

Children and Families Service

February 2020



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Foreword

I am pleased to introduce the latest Children and Families Service 2019-20 Mid-Year Report to Members. Over the past year, our skilled and committed workforce has continued to strive to achieve positive outcomes for our children and families and maintain their commitment to continuous learning and development in response to changing needs. However, the Ofsted 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'. We take this feedback extremely seriously and are committed to ensuring we learn and improve in response to the inspection. 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. This judgement from Ofsted shows that practice is not good enough for our children and I am determined to work with officers to raise standards.

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.

During the November inspection, the inspectors recognised the positive progress which has been made since their visit in February. However, inspectors also identified areas they felt needed improvement and made six recommendations which will form the basis of the service's action

plan. The inspectors recognised and commented on the high morale amongst our practitioners and the commitment to working at Hackney and improving children's lives.

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. This will require every service within the Council to take responsibility and work together to reach this goal.

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.

As we reflect on the past year, we are also aware of the challenges that increasing demand for our services brings. We will continue to evolve our approach in line with the feedback from Ofsted and explore new ways of further improving outcomes for children and families in Hackney.

Councillor Antoinette Bramble

Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member
for Education, Young People and
Children's Social Care



Overview of Performance



2,129 referrals were received between April-September 2019 – a 10% increase compared to the same point last year.



17.1% of referrals were made within 12 months of a previous referral between April - September 2019 - a small increase compared to 16.5% in 2018/19.



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 30 September 2019 – a 43% increase with the 194 children on Plans at 31 March 2019.



24.9% of children became the subject of a Child Protection Plan for a second or subsequent time between April - September 2019 – a small increase compared to 23.5% at the end of March 2019.



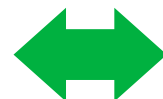
78,009 young people attended Young Hackney provision including commissioned services between April - September 2019 - a 2% increase compared to the 76,267 who attended during the same period last year.



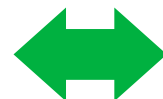
413 children were looked after as at 30 September 2019 – a 2.2% increase with the 404 children in care as at 31 March 2018.



103 children entered care between April - September 2018 – a 7.3% increase compared to 96 children entering care between April - September 2018. 212 children entered care in 2018/19.



60% of young people who entered care between April - September 2019 were aged 14-17 in line with the 61% of children aged 14 or over who entered care in the same period in 2018/19.



13.5% of looked after children had three or more placements in a year as at 30 September 2019 – in line with 13% as at 31st March 2019.



62% of looked after children had long-term placement stability as at 30 September 2019, a decrease from 65% as at 31 March 2019.



296 care leavers aged 17-21 were being supported by the Leaving Care Service as at 30 September 2019, a small decrease compared to the 303 being supported at 31 March 2019.

Priorities for the Children and Families Service in 2019/20

Our identified priorities for the year ahead include: (*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

Developments and Innovation



Ofsted Inspection – November 2019

Hackney Children’s Services was inspected under the Ofsted Inspection of Local Authority Children’s Services (ILACS) framework in November 2019. This followed a two-day focused visit in Hackney on the arrangements for children in need and those subject to child protection plans in February 2019. The outcome of the inspection was as follows:

Judgement	Grade
The impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families	Requires improvement
The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection	Requires improvement
The experiences and progress of children in care and care leavers	Good
Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement

The inspection resulted in six recommendations for improving practice at Hackney and five of these are included in the overall service priorities on page 5. The sixth recommendation relates to children missing education which Hackney Learning Trust will lead on responding to. The visit in February had previously identified areas for priority action and the November inspection acknowledged that *“since that time, senior leaders have taken steps to improve services for children in need of help and protection. There has been a positive shift in the practice and management culture so that it is increasingly child focused”* but found that practice in some areas was not consistently good.

Inspectors did not find any children to be at immediate risk of harm and also observed that *“in most cases, good work is helping to improve children’s circumstances.”* The inspection report also highlights areas of good practice including services for those leaving care, early help services,

support for foster carers, support for families with no recourse to public funds and staff morale.

Hackney takes the feedback from Ofsted very seriously. It is our 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. We are clear that this will require every service within the Council to take responsibility and work together to reach this goal.

The Council is involving frontline staff, partners, councillors and stakeholders in developing and delivering an improvement plan. A series of staff engagement events are planned to take place in February 2020. The Children and Families Service will regularly report to the Children and Young People Scrutiny Commission and will also report back to staff partners and residents on its’ progress. A number of actions have already taken place in response to the inspection including:

- Meetings have taken place with Police colleagues to develop a joint protocol for Strategy Discussions
- All current open Private Fostering cases have been reviewed and action has been taken to address any required tasks identified. New governance and case management processes for Private Fostering cases have been agreed to strengthen the assessment and oversight of these cases
- Improvements have been introduced to our pre-proceedings work, including the introduction of a revised Public Law Outline letter template

to improve clarity of information for parents about concerns for their children, what they need to do now and contingency planning

- Work has taken place to begin scoping review of the staffing, frontline and senior management capacity required within Children’s Social Care to ensure staff are supported to do skilled, direct work with children and families and to ensure that units are structured to support best practice.

These actions, along with others which are being developed, will form the basis of a service wide improvement plan. Progress against the plan will be monitored by a Children’s Member Oversight Board and a Children’s Leadership and Development Board. The Mayor and Deputy Mayor will chair the Children’s Member Oversight Board and the Chief Executive and Group Director will co-chair the Children’s Leadership and Development Board.

An external challenge partner has been identified to provide additional scrutiny and challenge to the service and the improvement plan. Regular updates from the Children’s Leadership and Development Board will be provided to the Children’s Member Oversight Board and Members will also be kept informed by regular open drop in sessions and Member Updates.

National Assessment and Accreditation System (NAAS)

NAAS is a national assessment and accreditation system for child and family social workers and practice supervisors. It enables social workers to have their knowledge and skills assessed to support their understanding of their own practice and ensure they are supported by their employer in any areas where they are not meeting the expected level. The assessment process has been designed by social workers and academics.

The scheme is currently being piloted in a number of local authorities around the country and Hackney is one of the early adopter sites. The information gathered from the early adopters will form the basis of an independent evaluation of the scheme which will inform how NAAS is rolled out nationally. Ten social workers had participated in the scheme in Hackney as at end of September 2019.

Children’s Social Work Workforce

	Hackney Sept 2019	Hackney 2018	Inner London 2018	England 2018
Turnover rate	8.3 %	13.1 %	19.1 %	15.2 %
Vacancy rate	24.2 %	20.1 %	25.9 %	16.5 %
Agency staff	28.1 %	27.4 %	25.5 %	15.4 %
Absence rate	1.2 %	1.5 %	2.3 %	3.2 %
Caseload	17.7	17.3	15.6	17.4

Hackney’s excellent social worker turnover rate of 8.3 % in this year is significantly lower than the inner London and national average, showing the service’s ability to retain high performing practitioners, in a competitive field. It is also significantly lower than the turnover rate in 2018 in Hackney (12.4 %).

The Hackney vacancy rate for September 2019 is higher than the 2018 national average but lower than the inner London average according to the latest available figures. Hackney’s 2019 agency social worker rate is higher than the 2018 national and inner London average. Hackney has a younger average age of social worker in the Children and Families Service compared to most local authorities, with a higher number of staff on maternity leave. Some of these posts are covered by agency workers. A number of agency workers have also been brought in to provide additional capacity to respond to increased demand. Plans are in place to recruit to some of these roles on a permanent basis. In total there are 181 permanent and 71 agency social workers employed by Hackney.

While Hackney’s current caseload numbers are higher than the 2018 inner London average and the national average, our unit model provides a high level of administrative support and access to a range of support services. Caseloads across CFS are monitored closely by senior managers. During the recent Ofsted inspection, some areas were found to have high caseloads and additional staff were employed to ensure workloads remained manageable.

Detached Outreach Team

Young Hackney's Detached Outreach Team has been in operation since January 2019. The team is funded through the Home Office Trusted Relationships Programme and supports a small team of Youth Support and Development Workers alongside an embedded clinical psychologist to deliver street based, youth work informed interventions across the borough. At a time when young people report there is a heightened sense of fear and anxiety due to the levels of serious violence within Hackney and across London, the team are able to engage and build relationships in the places young people feel comfortable. This is particularly valuable for some of the most vulnerable young people, who are either reluctant or find it difficult to access mainstream mental health support and to share information about their experiences.

The team operates Monday to Friday, delivering two sessions per day, the first from 3pm – 6pm and the second from 6pm – 9pm. The team can deliver later sessions and at weekends in response to community concerns. As at end of September 2019 the team has delivered 361 sessions, 2,473 engagements with young people, 114 clinical consultations and provided 75 young people with individual follow up support.



Safe and Together

Safe and Together is an approach by which Children's Services and other professionals can improve their response to domestic abuse. The belief of Safe and Together is that children are often best served when kept 'safe and together' with the adult domestic abuse survivor. This does not mean allowing children to continue to be exposed to harm and thresholds for the protection of children do not change. Safe and Together aims to reduce the necessity for the removal of children into care by holding perpetrators to account for their behaviour and protecting survivors of domestic abuse.

The model provides a framework for partnering with domestic abuse victims and intervening assertively with domestic abuse perpetrators to enhance

the safety and well-being of children. Many domestic abuse perpetrators will remain in contact with their children. Safe and Together recognises that it is critical, for the sake of the children's safety, that practitioners seek to encourage consistent, positive and meaningful change in perpetrators' behaviour. Safe and Together has had international success in changing children's services' responses to domestic abuse, amassing a strong evidence base for improving outcomes for children; increasing the number of children who remain safely with their non-abusive parent and decreasing re-referral rates.

