

**CHILDREN  
& FAMILIES**

# Full Year Report to Members

2019/20



Working for every **child**

 **Hackney**

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# Foreword

It gives me great pleasure to introduce the Children and Families Service (CFS) annual report for 2019/20. While most of the data included in this report comes from the financial year 2019/20, due to the huge amount of challenges and changes the service has faced in recent months, the updates on our services cover the period up until September 2020.

Ofsted conducted a full inspection of services in November 2019 and, while they found a lot of good practice and dedicated work, provided a clear framework of areas where the organisation must seek to improve. While the overall rating of 'requires improvement' was disappointing, the report was met with a constructive and energetic response from staff and leaders. An action plan was submitted to Ofsted in March 2020. Hackney was clear all parts of the council would contribute to

getting us to where we want to be, namely at a level that would be judged 'good' within the year and 'outstanding' as soon as possible thereafter. The Children's Member Oversight Board, chaired jointly by myself and the Mayor, continues to oversee the robustness of our response and progress against the plan.

The lockdown in response to coronavirus has had a significant impact on the way we deliver services to vulnerable young people and their families. Again while this was a difficult and unusual time for our workforce, they rose to the challenge and continued to provide vital services to the residents of Hackney. Throughout the various restrictions, workers have been creative in meeting needs and developing new ways to keep in touch, even when unable to work face to face. The service has always

kept children, who were also greatly affected by the changes to their daily lives, at the heart of all their work. From the Virtual School making sure young people had laptops to continue their education to Young Hackney providing space and time for young people to reflect on their experiences, all elements of CFS have had their role to play. Statutory services have also had to balance new and competing risks as they safeguard the most vulnerable children. I would like to thank all staff for their hard work and dedication during this period.

Over the summer, the Black Lives Matter protests highlighted once again the importance of anti-racism being an integral value for the whole service. The recent Side by Side exercise looking at staff experience and practice across Children's Social Care highlighted this as a key issue for both staff

and the families we work with. Although there is creative work taking place in this area, we recognise there is more to do and our Anti-Racist Practice action plan will continue to support staff, families and partners in embedding anti-racist practice into all of our work. The Anti-Racist Practice action plan which was developed over the summer sets out how we will combat racism both within Hackney CFS and in work with families, children and partner agencies.

**Councillor Anntoinette Bramble**

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



# Overview of Performance



**5,031 referrals** were received over the course of 2019/20, a 20% increase from 4,190 received in the previous year.



**4,923 assessments were completed**, a 14.8% increase from the 4,290 completed in 2018/19.



**251 children were on Child Protection Plans** as at 31 March 2020, a 29% increase compared to the 194 at the same time in 2019.



**432 children were looked after** as at 31 March 2020, a 7% increase from 405 at the same time the previous year.



**228 children entered care** during 2019/20, an 8% increase from 212 in 2018/19.



**66% of children under 16** who have been looked after for more than 2.5 years were in stable placements of more than 2 years in 2019/20, a 1% increase from 65% last year.



**793 (15.8%) referrals** were received within 12 months of a previous referral, a 0.5% decrease from 16.3% the previous year.



**119 children between 14 and 17 entered care** in 2019/20, a very slight decrease compared to 120 young people from this cohort entering care in 2018/19. This represented 52% of the total number of children who entered care in 2019/20, compared to 56% in 2018/19.



**18.6% children became subject to a Child Protection plan** for a second or subsequent time during 2019/20, a 4.4% decrease compared to 23% in 2018/19.



**170,780 attendances by named children and young people aged 6-19 years** during 2019/20 - at the wider youth provision delivered through Young Hackney and commissioned services for young people. This is a 3.6% decrease compared to 2018/19 when there were 177,299 attendances by named children and young people.



**12% of looked after children had three or more placements** in 2019/20, a 1% decrease compared to 13% in 2018/19.



**313 care leavers aged between 17 and 21** were being supported by the Leaving Care service at 31 March 2020, a 2% increase compared to 308 at the same point in 2019.

# Priorities for the year ahead



Delivering on the areas for improvement identified in the November 2019 Ofsted inspection report (further details in the Ofsted inspection section).



