and child centred, and the impact on children is at the heart of our assessment process, to prevent children from living in neglectful environments for too long.
- Improve the quality of assessment and planning for children subject to private fostering arrangements.
- Improve the timeliness and effectiveness of pre-proceedings work, including the quality of contingency planning.
- Ensure the quality and effectiveness of management oversight by leaders and managers at all levels, including that of child protection chairs.
- Ensuring that children and young people's views inform all aspects of our practice and organisational development.
- Continue our drive to recruit and retain more in-house foster carers, including through embedding the Mockingbird model with the introduction of our first hub home.
- Ensure that we have the right placements to provide stability for our more complex adolescents who are looked after, including through our involvement in the east London residential project and exploring joint commissioning opportunities with other local authorities.
- Continue to introduce the internationally recognised Safe and Together model to strengthen our response to domestic abuse across the partnership.
- Further develop our communications to ensure care leavers can access dynamic and interactive information about our Care Leaver offer.
- Respond to the findings of the Hackney Young Futures Commission.
- Ensure that issues relating to identity, diversity, inequality and discrimination are considered and addressed in all aspects of our work.

- Continue to invest in the workforce, with a particular focus on improving the diversity of our workforce, especially at management level.
- Complete an extensive review of Early Help services to ensure there is a comprehensive, consistent and responsive early help offer.