As a pioneer in working with both perpetrators and victims as well as being part of CFS, Hackney's Domestic Abuse Intervention Service is in a strong position to support this work with children's social workers.

The domestic abuse specialist agency Respect along with the London Boroughs of Hackney and Waltham Forest are working together to implement the Safe and Together Model across the two boroughs until March 2021. The partnership was officially launched on 30 September 2019, with the launch event being supported and introduced by Nicole Jacobs, the newly-appointed Domestic Abuse Commissioner for England and Wales.

As at January 2020, 33 Hackney CFS staff have been trained in the Safe and Together model; the majority of these are practicing managers in the Family Intervention and Support Service who work directly with families to assess and reduce risk and who supervise social workers. Focusing first on those who deliver and oversee social work practice will lead to the model having the greatest impact for children in Hackney.



Since a successful bid to the Department of Education in March 2017, Hackney has been working in partnership with the University of Bedfordshire to jointly develop and implement an approach to contextual safeguarding, encompassing both social work practice and wider partnership interventions. Contextual safeguarding seeks to understand and respond to young people's experience of significant harm beyond their families. It recognises that the relationships young people form in their neighbourhoods, schools and online can feature violence and abuse, and that parents and carers can have little influence over these contexts. The focus of the contextual safeguarding project has been to develop and prototype interventions to safeguard children and their families from extra familial harm, with a longer term focus on large scale systems change. This innovative approach is in the process of being embedded across Hackney and is funded to operate in its current form until the end of March 2020.

An **online toolkit** has been developed in partnership with and hosted by the University of Bedfordshire. It is being utilised by local authorities and partner agencies across the country. A suite of toolbox cards has also been developed to help practitioners in implementing resources and tools developed to support the approach in their day to day work.

Neighbourhood location assessments have previously taken place in two areas following concerns around significant harm affecting young people. A further assessment of a specific location is currently taking place based on concerns raised by the local community in relation to an increase in anti-social behaviour.

Hackney's Contextual Safeguarding project is now working to embed this approach across Hackney. A well-attended systems transformation group was established in summer 2019 comprising managers at all levels across the service.

Our **embedding approach** is also underpinned and supported by a programme to develop **contextual safeguarding champions** (staff volunteers who will help embed the approach), launched by the Deputy Mayor in May 2019. Contextual safeguarding champions are playing a critical role in translating this approach into practice and contributing to the development of interventions across each of the service areas. There are currently 34 champions in place in teams and units across CFS.

Productive partnership working has also been integral to the approach and effective relationships have been developed with colleagues across a range of relevant services including health, Police, education and housing. There have been significant successes particularly in terms of new structures being developed with colleagues in Community Safety, specifically in relation to improved information sharing and coordinating responses to serious youth violence and extra familial risk.

A range of resources and tools have been developed and published as part of the implementation of contextual safeguarding principles, including a revised **Hackney Child Wellbeing Framework** (equivalent to a thresholds document) now incorporating extra familial risk. **An Assessment and Intervention Planning for Young People at Risk of Extra Familial Harm Guide** has also been produced as a reference document with practitioners across the service and partner agencies to support them in working with young people and families experiencing extra familial risks.

Early Help and Prevention



Strengths/Progress

During the recent Ofsted inspection, it was noted that “*early help services are well developed and effective.*”

Strong links with local schools – provision of targeted support for young people, as well as provision of Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) curriculum based delivery and sports activities. Young Hackney continues to have strong working relationships with internal colleagues, including education, health, housing and community safety, which is strengthened through partnerships with the voluntary and community sector and Police.

Young Hackney’s universal delivery within the community has continued to extend its reach to more young people – between April - September 2019, there were 78,009 attendances by named children and young people aged 6-19 years at the youth provision delivered through Young Hackney and commissioned services.

Effective Troubled Families programme – Hackney has identified and surpassed the programme target figure of 3,510 families to be worked with by March 2020. We have worked with over 5,000 families under the Troubled Families programme remit. The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) undertook an annual ‘spot check’ in April 2019 and commented that they found many examples of good work in Hackney.

Trusted Relationships detached outreach project – The project is working to create an innovative and effective detached outreach project that supports some of our most vulnerable young people to access support and engage with mental health services. The detached outreach team includes youth workers and a clinical psychologist. The team also aims to generate further insight into young people’s lived experiences, through the removal of perceived barriers to access services.



Areas for further development and actions to address

An extensive review of Early Help services was initiated in June 2019 to ensure that a comprehensive, consistent and responsive offer is in place for all children in Hackney. This review will consider options for delivering Early Help services and will respond to the work being undertaken within Integrated Commissioning workstreams in relation to Neighbourhood approaches and emotional health and wellbeing and the development of CAMHS provision in schools.

Management information in relation to early help – Work is taking place to develop and improve current management information and reporting systems for early help to improve management oversight and understanding of the impact and effectiveness of early help interventions as well as monitoring levels of demand. The QlikSense dashboard for early help services went live in autumn 2019, providing accessible early help performance information. This system is being developed further to provide useful performance information to early help managers and practitioners.

Addressing serious youth violence – Serious youth violence, in particular knife crime, remains a significant challenge. Adopting a public-health approach, Hackney has developed a multi-agency Knife Crime Strategy aimed at reducing children’s exposure to criminal, violent, and anti-social behaviour. This approach treats violence as a preventable public health issue, using data and analysis to identify causes and focusing on prevention through multi-agency systemic approaches. Whilst the work to develop the strategy is positive, and multi-agency engagement is a strength, this is a relatively new development and the activity to deliver positive outcomes requires continued focus and drive across the partnership.



Young Hackney

Young Hackney is the Council’s early help, prevention and diversion service for children and young people aged 6-19 years old and up to 25 years if the young person has a special education need or disability. The service works with young people to support their development and transition to adulthood by intervening early to address adolescent risk, develop pro-social behaviours and build resilience. The service offers outcome-focused, time-limited interventions through universal plus and targeted services designed to reduce or prevent problems from escalating or becoming entrenched and then requiring intervention by Children’s Social Care. Young Hackney’s approach to early help is based on a systemic understanding of the key relationships in a child or young person’s life and, in particular, the critical influence of peers and family members.

Universal Provision delivered through Youth Hubs

Universal provision within the community delivered by Young Hackney and its commissioned providers continues to be well attended – this includes youth clubs and sports and citizenship activities. There were 78,009 attendances by named children and young people aged 6-19 years at youth provision between April - September 2019. The equivalent figure for April - September 2018 was 76,627 so this represents an increase of 2%. Between April - September 2019, there were 30,463 attendances by named children and young people aged 6-19 years across the network of Young Hackney hubs. This is a similar number for the same period in 2018/19 (30,519 attendances)



Work with local schools

Young Hackney works closely with schools to support the delivery of the core Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) programme as well as to support behaviour management interventions. A curriculum has been

developed that is delivered in schools and focuses on topics such as healthy relationships, substance misuse, e-safety and youth participation and citizenship.

The majority of secondary schools in Hackney have an allocated Young Hackney team who will work with them to identify students who require additional support to participate and achieve. If schools identify students who would benefit from individual support, Young Hackney will create an appropriate intervention with the school.



Individual Support – Universal Plus and Targeted Support

At any one time, Young Hackney is working with approximately 700 young people through the Early Help teams, providing tailored targeted support interventions. The most common presenting issues include: risk of sexual or criminal exploitation, relationships, emotional wellbeing, behaviour, school attendance, risk of offending, risk of becoming not in education, employment or training (NEET), different cultural expectations within the family.



The Health and Wellbeing Team

The Health & Wellbeing Team continues to deliver Personal, Social Health and Economic (PSHE) education and relationship and sexual education (RSE) to all 5-19 years old and for those up to 25 with additional education needs and disabilities. This has been delivered in primary/secondary schools, pupil referral units, colleges, youth hubs and alternative education providers. 288 sessions have been delivered between April and September 2019 in schools alone, 102 more than the same period last year, and have awarded 1,082 accreditations. The team are currently on target to deliver more than 1,000 sessions in schools in 2019/20, exceeding the annual target of 600.

The team is currently running two accredited Peer Education programmes at the City Academy and the Job Centre in Mare Street for young people who are NEET.

The team have continued to develop and deliver programmes of work for young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) at New City College, Forest Road Youth Hub, Stoke Newington School and many others. The team have also delivered our third programme of work at Ickburgh School, where the majority of children and young people have severe learning disabilities or are profoundly disabled; with significant learning needs, sensory impairment and/or a physical disability.



Substance Misuse Team

The Young Hackney **Substance Misuse Team** supports children and young people aged 6-25 years who are directly affected by their own substance misuse, or that of a significant other such as parental substance misuse which has an impact upon the development of a child growing up with substance misusing parents (Hidden Harm). Interventions take a tailored and systemic approach that aims to build resilience in young people, by considering issues such as family and relationships, finances, education and housing, while liaising with other services/partners as necessary. 51 young people were supported between April 2019 and September 2019.



Family Support Service

The Family Support Service Units are primarily social work led delivering targeted support to families in need of additional and/or intensive support, including those identified as 'Troubled Families' meeting a minimum of two of six headline criteria:

- Parents and children involved in anti-social behaviour
- Adults out of work or at risk of financial exclusion or young people at risk of worklessness

- Children who are not attending school regularly
- Children who need help: children of all ages, who need help, are identified as in need or are subject to a Child Protection Plan
- Families affected by domestic violence and abuse
- Parents and children with a range of health problems



Troubled Families Programme

Hackney has an overall programme target to work with 3,510 families by March 2020, and has successfully identified over 3,510 families who meet the programme criteria of 2 or more presenting needs as outlined in the outcomes plan. To date, Hackney has made 2,725 Payments by Results (PbR) claims and is set to have made 3,150 claims by the end of December 2019, with an end of programme target of 3,510 by the end of March 2020. This leaves 360 claims for identification and submission in the last quarter of the current financial year. We are confident of achieving the maximum number of claims.