Ensure that children and young people's views inform all aspects of our practice and organisational development, including responding to the findings of the Hackney Young Futures Commission.



Ensure that our resources are used as effectively as possible to ensure that children receive the right support at the right time, including through a refocusing of front door activities, the completion of an extensive review of Early Help services and a review of caseloads across the service.



Ensure our systemic principles are embedded throughout our practice with children and families and that our approach and vision for CFS is understood by our practitioners and at the centre of all that we do.



Promote anti-racist practice and ensure that issues relating to identity, diversity, inequality and discrimination are considered and addressed in all aspects of our work and in our workforce development.



Review the unit model to ensure that it is robust, provides effective management oversight of cases, and supports new ways of working following COVID-19.



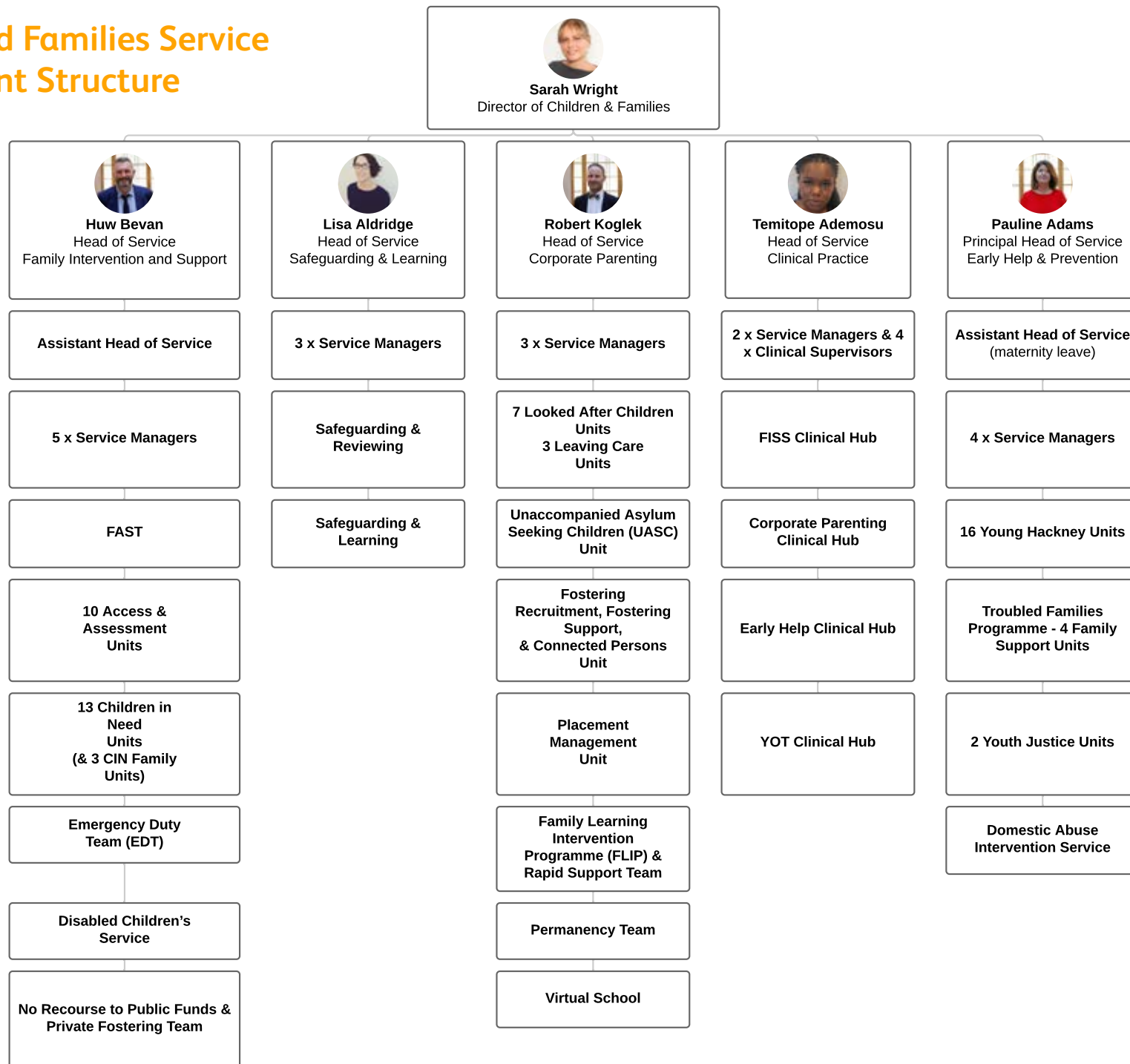
Undertake an analysis of children coming into care to understand how we can better support families to stay together safely and develop an Edge of Care Strategy to ensure children are only coming into care when this is in their best interest.



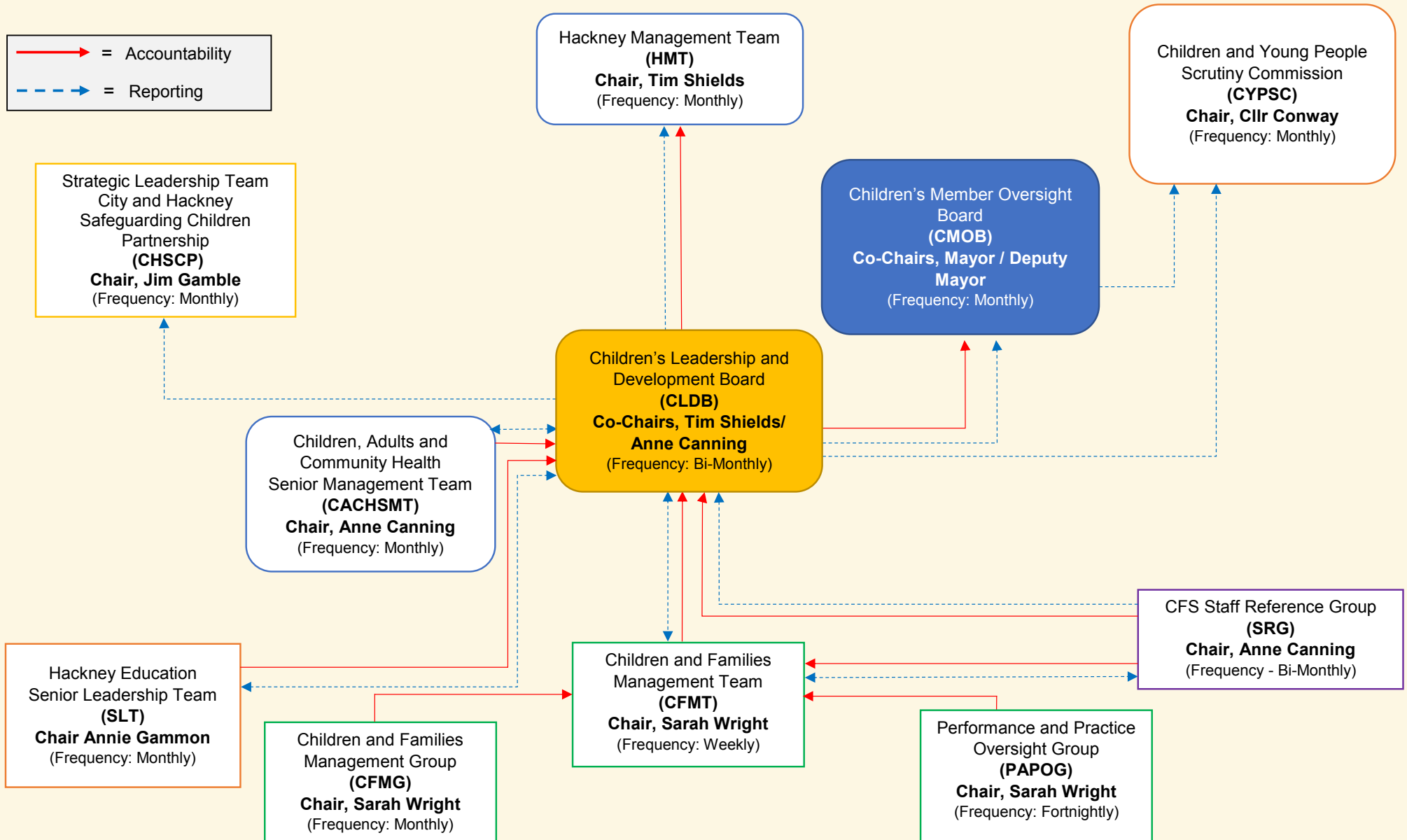
Continue in our journey to embed Contextual Safeguarding approaches to address extra-familial risk through the creation of a Context Intervention Unit.