Hackney's current conversion rate from attachments to Payments by Results claims is 46%, whilst the London average is 40% (national average is 38%). Hackney is currently 6th in the performance table for London. Feedback following a spot check by the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government about the quality of Troubled Families work was very positive; noting that cases seen '*demonstrated the high-quality work that Hackney is carrying out with families across a range of services.*'





The in-house Domestic Abuse Intervention Service (DAIS) remains fully integrated and co-located within the Children and Families Service and the wider Children's, Adults and Community Health directorate. This integration provides a strong foundation for the joined up and assertive interventions undertaken to reduce risk and for victims and survivors of domestic abuse. Hackney is unique within the UK in having an entirely **unified approach addressing domestic abuse** through locating responsibility for strategic leadership on domestic abuse and Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG), delivery of training and practice development to partner agencies and intervention officers working with both victims and perpetrators in one management and staff team.

DAIS is now using the Mosaic case management system which further increases safety for victims and survivors through enabling immediate identification of and communication with allocated workers within Adult Social Care, Children's Social Care and the Council's Young Hackney Early Help and Prevention Service.

Between April - September 2019 DAIS received **584 referrals, 14% less than the same period last year** (681 referrals). This is still a significant increase on the number of referrals received in 2015/16, the first year DAIS was in operation (820 referrals for the whole year). Of the 584 referrals received so far this year, 350 were for clients with children, 60% of the total.

Hackney is part of the **East London Specialist Domestic Violence Court**. The Court is a specially adapted magistrates' court which seeks to increase the number of successful prosecutions and improve victim safety. Hackney co-funds the Specialist Domestic Abuse Court Co-Ordinator post along with Tower Hamlets Council. In addition a DAIS Intervention Officer is based at the court two days a week.

For those victims of domestic abuse who have been identified and assessed as high risk, Hackney holds a fortnightly **Multi Agency Risk Assessment**

Conference (MARAC), chaired by the police and DAIS Service Manager, and scrutinised by the Domestic Abuse Steering Group. In Hackney there is no 'capping' of referral numbers and cases are never 'rolled over' to subsequent MARACs. There is an emphasis on work being undertaken as soon as the risks are known - rather than waiting for the MARAC meeting – to prevent homicide or serious injury. Between April and September 2019, 245 cases were heard at MARAC, an increase of 12% on the same period last year (218 cases). In 112 of the 245 cases (46%) there were children in the household.

54 (22%) of the total number of cases heard at MARAC in April and September 2019 were 'repeat' referrals; this rate of repeat referrals (defined as being when any incident of domestic abuse occurs within 12 months of the case previously being heard at MARAC) is slightly below the expected range (SafeLives advises that a rate between 28% - 40% is expected). The issue of whether repeat referral are always being correctly identified will be explored by the Domestic Abuse Steering Group.

Five women were killed through domestic abuse between 2012 and 2014. No-one in Hackney has died as a result of domestic abuse since 2014.

DAIS and the **Metropolitan Police's East Central Borough Command Unit** have trialled new ways of intervening with perpetrators and learning from this will be taken forward via closer collaboration underpinned by bi-monthly joint management meetings.

The team works closely with professionals across the Council and through external partnerships with community and voluntary sector domestic abuse services. **The First Access and Screening Team (FAST)** has a dedicated Domestic Abuse Social Worker who responds to referrals for early help and safeguarding services for children and families where domestic abuse is a factor.

DAIS delivers training on behalf of the **City and Hackney Safeguarding Children's Partnership**. This includes hosting bi-annual events for key statutory agencies and the Violence Against Women and Girl's sector to explore themes, share learning and promote good practice.

In summer 2019, DAIS undertook a **joint residential activity with Young**

Hackney to work with young people around exploring domestic abuse and Violence Against Women and Girls. This included gaining their contribution to implementing the Violence Against Women and Girls Action Plan.

DAIS has used funding available via the Troubled Families programme to create the **Domestic Violence Perpetrator Programme (DVPP)**. The DVPP works closely with colleagues from the Children and Families service, offering case consultation, treatment viability assessments, and interventions through behaviour change work with perpetrators either through group or one to one sessions. Between April and September 2019 the DVPP received 27 referrals, undertook 19 assessments, delivered one to one interventions with five individuals and ran a group work programme attended by 22 individuals.

DAIS secured funding from Hackney Council Housing for a **domestic abuse housing specialist**. The practitioner is based within DAIS and works closely with Housing to bring together a service model that is based on the principles of awareness, prevention, early intervention and protection.

A key priority for the specialist is leading in the achievement of Hackney's **Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA)** accreditation for the Benefits and Housing Need service. The accreditation will allow Hackney to examine key elements of service delivery and assess our existing practice in order to improve our response to clients experiencing domestic abuse. One of the service improvements we are keen to work on is upskilling the Housing workforce to respond more effectively to victims of domestic abuse through consultation and training. We are hoping to provide domestic abuse training to approximately 50 members of the management team and devise a training plan for approximately 200 front line staff. If successful, Hackney will be one of a few local authorities in the country to obtain the accreditation which is the highest standard a housing organisation can receive to demonstrate its commitment to addressing domestic abuse.

DAIS successfully supported the Council's **16 days of Activism to End Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG)** campaign in November and December 2019. Throughout the campaign DAIS worked with their community partners to raise awareness and ensure that Hackney residents

are aware of where they can access support, both as victims/survivors of domestic abuse and perpetrators who wish to change their behaviour. A VAWG partnership event took place in the local community which celebrated local female artists and focused on the message that Violence Against Women and Girls is everybody's business.

As part of this event DAIS worked in conjunction with the night time economy team to launch the **'Good Night Out'** campaign focusing on dispelling damaging myths around sexual violence and promoting women's safety in public spaces.



The Youth Justice Service works with all young people in Hackney who are arrested or convicted of crimes and undertakes youth justice work including bail and remand supervision and supervising young people who have been given community or custodial sentences.

Young people are supported by a multi-agency team including a Forensic Psychologist, the Virtual School, Speech and Language Therapists, the Police, a Nurse, Probation Services, a Substance Misuse Worker and a Dealing Officer.

First time entrants

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). Between April and September 2019, 52 young people entered the youth justice system for the first time. The seriousness of offences young people have committed has an impact on this figure, as this limits police discretion to be able to offer access to the very successful informal diversion opportunities we run in Hackney.

Young people are offered triage (voluntary engagement) for minor offences in order to divert them from the formal youth justice system and crime. The conversion rate into the youth justice system for young people offered a triage intervention was approximately 14% - this means 86% of those offered triage do not become involved in further offending. This is an improvement from 82% last year and shows that the focus on crime prevention and diversion activities, alongside the extensive Young Hackney and community based provision offer, has helped to divert young people before they enter the youth justice system and has helped to keep the rate of first time entrants low.

Education, Employment and/or Training

Education can be a strong protective factor for young people at risk of offending. The Youth Justice Service has a strong focus on securing access to education, training and employment and is supported by the Virtual School. At the 30 September 2019, 56% of young people whose youth justice orders had ended were attending and engaging in full time education, training or employment. This was a significant decrease from 70% in 2018/19, and the wider Youth Offending Team partnership are focusing on how to better engage the older cohort of young people in education and training.

The Youth Offending Team cohort has reduced in size and the Youth Justice Board counting and reporting rules for the cohort have also changed (in April 2019). We now measure the attendance of those children and young people on post court orders (Referral Orders, Youth Rehabilitation Orders or Detention and Training Licenses). The cohort reported on is now older (the majority being in Year 12 or 13), have more previous offences and poorer educational engagement histories. As a result, the ambitious target of full time engagement in training or education has become harder to achieve.

Overall, Hackney continues to have a relatively low proportion of 10-17 year olds involved in the youth justice system, and a relatively low number of remand and custodial sentences for young people who have committed or are alleged to have committed serious crimes and placed themselves or the public at risk. However, over 2018/19 there were 15 instances where young people were sentenced to custody which was a significant increase on the previous year. The severity of the offences impacted on the sentencing decisions of the courts. To date this year, only five people have been sentenced to custody.

Despite the challenges faced by the smaller number of young people with very complex needs the number of young people re-offending in Hackney has decreased from 70 in the previous year to 68 young people between October 2018 and September 2019.

Family Intervention and Support Service (FISS)

Access and Assessment

The Ofsted inspection in November 2019 found that *the experiences and progress of children who need help and protection requires improvement.*



Strengths/Progress

Decision-making at the front door – during the recent inspection, Ofsted noted that *“thresholds are applied consistently and effectively at the front door when concerns first arise, and children and families receive the right level of initial help when they need it. The emergency duty team provides effective decision-making out of hours, including innovative responses to prevent children from being held in police custody in the borough.”*

Timely and effective response at the front door – from April - September 2019, 98% of referrals progressed to assessment within 24 hours, a slight decrease from 99.6% in 2018/19, explained in part by the increased numbers of referrals.

Multi-agency co-location within FAST – Police CAIT (Child Abuse Investigation Team), workers from Young Hackney Substance Misuse, and a specialist domestic violence social worker are co-located in FAST. This has led to good joint working and swift access to appropriate support for families.

More timely of assessments – during the recent inspection, Ofsted noted that *“children at risk of immediate harm are seen promptly by social workers, and immediate action is taken to protect them. The timeliness of the completion of written assessments has significantly improved from the low base at the time of the focused visit.”* During April - September 2019, 72% of assessments were completed within 45 days, an increase from 59% in the same period 2018/19. While this is a substantial increase, this is still an area where Hackney aims to improve.