# Children and Families Service Management Structure



# Children's Leadership and Development Governance Map





# Ofsted Inspection and Action Plan



Hackney Children's Services was inspected under the Ofsted Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) framework in November 2019. The inspection report was published in December 2019 and 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

Hackney takes feedback from Ofsted very seriously. Our aspiration is to take Children's Services back to 'good' within one year, with a view to being ready to be judged 'outstanding' by our next inspection.

An action plan was developed in response to the Ofsted inspection at the beginning of the year and submitted in March 2020. In parallel, a series of workshops were held with all CFS staff (in excess of 230 staff attended) in February 2020 to support the wider development of the service alongside

the action plan. Feedback from the groups has guided the direction of a significant amount of the work that has taken place over the last six months. Quarterly updates will be provided to staff, to update on the Children's Action Plan and on embedding staff feedback.

Progress against the action plan continues to be monitored by the Children's Member Oversight Board (CMOB) and a Children's Leadership and Development Board (CLDB). The Mayor and Deputy Mayor co-chair the Children's Member Oversight Board and the Chief Executive and Group Director co-chair the Children's Leadership and Development Board.

While progress against the action plan has been positive, the key next stage of our work to improve practice is to monitor the impact these changes have had on practice and most importantly for the children and families we work with. The Service is also in the process of developing a Phase 2a Action Plan which will set out a more ambitious vision for the service over the next two years beyond the areas identified for improvement by Ofsted. In addition, a Phase 2b plan is also in development, involving wider partners in the establishment and implementation of a wider Hackney Children's Partnership Plan which will report into a sub-group of the Council's Health and Wellbeing Board (HWB)

## Progress against the plan

### Area for improvement 1: The quality of information sharing and decision making within strategy discussions

- Working agreements for engaging officers from the various police teams who may respond to concerns about significant harm about our children and young people in strategy discussions were signed in December 2019.
- A draft protocol has been developed around mutually agreed expectations with partners including appropriate levels of participation and information sharing in strategy discussions. This is to ensure that all decisions are attuned to the child's individual needs and are informed by key information about the child and the circumstances of their family and significant others. The protocol will be embedded via virtual training over the autumn once it is completed.
- As part of an ongoing review of the front door, we aimed to have increased the number of co-located partners within the Hackney Service Centre but this has been delayed by the coronavirus restrictions. Improvements to remote working with partners and more effective use and sharing of ICT systems is ongoing.
- During lockdown, managers within Hackney Education worked closely with FAST to respond to attendance and engagement queries from schools related to lockdown. This had a really positive effect on relationships with schools and supporting them in making appropriate referrals. A member of Hackney Education is located in FAST for the autumn term and options for long term arrangements are being considered. This will enhance the ability of partners to participate and inform decision making.
- Bi monthly dip samples of this area are ongoing to establish the impact of the changes made.

### Area for improvement 2: the assessment of the impact for children of living in neglectful environments to inform authoritative and child-centred practice

- A practice week on neglect was held in July 2020 to support understanding of neglect and improve practice. The week consisted of training opportunities, resources provided to staff and practice guidance was developed and shared with staff. The practice guidance outlined research and best practice in the area of neglect and set expectations around standards for ensuring quality assessments and timely interventions.
- Further work over the winter will focus on developing, delivering and embedding a programme of training around neglect and assess the impact.
- A new risk assessment process has been developed which will support work being done to strengthen the expectations and processes around re-assessments to ensure they are reflective of cumulative harm and look at all strengths, risks and protective factors.
- Direct work tools have been developed in consultation with Children's Rights Officers' to support children to effectively participate in Child Protection Conferences. They will be designed and disseminated through a workshop in autumn 2020. Further work to support children to participate in their planning will be completed over the next six months.