Overall quality of assessments: – during the recent inspection Ofsted noted that *“assessments are mostly thorough and lead to proportionate decisions about next steps. Children’s unique cultural identity is recognised and reflected in assessments. Families benefit from help during the assessment process, particularly when it addresses risks arising from domestic abuse. Social workers make concerted efforts to engage fathers in the assessment process, and the potential risks from males are increasingly recognised in assessments and plans for children.”*



Areas for further development and actions to address

During Ofsted’s recent inspection, two improvements were identified in relation to assessment activity throughout the service:

- The quality of information-sharing by partners and the quality of decision-making within strategy discussions.
- The assessment of the impact for children of living in neglectful environments to inform authoritative and child-centred practice.

Strategy discussions – Ofsted inspectors noted that *“most strategy discussions are timely, but for a very small number of children there is a delay in recognising children at risk of significant harm until there has been a further incident or concern. Strategy discussions do not involve all relevant partners sharing agency information until the initial child protection conference stage.”* The actions to address these concerns will be included in the post-inspection improvement plan, due to be submitted to Ofsted in March 2020.

CAIT Police colleagues are now co-located in FAST meaning there are increased opportunities to have strategy discussions in person. The Police are now involved at every level. However, the physical space occupied remains problematic and plans are being explored to relocate the staff.

Health involvement in strategy meetings – a plan has been agreed for the health representative in FAST to contribute to strategy discussions where the allocated Health Professional is not available, and agreed a process for the LAC Health team or in-house Clinical team to be involved in discussions for looked after children as appropriate. There is work underway to develop a joint protocol for strategy discussions.

Assessment of neglect – Ofsted found that “*some assessments remain too adult-focused and do not address the lived experience of very young children, particularly those living at risk of neglect.*” The actions to address these concerns will be included in the post-inspection action plan due to be submitted to Ofsted in March 2020.

Access and Assessment

The Access and Assessment Service is part of the Family Intervention and Support Service and undertakes statutory assessments of children in need and child protection investigations for all new referrals to Children’s Social Care.

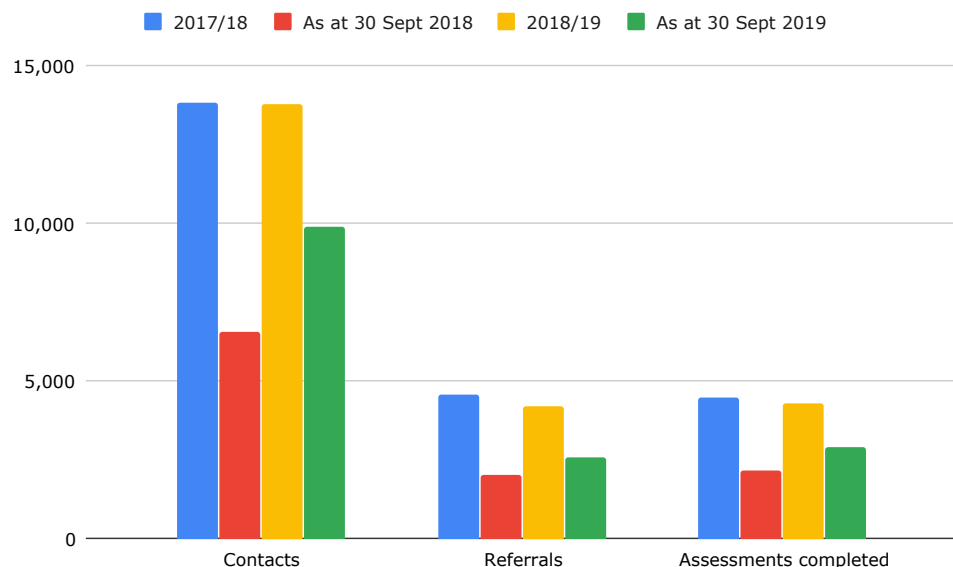


First Access and Screening Team (FAST)

The First Access and Screening Team (FAST) acts as a single point for contacts and referrals to the Children and Families Service for children in need of support or protection. The multi-agency and co-located team of police, probation, health, social work and research staff work together to share intelligence and jointly assess risk. All contacts with FAST are immediately progressed as a referral to Children’s Social Care if the threshold for a statutory assessment is met, otherwise FAST supports children and young people to access universal and targeted early help provision such as the Family Support Service, Young Hackney, or Children’s Centres.



Contacts, Referrals and Assessments



	2017/18	As at 30 Sept 2018	2018/19	As at 30 Sept 2019
Contacts	13,802	6,562	13,767	8,487
Referrals	4,563	2,002	4,190	2,129
Assessments completed	4,456	2,148	4,290	2,504

Contact: when an agency or member of the public provides information to our First Access and Screening Team (FAST). This might be a discussion about a child or family, or be for advice about services.

Referral: when a contact is about a specific child and this requires further investigation, the FAST team may progress the contact to a referral.

Assessment: when a referral has been investigated and it is decided that an assessment is needed to understand more about the child and their family in order to check that they are safe, an assessment is undertaken.

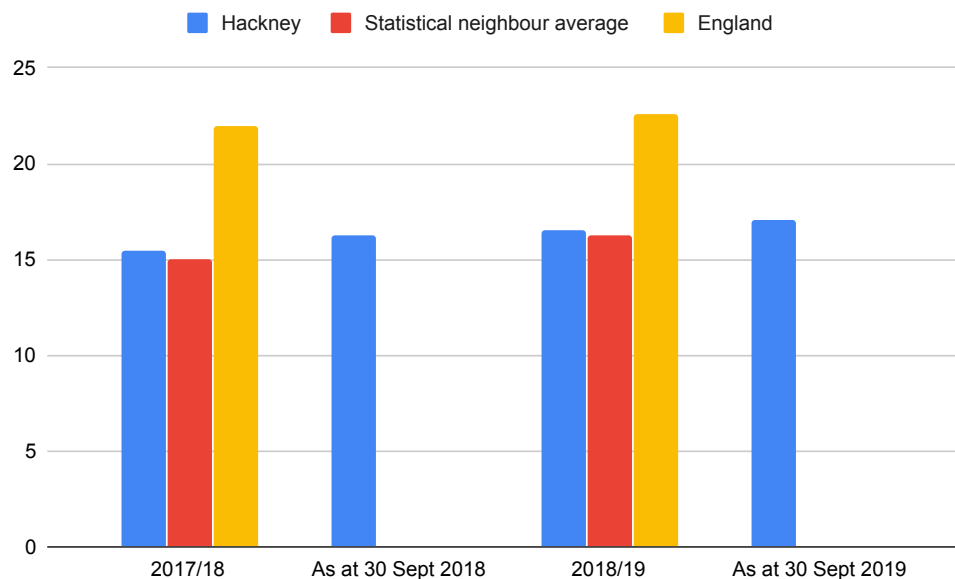
Referrals which do not result in an assessment but indicate that some ongoing support would be beneficial result in families being signposted or referred to Early Help services.



There has been a 30% increase in the number of contacts as at 30 September 2019 from this time last year, with an increase in the number of referrals accepted (10%) and assessments completed (17%). Additional staff have been recruited in light of the increased demand, and analysis of the driver of increased demand is being undertaken.



Percentage of re-referrals within 12 months of a previous referral



	2017/18	As at 30 Sept 2018	2018/19	As at 30 Sept 2019
Hackney	15.5%	16.3%	16.5%	17.2%
Statistical neighbour average	15%	n/a	16.3%	n/a
England	22%	n/a	22.6%	n/a

There has been a small but gradual increase in the number of re-referrals over the past two years. We are aware that our recording in this area has improved and this may account for the increase. Hackney's rate of re-referrals continues to be lower than the national average.

Between April - September 2019, 72% of assessments were completed within 45 days, compared to 59% during the same period in 2018/19. There has also been a significant decrease in the number of assessments completed in 60 days or more, from 15% to 8% from April to September 2019.



Family Intervention and Support Service (FISS)

The Children in Need Service



Strengths/Progress

Management oversight of Children in Need and Child Protection Plans

The recent Ofsted inspection found that:

- *“Services for children in need have improved since the findings of the focused visit. There is additional senior manager oversight to ensure that children’s circumstances are improving, or that decisive action is taken to intervene to enable this to happen.”*
- *“When needs are addressed, children are appropriately stepped down to effective early help services, and a low proportion of children are re-referred to social care.”*
- *“In most cases, good work is helping to improve children’s circumstances, and during the inspection no children were found to be at immediate risk of harm.”*
- *“Initial planning for children is robust, and there is effective oversight of the progress made by children in need.”*
- *“More recent child protection planning demonstrates better practice and plans which set clear goals to reduce harm for children.”*
- *“A range of relevant partners make a positive contribution to the regular reviews of children’s plans.”*
- *“In better casework, where intervention is not making improvement for children, social workers and managers have taken timely and effective action to review and escalate children’s cases.”*

Following the focused visit by Ofsted in February 2019, Service Manager and Head of Service checkpoints were introduced for all Child in Need and

Child Protection Plans at 9, 12 and 15 months increasing management oversight of cases open for longer periods to ensure that, where necessary, cases are stepped up to Child Protection processes in a timely manner. This has been part of the reason for an increase in the number of Child Protection Plans. Hackney’s current rate of Child Protection Plans is in line with national average rate per 10,000.