### Area for improvement 3: the quality of assessment and planning for children subject to private fostering arrangements

- A new Private Fostering Policy was developed in January 2020 which outlined case management responsibilities to promote consistently high quality practice in safeguarding children in private fostering arrangements. Cases were transferred to the new No Recourse to Public Funds and Private Fostering Team in March 2020, a structural change to

embed best practice. At the same time all open cases were reviewed to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children and the ability of their current carers to meet their needs.

- Work has also been completed during summer 2020 across the City and Hackney Safeguarding Board to increase awareness of privately fostered children, and agencies roles and responsibilities in relation to them including the development of an app for practitioners to use.
- Improvements to the management information available in this area are ongoing with the creation of a new management information dashboard being completed in September 2020.
- Bi annual audits will continue to review the well being of, and arrangements for, children in private fostering arrangements. Work is also continuing with the North London consortium to share learning and best practice in this area.

#### Recommended area for improvement **4: The timeliness and effectiveness of pre-proceedings work, including the quality of contingency planning**

- A new permanency planning meeting process, with meetings chaired by the Head of the Family Intervention and Support Service was developed in January 2020 in order to ensure that permanency is considered at the earliest possible opportunity for children and that contingency plans are in place when legal proceedings are being considered.
- Practice guidance to support practitioners in understanding appropriate escalation, timescales and processes in pre proceedings was developed in March 2020, with the aim of ensuring timely and effective intervention for children. Ongoing audits are measuring how effectively it has been embedded.
- There have been developments in the way Mosaic supports the Public Law Outline process and improvements in management information available to support this work are ongoing.

- Work is ongoing with colleagues in Legal Services to develop and embed a joint protocol to ensure consistency in our pre proceedings process and ensure high quality decision making for children.

#### Recommended area for improvement **5: The welfare of children who are missing education or who are home educated is safeguarded**

- The Elective Home Education (EHE) policy was updated in June 2020 in order to ensure annual reviews of the quality of teaching and learning in this area.
- Further work to launch and embed the Elective Home Education policy is ongoing but has been delayed in some areas by the pandemic.
- A protocol to ensure a more effective cross service / multi agency approach to unregistered settings as soon as these are identified, ensuring children attending these settings are safeguarded and attending appropriate education was launched in July 2020.
- A bi-annual teaching and learning forum to support parents in securing positive outcomes for children and young people who missing education or are home educated was planned but has been affected by the pandemic. Options for virtual alternatives are being considered.

#### Recommended area for improvement **6a: the effectiveness of management oversight by leaders and managers at all levels**

- A scoping exercise to establish practitioner, frontline manager and service manager capacity was completed in January 2020 and additional resources provided where needed. A further benchmarking exercise is also underway with other local authorities to look at this area and is expected to be completed in autumn.
- As part of constructing a professional development programme on challenge for all staff, including challenge to partners, a systemic leadership development training programme commenced in June 2020.

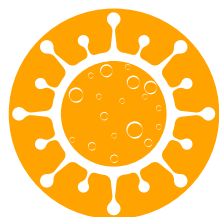
- A new induction programme was devised in July 2020 which includes an introduction to systemic practice. Training on performance management for all managers also started in July 2020.
- Roles and responsibilities for all managers were clarified within a new handbook produced in September 2020.
- A review of the unit model is currently taking place to ensure practitioners have the time to do high quality direct work with children and families and frontline managers are able to maintain effective oversight of the cases held in their units to support best practice. The outcome of this review is anticipated in October 2020.
- Quarterly case review days already monitor management oversight of cases in general but a schedule of audits looking at management of different points in case progression will be completed over the winter.