Unit model supported by Clinical and Domestic Abuse Services

Ofsted noted during the inspection that:

- *“a range of key services are co-located alongside the...units, where children and families are allocated across a manager and social workers. This integrated way of working enables children and families to benefit from prompt and effective clinical consultation and support that is making improvements to their lives. A forensic clinical psychologist is supporting complex work to more accurately assess males who may pose a risk to children.”*
- *“The domestic abuse intervention service also provides effective support to victims, as well as a range of evidence-based programmes for perpetrators of domestic abuse. The risks to children from domestic abuse are well understood, and the impact for children is effectively addressed within plan.”*

Missing young people – Ofsted noted that:

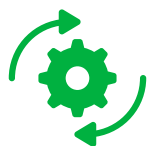
- *“Multi-agency interventions with vulnerable adolescents are helping to address the risks associated with exploitation, serious youth violence and going missing. Concerted efforts are made to engage children in work to develop their insight in order to decrease the risk in their daily lives.”*
- *“When young people return from being missing, they are not all routinely offered a timely interview. However, they do benefit from effective interventions and conversations about the risks of going missing.”*

- *“Whilst immediate responses to missing children episodes are proactive, and high quality direct work takes place to understand young people’s behaviour and support them to develop strategies to keep themselves safe, work is taking place to improve the timeliness of recording missing episodes and ensuring that independent return home interviews are consistently offered to young people.”*

A more streamlined recording process for missing children episodes was introduced in October 2019 to improve the timeliness of recording missing episodes. This is being tracked by managers to ensure that it is consistently embedded.

Contextual safeguarding – Ofsted noted during the inspection that *“Hackney is currently developing new ways of working through the Contextual Safeguarding project which is supporting practitioners to identify alternative types of plans, support and interventions that may be more effective in reducing the risk of extra-familial harm.”*

Disabled Children’s Service improvements – Following a review at the end of 2018, this service was brought within FISS in April 2019. Ofsted noted that *“Following deterioration in services, senior leaders took remedial action earlier in the year and implemented a plan for improvement. This is beginning to have some positive impact in improved safeguarding practice and more robust management oversight of the progress of children’s cases.”*



Areas for further development and actions to address

During the recent Ofsted inspection, two specific recommendations for improvement were identified in relation to the Children in Need Service:

- The quality of assessment and planning for children subject to private fostering arrangements (which includes the oversight provided by Corporate Parenting).
- The timeliness and effectiveness of pre-proceedings work, including the quality of contingency planning.

The recommendation in relation to the assessment of children living in neglectful situations informing authoritative and child centred practice also relates to this service area.

Private fostering – Ofsted inspectors found that:

- *“private fostering arrangements are under-developed. Some children are living in private fostering arrangements where the adult’s capacity to meet children’s needs is insufficiently assessed.”*
- *“Senior leaders took immediate action to address weaknesses in the assessment and approval of some private foster carers that were found during the inspection.”*

Following the inspection, all private fostering cases have been subject to a deep dive audit to ensure that arrangements in place meet children’s needs. Monitoring processes for private fostering arrangements have been improved and are reported to senior leaders. This will be kept under close scrutiny by leaders as part of the post-inspection improvement plan.

Neglect and child protection – During the inspection, Ofsted found:

- *“a small number of children experiencing neglect and who are subject to children protection plans do experience delays in being protected.”*
- *“reviews of children’s plans are not informed by updated written assessments of need and do not consistently provide an updated evaluation of risks for children. This includes children who are subject to plans for a number of years.”*
- *“Child protection conference chairs do not provide consistent challenge when plans do not improve or address children’s circumstances. This is compounded at times by over-optimism and lack of challenge within the social work unit meetings that oversee cases.”*

The actions in response to this feedback are being developed but managers are also focusing on encouraging a culture of authoritative practice with robust oversight.

Pre-proceedings work – During the inspection, Ofsted found that:

- *“Most decisions to initiate pre-proceedings are appropriate, with*

effective practice in pre-birth planning. For a small number of children, the decisions to escalate to pre-proceedings is not timely and follows lengthy periods of child protection planning, which has not improved children's circumstances."

- *"There is a lack of clear contingency planning in pre-proceedings work, which delays the exploration of alternative family carers for children. As most cases progress onto care proceedings, this cumulative delay means that a very small number of children do not come into care when they need to, even when the threshold has been met."*
- *"A review of children's cases following the focused visit resulted in a large increase in care applications to court in recent months. Routine management oversight is not consistently ensuring the progression of plans for a small number of children in pre-proceedings. Senior managers identified immediate actions to improve this key area of practice during the inspection."*

Improvements have been introduced to our pre proceedings work, including the introduction of a revised Public Law Outline letter template to improve clarity of information for parents about concerns for their children, what they need to do now and contingency planning. Closer working arrangements with the Legal Service were recently put in place to support the development of more sharply focused submissions to court when children need to come into care.

Child-focused planning – Ofsted found that

- *"not enough children are encouraged to participate in reviewing their plan in any way, or have their views sufficiently considered within review meetings and conferences."*

The service will take learning from the approaches taken in our successful child-centred approach of LAC Reviews '**Our Reviews, Our Choice**' to inform the approach taken in Child Protection conferences and make better use of the Children's Rights Service to give children a greater voice.

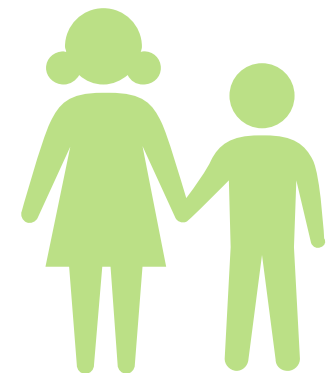
The Children in Need Service

The Children in Need Service is part of the Family Intervention and Support Service and is responsible for the safeguarding of children and young people assessed as being 'at risk'. Work undertaken in the service includes child protection interventions, court proceedings and statutory family support to help children remain at home safely.



Child Protection Plans

Children thought to be at risk of significant harm are discussed at an initial Child Protection Conference to determine the need for a Child Protection Plan – a Protection Plan will outline the multi-agency interventions and support that will be put in place with the child and family to reduce the risk of harm and to achieve change within the family. Child Protection Plans are reviewed at regular intervals, and will end when the multi-agency group agrees that the child is no longer at risk of significant harm (in some cases this will be because the child has become looked after by the local authority).

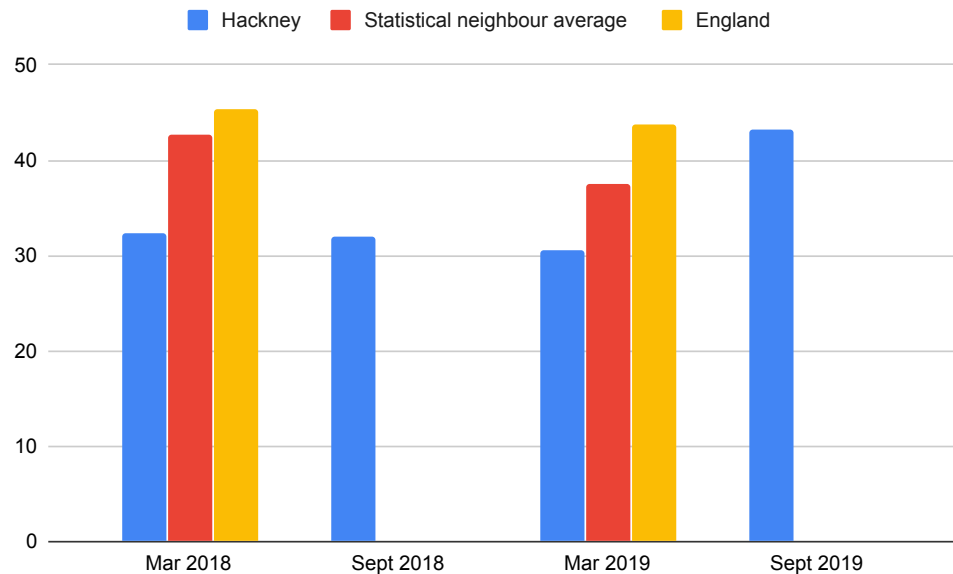


Number of Child Protection Plans

Mar 2018	Sept 2018	Mar 2019	Sept 2019
200	199	194	276

There was a decrease in the number of Child Protection Plans in 2018/19 as a result of the introduction of a pre-Child Protection Conference consultation stage and the impact of the Contextual Safeguarding project on approaches to managing risk to young people. This has now increased in part due to increased management oversight following Ofsted's focused visit in February 2019.

Rate of Child Protection Plans per 10,000 population aged under 18



	Mar 2018	Sept 2018	Mar 2019	Sept 2019
Hackney	15.5%	16.3%	16.5%	17.2%
Statistical neighbour average	15%	n/a	16.3%	n/a
England	22%	n/a	22.6%	n/a



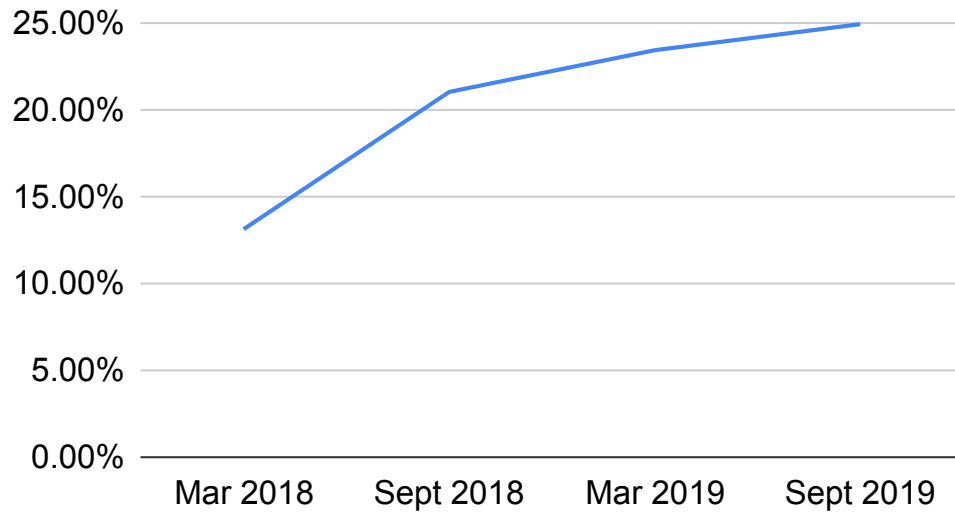
The rate of Child Protection Plans in Hackney at 30 September 2019 was 43.3 children per 10,000. This is an 11.3% increase from the previous year (32 per 10,000 at September 2018).



Court Proceedings

The overall average length of court proceedings in Hackney between April - September 2019 was 35 weeks. This is an increase from an overall average of 28 weeks in 2018/19 and corresponds to the increase in applications to court. As at 30 September 2019, this is slightly higher than the national average of 33 weeks but lower than the East London average of 40 weeks.

Percentage of children who became the subject of a Child Protection Plan who became the subject of a plan for a second or subsequent time



	Mar 2018	Sept 2018	Mar 2019	Sept 2019
Hackney	13.1%	21%	23.4%	24.9%
Statistical neighbour average	15.8%	n/a	16.5%	n/a
England	20.2%	n/a	20.8%	n/a



The percentage of children in Hackney subject to a Child Protection Plan for a second or subsequent time at 30 September 2019 was 24.9%. This is an increase compared to the same point last year and higher than the most recently published statistical neighbour average (16.5%) and most recently published national average (20.8%). A report analysing this rise made a number of recommendations to ensure interventions are effective before plans end.

Percentage of children subject of a Child Protection Plan, by length of time as the subject of a plan

Duration of Child Protection Plan	Mar 2018	Sept 2018	Mar 2019	Sept 2019
Under 3 months	32%	31%	27%	30%
3 – 6 months	11%	22%	30%	32%
6 – 12 months	21%	23%	24%	26%
1 – 2 years	33%	19%	13%	9%
Over 2 years	3%	5%	6%	4%

Between March 2019 and September 2019 there was a 6% reduction in the number of children on Child Protection Plans for over a year to 13% - this figure is now below the national average (15%).



Clinical Service

The Hackney Children and Families Clinical Service is an integrated and specialist Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) for children accessing Children's Social Care Services, the Family Support Service, Young Hackney and the Youth Justice Service. It works in partnership with the City and Hackney CAMHS Alliance and is accountable through integrated CAMHS commissioning arrangements. The Clinical Service operates on an outreach basis in order to promote accessibility for families, and aims to not have a waiting list.

The Clinical Service offers a wide-range of evidence based therapeutic support to children and families experiencing emotional and behavioural difficulties; relationship issues and mental health issues. Approaches offered include Systemic Family Therapy, Child Psychotherapy, Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT), Video Interaction Guidance (VIG), Art Therapy and Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy (DDP).



Clinical Service Activity Data April - September 2019

Number of new cases	309
Total number of cases	251
% of positive CHI-ESQ* feedback	93 %
% of positive SDQ** improvement	60 %

*The Children Experience of Service Questionnaire (CHI-ESQ) was developed by the Health Care Commission as a means of measuring service satisfaction in Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services.

**The Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) is a brief emotional and behavioural screening questionnaire for children and young people.

Fostering Changes and Nurturing Attachments Group

The Fostering Changes and Nurturing Attachments training for foster carers aims to develop foster carers' skills in managing complex relationships with young people and provides a safe space for foster carers to reflect on their own attachment histories. Eight foster groups have run, with 60 participants who attended at least 75 % of sessions. This course runs twice a year and will continue to run this year.

Mindfulness-based cognitive therapy

In April and May 2019, the Clinical Service ran an eight session group programme for Special Guardians led by a Clinical Psychologist. The programme taught a wide range of mindfulness practices and provided guidance and offered support for weaving these practices into the relationships with the children in their care.

Compassion Focussed Therapy Group

This six week group aimed to provide parents with the opportunity to develop ways of being more kind and compassionate to themselves. The group was aimed at parents that have a tendency to criticise themselves or their parenting, as well as parents who report low self-esteem and low confidence. It focused in part on supporting parents to identify some of the barriers to being compassionate to themselves, and the impact this can have, particularly on their children.

Post Incident Parent Support Group

Following a number of violent incidents in Hackney involving young people, this group was set up to support parents. The group was facilitated by a Forensic Psychologist and is linked to the Contextual Safeguarding team.

Systemic approaches

Family Therapy, Multi-Family Group Therapy and Couples Therapy are available to families where there are relationship difficulties, including risks of abuse, neglect and extra-familial risk. Five Family Therapy clinics run each week, including an evening clinic for working parents. Systemic approaches also inform reflective practice groups for Children and Families Service practitioners. In 2019 the Clinical Service started training in 'Family Ties' a multi-family group for children and families experiencing separation or divorce, a joint venture with the Anna Freud Centre. The first group began in September 2019.

Association for Systemic Practice and Family Therapy accredited training for practitioners

In 2018, the Foundation Level training available for practitioners in Hackney was accredited by the Association for Systemic Practice and Family Therapy in the UK (AFT).

The training provides a collaborative and enabling learning environment for practitioners to cultivate their knowledge and understanding of a wide range of systemic theories and interventions. The course aimed to help trainees develop a systemic skills base that would enhance their social work practice and further promote self-reflexive, anti-oppressive and

empowering practices with some of the most vulnerable children, young people and their families.

Our second year, intermediate level systemic training is offered to practitioners who had successfully completed the foundation level in systemic practice. In 2019, this year two training was also accredited by AFT.

Training and consultation to colleagues, clinical assessments and direct work

In addition to direct clinical work and assessments, the Clinical Service delivers training to social workers, foster carers and other frontline practitioners. This includes topics such as managing self harm and risk, and recognising and responding to the attachment needs of looked after children. Consultations are offered to colleagues on request to inform decision making and ensure children's mental health needs are met.

The Trusted Relationships Project

The Clinical Service has a Clinical Psychologist based in the Trusted Relationships project. The project aims to provide a detached youth work and mental health service that operates around the borough in areas frequented by young people. The aim is to provide an alternative, accessible and less stigmatised pathway into targeted support.

Corporate Parenting



Strengths/Progress

The November 2019 Ofsted inspection judged that the experiences and progress of children in care and care leavers were good.

Inspectors noted that *“children in care and leaving care in Hackney benefit from a strong service...once in care, most children live in placements that meet their needs and children make good progress.”*

Foster carer recruitment activity continues – this has resulted in 6 foster carer households recruited between April–September 2019 which is in line with the 12 recruited during the whole of 2018/19. The service continues to set ambitious targets for foster carer recruitment. During the recent inspection, Ofsted noted that *“support for foster carers is strong, with a comprehensive training offer and a range of effective support, including regular therapeutic consultations.”*

Supported Lodgings – A supported lodging scheme was launched in January 2019. Five mainstream foster carers have joined the scheme to date and further candidates are being assessed. This means that Hackney can provide a wider range of placement options for young people.

Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children project – additional support for UASC/former UASC is being provided through a project funded by the Government’s Controlling Migration Fund. This project is aiming to develop supported lodgings options for Vietnamese, Albanian and Eritrean UASC, and provide specialist support to develop the independence and integration of this cohort. Our unaccompanied asylum seeking children also receive support in terms of their education, including learning English, through the Virtual School, and will receive clinical support for trauma by the in-house Clinical Service as required.

Child-centred Looked After Child Review process – There continues to be positive feedback from young people about their Looked After Child Reviews through the child-friendly ‘Our Reviews, Our Choice’ process.

Children in Care Council – A dedicated Participation Officer, located in the Virtual School, started in post in March 2019, and has focused on relaunching Hackney’s Children in Care Council and offering wider participation opportunities, rebranded as HoT - Hackney of Tomorrow. HoT has developed a committed and engaged membership group of young people, who have been included in a number of recruitment and commissioning exercises. Plans are in place to encourage more school-age children to join HoT, and the Corporate Parenting Board now has dedicated space at every meeting for HoT to engage with and influence decision-making by councillors and senior leaders.

Widespread engagement in the development of the refreshed Corporate Parenting Strategy for 2019-2022 – A well-attended development workshop was held in May 2019 with practitioners, partner agencies, foster carers, councillors and young people. The priorities of the refreshed strategy are based on the ‘Hackney Promise to Children and Young People in Care’ that was developed by young people. The strategy reaffirms the corporate parenting responsibilities of councillors and leaders across the Council.

Access to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service support for looked after children and care leavers – New entrants into care receive robust and timely mental health assessments from our in-house clinicians and ongoing support from clinicians as needed. An in-house clinician is present at every initial health assessment, strengthening joint working with the Looked After Children Health team at an early stage. The strong and consistent clinical intervention to looked after children continues for care leavers as they transition to adulthood.

The Virtual School provides access to a broad range of cultural and educational activities for looked after children and care leavers. Care

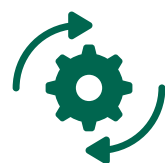
leavers receive extensive support around education, employment and training. The Virtual School actively pursues and works in partnership with external organisations and the voluntary sector to develop opportunities for care leavers to secure training, apprenticeships and employment.

Ofsted noted during their recent inspection that *“Young people were full of praise for the virtual school staff who are helping them.”*

The Leaving Care Service continues to be led by qualified social workers. In response to the increase in the number of care leavers supported by the Service, additional capacity has been delivered through the creation of 3 Personal Advisor roles in the Leaving Care social work units.

Health support for looked after children and care leavers – the recent Ofsted inspection noted that “The health needs of children in care and care leavers are well addressed and timeliness of review health assessments is improving.” The redesigned LAC Health Service, jointly commissioned with the CCG, has more robust systems to ensure access to a full health offer for young people placed out of area. A new provider is in place and has been delivering the LAC Health Service since September 2019, with performance being tracked at regular contract monitoring meetings.