## Recommended area for improvement **6b: the effectiveness of management oversight by leaders and managers at all levels**

- The Hackney CFS quality assurance framework was self evaluated in January 2020 and a new framework was developed in March 2020.
- Practice guidance on working with fathers and male carers, child sexual abuse and neglect have been completed and a forward plan of practice guidance is being developed and will be monitored by the Systemic Strategy Group.
- A peer review of completed audits with neighbouring local authorities will be completed in autumn 2020 and a peer audit of cases is planned for early in 2021.
- A 'Side-by-Side' quality assurance exercise was run during September 2020 where 52 frontline managers and practitioners explored cases across the service and the impact of COVID-19. The findings from this exercise will be published later in the Autumn.
- A programme of 'Learning Visits' has been established, where senior managers will join frontline staff in practice activities in a two-way opportunity to share learning and insight on staff's day-to-day experiences are planned for late Autumn.
- Following service-wide recruitment, 10 staff members were appointed to our CFS Staff Reference Group (SRG). The group has been established to provide an effective feedback loop between senior management and staff from across the service, working as a sounding board and 'consultative body' on developments in the service. Membership reflects staff from a range of service areas and pay grades. The group have met twice, issues discussed have included feedback on the CFS rebranding, feedback loops, practice guidance and reviewing communication channels in the service. The group continues to meet on a bi-monthly basis.

# Impact of COVID-19



The impact of coronavirus, and the measures taken to mitigate it by the government, have inevitably had an effect on the way Hackney CFS works. Nevertheless, we continued to provide a full service during the lockdown. Our business continuity plan was activated on 16 March 2020 and senior management team meetings were held up to three times a week, to plan and coordinate operational activities to ensure that we were able to serve the community safely.

## Impact on children and young people:

The closure of educational, childcare and leisure facilities, as well as contact centres, meant that children were isolated from their usual support networks and from family members they did not live with. This was particularly challenging for children in vulnerable or at risk households.

Education and early help input into the front door team was strengthened during the lockdown period. This was effective in responding to school concerns about children that were not open to CSC and assisted early engagement with families.

Work took place jointly with colleagues in Hackney Education to liaise with schools and ensure that an appropriate plan was agreed for each individual child confirming the level of contact that the school would maintain and whether a setting could support continued attendance, particularly for vulnerable children. Some children were offered places within schools during the lockdown period although take up of this offer was low, as it was across much of the country especially in London.

All service areas have worked hard to ensure they continued to work with children as meaningfully and creatively as possible during this difficult time. (Please see the sections on each service area for further details of the different measures put in place). Some of the techniques and approaches tried with families have been very successful, for example more regular virtual contact with looked after children, and will be incorporated into practice long term.

## Service continuity:

At the beginning of lockdown senior managers asked practitioners to rate all of their cases red, amber or green to decide on the level of contact to have with families, which balanced the risk to children with the risks of spreading coronavirus. As the restrictions continued a MOSAIC risk assessment tool was created to assist practitioners in deciding whether visits should take place face to face or virtually and how often these visits should take place to ensure that children who were at risk of harm or in need of support had the most appropriate level and form of contact. We recommended that the risk assessment be regularly reviewed but allowed practitioners and their line managers to use their professional judgement to be responsive to stable or changing circumstances dependent on the needs of the child(ren). Once the lockdown measures eased we resumed face to face direct visits in the vast majority of cases, unless family health prevented this, and paused use of the risk assessment tool. Our approach to visits was iterative and evolved over time in response to changes in Government guidance and in our recent Side by Side exercise some staff commented that changes in advice and requirements had sometimes been difficult to keep up with. The feedback from the Side by Sides will be used to inform development and dissemination of the tool should it be needed again.

## Impact on staff:

At the beginning of the lockdown period there were a high number of COVID-19 cases within Hackney. Whilst relatively few of our staff had periods of sickness, many staff have additional vulnerabilities including a high number from Black and minority ethnic backgrounds and a large number of staff had caring responsibilities for children or family members. There was therefore a significant number of staff that were either unwell, self isolating or otherwise restricted in their availability to complete face to face work. The unit model was supportive in ensuring other staff could step in as needed.

The challenges for staff, both in terms of changes to ways of working and the impact of lockdown on their wellbeing, were recognised by senior managers. There are a large number of staff with increased caring responsibilities due to the restrictions in place and the Council has increased the paid dependency leave allowance to 30 days, and many staff have been working reduced or flexible hours.