Successful transition to the Regional Adoption Agency – led by Islington Council, Adopt London North launched on 1st October 2019. Hackney fully engaged with 5 local authorities in setting up and managing this transition for staff and adoptive families.



Areas for further development and actions to address

The number of looked after children and care leavers has increased significantly over the last few years. This has meant that greater staffing numbers are needed as well as an increase in the number and variety of placements for children. The Service has responded accordingly, seeking opportunities to increase funding such as through the Controlling Migration Fund and working with Finance colleagues to ensure that resources are well

targeted. The recently refreshed Sufficiency Strategy 2019-22 responds to the need to increase the number and variety of placements for children and young people.

Suitable placements for complex adolescents – of the young people who entered care between April - September 2019, 60% were aged 14 years or older. These young people often have complex needs requiring greater levels of support. Appropriate placements to match the needs of these young people are extremely difficult to source. The service continues to recruit more in-house foster carers who are able to provide appropriate placements for these complex adolescents. The Service is also a partner in the North East London Residential Commissioning Group – looking to improve the quality and reduce the cost of residential placements to meet young people’s needs. In their recent inspection, Ofsted noted that *“robust commissioning and child-focused work by the placement management unit are helping to ensure that the majority of young people live in accommodation, including semi-independent accommodation, that is suitable and provides on-site support to meet their needs.”*

Placement stability is a continuing challenge and this is linked to the older age profile and complexity of needs of those children becoming looked after. The offer available to support placement stability includes innovative interventions such as the Family Learning Intervention Project. However, practice needs to be more timely in identifying support needs and implementing appropriate support to sustain placements. Service Managers within Corporate Parenting have also initiated in depth work to understand thematic issues affecting placement stability through learning from disruption meetings and extended moving on reviews in order to improve overall performance on placement stability. Management oversight is showing that the majority of placements are supported by effective ‘settling in’ meetings, however work is taking place to improve the consistency of ‘settling in’ meetings at the start of placements to ensure these always take place.

Life story work – Recent audits have identified that improving the consistency, quality and timeliness of life story work is an ongoing area for development. A working group has been established to support practitioners to develop a deeper understanding of the significance of

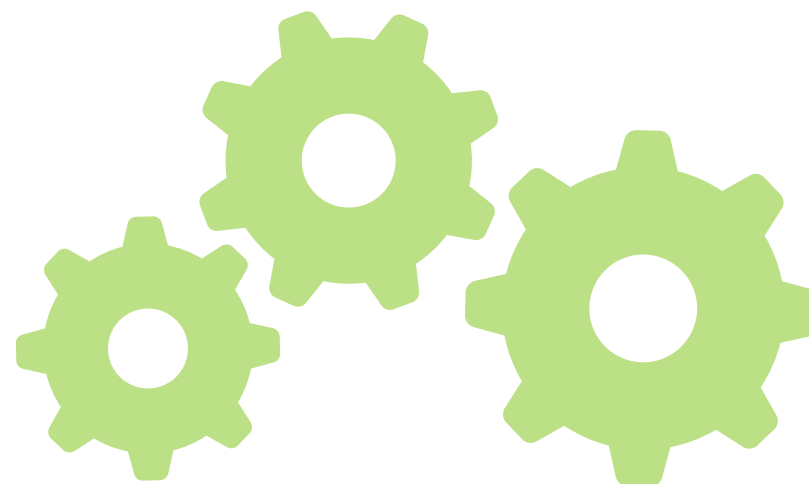
life story work, and maintaining child friendly records from the earliest engagement with statutory services in a way which supports later preparation of life story work.

Strengthening support for children on Special Guardianship Orders (SGOs) Ofsted noted in their recent inspection that *“Leaders recognise that more children could benefit from special guardianship arrangements with extended family members, and appropriate plans are in place to address this through a dedicated support service for connected carers and guardians.”* The establishment of a targeted SGO and Connected Carers unit within the Corporate Parenting Service is in progress and this will expedite and focus practice on supporting children under SGO arrangements.

The number of young people ‘staying put’ is lower than expected (21 at the end of September 2019, compared to 25 young people in 2018/19). Recent analysis has highlighted the level of financial support to continuing

foster carers as having a key impact on performance in this area. Service Managers have reviewed the current policy and proposed an increase in the staying put allowance following feedback from carers and former carers to understand what offer would better support performance. The Service implemented the new arrangements from September 2019 and expects this will increase the number of young people in ‘staying put’ arrangements.

Access to affordable accommodation for care leavers – wider housing issues within Hackney and the London area present an increasing challenge to the range of suitable and affordable accommodation available for care leavers. The Service is continuing to work in partnership with the Council’s Housing Needs Service to increase the number of care leavers in suitable accommodation and there are plans in place to develop a new housing pathway for young people.





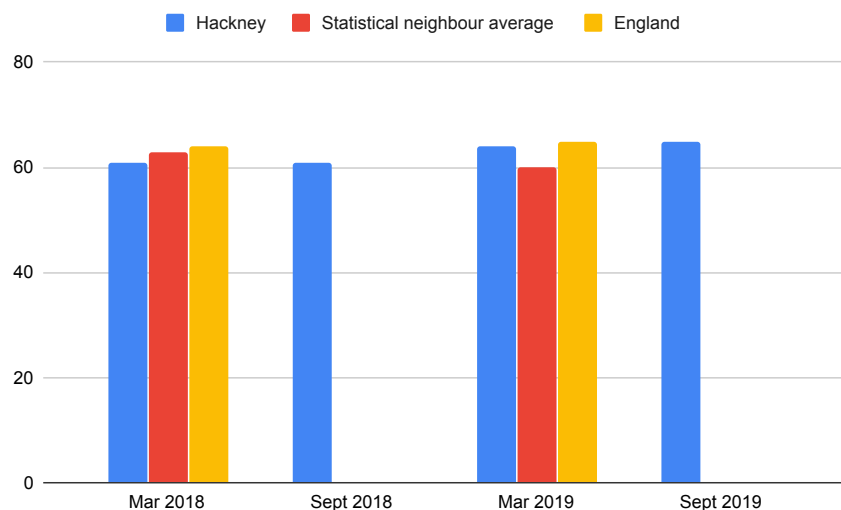
Looked After Children

The Corporate Parenting Service is responsible for all areas related to the safeguarding and welfare of children who are in the care of the local authority. This includes planning for their future placements via fostering and adoption, supporting rehabilitation home whenever possible, and supporting young people who have previously been in care up to the age of 25.

Number of looked after children

Mar 2018	Sept 2018	Mar 2019	Sept 2019
381	384	404	413

Children Looked After per 10,000 population aged under 18

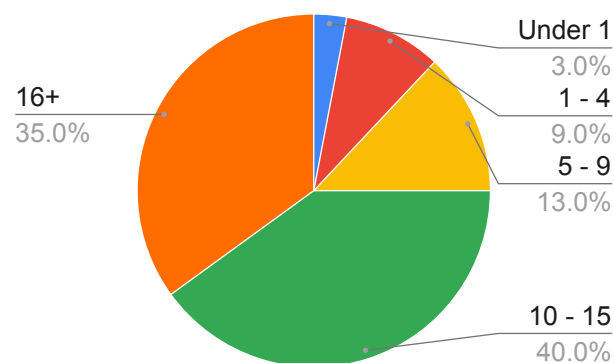


	Mar 2018	Sept 2018	Mar 2019	Sept 2019
Hackney	61	61	64	65
Statistical neighbour average	63	n/a	60	n/a
England	64	n/a	65	n/a

Hackney's rate of looked after children is increasing but is in line with the national average as at the end of September 2019.

Age breakdown of total number of looked after children, at 30 September 2019

Age	Sept 2018	Mar 2019		Sept 2019
	Hackney	England	Hackney	Hackney
Under 1	17 (4%)	5%	19 (5%)	11 (3%)
1 - 4	22 (6%)	13%	26 (6%)	36 (9%)
5 - 9	59 (15%)	18%	58 (14%)	55 (13%)
10 - 15	150 (39%)	39%	153 (38%)	163 (40%)
16 +	136 (35%)	24%	148 (37%)	148 (35%)
Total	384		404	413



A higher proportion of Hackney's looked after children cohort are older young people than the national average – 36% of the total cohort were aged 16+ years as at 30 September 2019, compared to 24% nationally (as at March 2019).

Age breakdown of children entering care during the year as at 30 September 2019, by age on starting

Age	Sept 2018	Mar 2019		Sept 2019
	Hackney	England	Hackney	Hackney
Under 1	7 (7%)	19%	24 (11%)	4 (4%)
1 - 4	7 (7%)	17%	22 (10%)	15 (15%)
5 - 9	8 (8%)	17%	19 (9%)	11 (11%)
10 - 15	30 (31%)	27%	58 (27%)	31 (30%)
16 +	46 (47%)	20%	89 (43%)	42 (40%)
Total	98	NA	212	103

More young people come into care at an older age in Hackney. Between April - September 2019, 73 children and young people aged 10 and over entered care -70% of the total number that entered care.



There has been a 5% increase in the number of children entering care between April and September 2019, 103 compared to 98 during the same period in 2018.

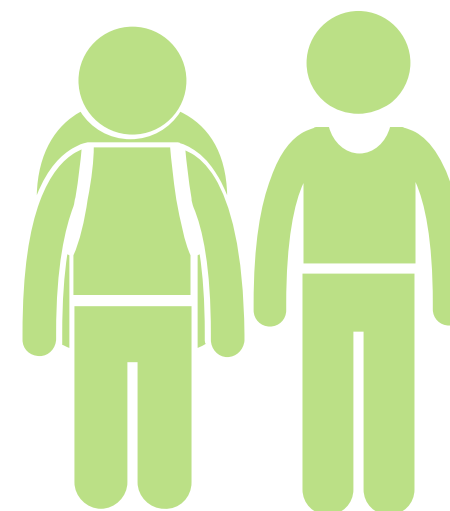


The percentage of young people becoming looked after for the second or subsequent time within the last 12 months was 7.8% as at 30 September 2019, a decrease compared to 16.8% at the same point last year, and also compared to 14.7% for the whole of 2018/19.

The number of children leaving care between April - September 2019 was 98. Of these, 27 (27%) returned home to live with parents, relatives or another person with parental responsibility. A further 14 (13%) left care due to Special Guardianship Orders being granted, and 6 (6%) were adopted.

Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children

44 Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children were open to Hackney as at 30 September 2019, compared to 43 as at 31 March 2019. Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children numbers have continued at the same level following an increase last year.





Fostering Service

Recruitment of Foster Carers

Six mainstream foster carer households have been approved during April -September 2019 and the service is on track to recruit fourteen carers by the end of March 2020. Six mainstream foster carer households were approved between April - September 2018 and twelve for the whole of 2018-19. Eight foster carers resigned or had their approval terminated between April and September 2019, due to a change in their circumstance or retirement. Research has shown that on average, approximately 13 % of foster carers leave their service each year nationally.



Mockingbird Project

The Fostering Network’s Mockingbird programme is an innovative research-based method of delivering foster care using the Mockingbird Family Model. The model uses an extended family model which provides respite care, peer support, regular joint planning, training, and social activities to other foster placements. The model centres on a constellation where one foster home acts as a hub, offering advice, training and support to 6-10 satellite foster or kinship families. The hub home builds strong relationships with all those in the constellation, empowering families to support each other and to overcome problems before they escalate or lead to breakdown.

Evaluations of the Mockingbird Family Model in other areas show improved outcomes for children, young people and carers, with improved placement stability, connection with siblings, and foster carer support and retention.

The project launched Hackney’s first hub home in August 2019 and work is underway to identify a second hub home during 2020.

Placement Activity – Placement Stability

Percentage of looked after children with three or more placements in one year

	Mar 2018	Sept 2018	Mar 2019	Sept 2019
Hackney	11%	13%	13%	13%
Statistical neighbour average	12 %	n/a	11 %	n/a
England	10 %	n/a	10 %	n/a

The percentage of children with 3 or more placements in a year as at September 2019 has remained in line with performance at March 2019 and September 2018.

Percentage of looked after children aged under 16 looked after continuously for at least 2½ years who have been living in the same placement for at least 2 years

	Mar 2018	Sept 2018	Mar 2019	Sept 2019
Hackney	62%	66%	62%	64%
Statistical neighbour average	69 %	n/a	70 %	n/a
England	70 %	n/a	69 %	n/a

Long-term placement stability for children in care has increased between April and September 2019 from 62 % to 64 % . Long term placements are reviewed at the Care Planning Panel to ensure required support is provided as early as possible.



Adoption and Permanency – Children Adopted

Number (and percentage) of looked after children who ceased to be looked after who were adopted

	2017/18	2018/19	Sept 2019
Hackney	12	12	6
	6%	6%	6%
Statistical neighbour average	12	12	n/a
	6%	6%	n/a

Between April and September 2019, six Hackney children were adopted. This is an increase compared with the same period last year when four children were adopted.

The average time between a child entering care and moving in with its adoptive family, between April and September 2019, was **472 days** compared to a national average of 433 days over the course of 2018/19.

The average time between a local authority receiving court authority to place a child and the local authority deciding on a match to an adoptive family, between April and September 2019, was **425 days** compared to a national average of 173 days in 2018/19. This high average was in part due to the adoption of an older child with complex needs adopted by his foster carers of three years, which was a positive outcome for this child.



Recruiting Adopters

Two adoptive families were approved in Hackney between April and September 2019. This is a decrease from 2018/19 when eight adoptive

families were approved over the course of the year. The last families to be approved as adopters were approved in April 2019.

All local authorities are required to become part of a Regional Adoption Agency by April 2020. In London the majority of local authorities are participating in the development of Adopt London which has four sub-regional Adoption Agencies. Hackney is now part of Adopt London North which consists of six local authorities (Hackney, Camden, Islington, Enfield, Barnet and Haringey).

The development of the Regional Adoption Agency which is led by Islington Council, launched on 1st October 2019. The ongoing recruitment of adopters is now being managed by Adopt London North.



Leaving Care

The Leaving Care Service ensures that young people are supported to develop independent living skills, offered career advice and training and educational opportunities, and supported to reach their full potential in all aspects of their life.

296 care leavers aged 17-21 were being supported by the Leaving Care Service, as at 30 September 2019, a **13.8%** increase compared to the **260** being supported at the same point in September 2018, but a **2%** decrease compared to the **303** young people being supported at 31 March 2019.

The Service was providing support to 65 care leavers aged over 21, as at 30 September 2019. This is double the number of care leavers supported at the same time last year. On 1 April 2018, the law changed for care leavers and all care leavers must now be offered support from a personal advisor until the age of 25, regardless of whether they are in education.

Safeguarding and Learning

Independent Chairs

Hackney's Independent Chairs provide independent oversight of work with looked after children as well as chairing Child Protection Conferences. A new way of conducting reviews for looked after children, *Our reviews, our choice*, has been developed to make reviews more creative and encourage the participation of looked after children in their reviews. Feedback has shown that the process is ensuring more child-focused, age-appropriate reviews in line with children's needs. Social work and IRO reports are being thoughtfully written and personalised for each child or young person. The process has successfully resulted in increased participation, particularly from children aged 5 -15.



Ofsted noted during their recent inspection that “*child protection conference chairs do not provide consistent challenge when plans do not improve or address children’s circumstances.*” The actions to address this concern will be included in the post-inspection action plan due to be submitted to Ofsted at end of March 2020.

Children’s Rights Service

The Children’s Rights Service continues to offer children and young people access to confidential and impartial support on issues concerning the Hackney Children and Families Service. The Service also provides Independent Return Home Interviews to young people who have been reported missing to understand what has happened and support young people to be safer. The Children’s Rights Officers (CRO) work to ensure that children and young people’s voices are heard, their wishes represented in plans made and their rights & entitlements upheld. The role has expanded this year to formally offer safety planning work, focusing on positive relationships, appropriate sexual relationships, self-esteem work, and understanding grooming and exploitation.

Between April and September 2019, the service received referrals for 101 young people. 78 young people have closed to the service while 23 remain open and receiving ongoing support along with open cases from other reporting periods. The average length of time that young people receive support from the service is 7.7 months, with the longest open case being 2 years and 10 months. Between April and September 2019 there have been no formal complaints made by children under the age of 18 or their advocates on their behalf. Children’s Rights Officers offer support and mediation to facilitate early and informal resolution for any complaints from children and young people.

In this period the service has supported developments in the process around recording missing children and are keen to increase the timeliness of the return home interview offer.

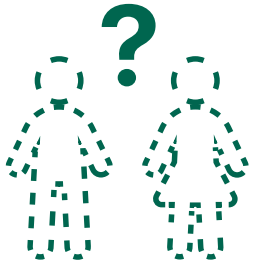


Local Area Designated Officer (LADO)

The LADO investigates allegations of harm or concerns around the conduct of adults working with or volunteering with children.

There were 143 referrals to the LADO between April - September 2019, a slight increase in referrals when compared to 2018/19 which saw a total of 266 referrals over the whole year, following a 61 % increase on referrals in 2017/18.

Priorities for this year include providing training internally and for other agencies including schools and Police on the roles of the LADO, work to support unregistered settings and improving quality assurance and service development.



Missing Children and Children at Risk of Sexual Exploitation (CSE)

Between April - September 2019, 73 young people went missing from care on 491 occasions and 34 young people went missing from home on 49 occasions. The figure for young people in care is higher than during 2018/19 when 87 children went missing on 496 occasions over the course of the whole year. There are a number of children who go missing on a regular basis which may partially account for the rise in missing instances.

58% of children and young people who went missing from home accepted a Return Home Interview. 45% of children and young people who went missing from care accepted a Return Home Interview between April - September 2019 which is a significant reduction on the same period last year (62%).

In order to ensure young people who frequently go missing are supported and that the Director and senior management are kept informed, fortnightly missing children meetings are convened whereby practitioners provide an overview of the risk in relation to the child and the circumstances around the current missing episode in respect of high risk cases.



Quality Assurance

The Children and Families Service is a complex system and many tools are used to understand performance and identify learning opportunities, themes and trends to enable the service to continue to adapt and respond to new demands. This includes management and audit oversight, with 343 audits taking place between April - September 2019. Multi-agency audits are also coordinated through City and Hackney Safeguarding Children Partnership.

In response to learning from audits, a Practice Week was held in July 2019 focusing on the theme of identity, diversity and discrimination - sharing learning, research, providing training and reminding staff of key messages to consider during their practice. Ofsted found that "children's unique cultural identity is recognised and reflected in assessments" when they inspected the service in November 2019.

During the recent Ofsted inspection, it was noted that ***"quality assurance is not yet consistently driving improvement to frontline practice across the whole service. Thematic issues from audit findings are used well to inform wider workforce development. Case audits challenge very poor practice and ensure that swift remedial action is taken where necessary. However, the approach of auditors is too inconsistent: some take an overly optimistic view of practice and are overly focused on process. Feedback from audits is too reticent in identifying and acting on areas of weaker practice, for example audits of privately fostered children. Actions arising from audits are not all systematically followed through to ensure sustained and wider improvements in practice."***

A number of changes to the auditing tools and process were put in place following the Ofsted focused visit in February 2019, however it is clear that further work is needed around the quality assurance framework and auditing processes given the inspection feedback from November 2019. These changes will be incorporated in the post-inspection action plan due to be submitted to Ofsted in March 2020.