All staff have continued to have regular supervision meetings and more informal catch ups with their line managers using Google Meet. Unit meetings have taken place virtually but more regularly and of shorter length. Staff forums have also continued to take place online. A staff survey in May 2020 found that 88 % of CFS staff felt they had been 'extremely supported' or 'very supported' by their line managers and peers in the previous 4 weeks.





# Anti-Racist Practice



The following statement expresses Hackney Hackney Children and Families Services' aims and intentions in relation to anti-racism:

*“Hackney’s Children and Families Service is committed to eradicating systemic racism, discrimination and injustice and to making anti-racism a foundation of our practice. We will be a voice and force for change, for every child and family that we work for and with, to recognise and address the impact of racism on children and families within our practice, to apply our anti-racist principles in all of our interactions with and decision-making about children and to determinedly and actively, demand the same from our partners. As an organisation, we acknowledge that the experience of our Black staff and those from other marginalised ethnic groups, is not the same as that of our White staff. We are committed to ensure that all voices are represented and heard at every level where decisions are made and that our workforce reflects the community which we serve, especially at the senior leadership level.”*

The Anti-Racist Practice action plan was developed in the summer of 2020 in the context of the murder of George Floyd in the USA, protests and the ongoing Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement across the world. Developing the plan included self-reflection and an increased recognition and awareness of racism and the issues of power and privilege that are prevalent within and across all levels of society. The plan is monitored by the Children and Families Management Team and developed in consultation with the Black Leadership Group. In addition there will be three working groups formed over October 2020 contributing to and progressing the actions under each goal of the plan, and a Google Currents community open to all staff to make their contributions.

## The plan has three main aims:

- Inclusive Recruitment and Aspirational Support for Staff: Staff workforce is representative of child and family population in Hackney at all levels including at senior leadership levels
- Anti-Racist Leadership and Practice with Children and Families: Leadership and practice with children and families take a pro-actively anti-racist stance to address racism, discrimination and inequality
- Promoting Anti-Racist Practice to influence broader systems that affect children and families lives: Leaders and Practitioners across CFS take action to address structural racism and proactively lead, support and constructively challenge the broader system including in partnership discussions as required



In relation to the goal around Inclusive Recruitment and Aspirational Support for Staff, we acknowledge that the diversity of our workforce is inconsistent across the service and disproportionately White at senior management levels which is why the following actions have taken place:

- Anonymous recruitment started in July 2020
- Verbal reasoning tests ended in July 2020
- Diverse interview panels were introduced in Spring 2020
- Current data on the workforce, diversity and disproportionality at all levels has been confirmed as baseline measure for future change
- Black leaders have set up a Black Leadership Group which will support the plan including recruitment and support for staff, as well as identifying an external consultant to offer coaching and facilitate conversations with the senior management team.



#### Further goals in all areas include:

- Quarterly monitoring and analysis of workforce by role and ethnicity as one indicator and measurement of change which will form part of the Corporate Dashboard
- Future surveys to collect information and measure progress in workplace experiences of Black and minority ethnic staff
- In Autumn 2020, review with HR and Corporate options for reporting incidents of racism in a way that staff feel safe and supported which may include the option of a restorative approach as well as formal action as required



- Review advert content, job descriptions, interview questions, assessments and role-play to ensure that language and content is inclusive and promotes diversity by Spring 2021
- Development of systemic tools to support approach to chairing and facilitating meetings (including interview panels) which include attention to power dynamics by January 2021
- Monitor and ensure equitable access to training opportunities, particularly those that support staff to move into leadership roles
- Establish a peer support group for Black practitioners in Autumn 2020
- Explore how we will provide culturally sensitive emotional support in response to racialised trauma
- All training developed and commissioned will include explicit reference to anti-racist practice requirements
- Develop systemic and anti-racist tools and approaches to facilitate conversations with families and to facilitate meetings that attend to power dynamics, racism and discrimination in Spring 2021
- Explore the potential for an Anti-Racist Continuum of Practice as a tool for self reflection, goal setting and inquiry into practice developed and being shared with the Black Leadership Group for consultation
- Developing a position statement on Anti-Racist Practice
- Introductory Anti-Racist Practice training for all CFS in Autumn 2020 delivered by British Association of Social Workers following a pilot session



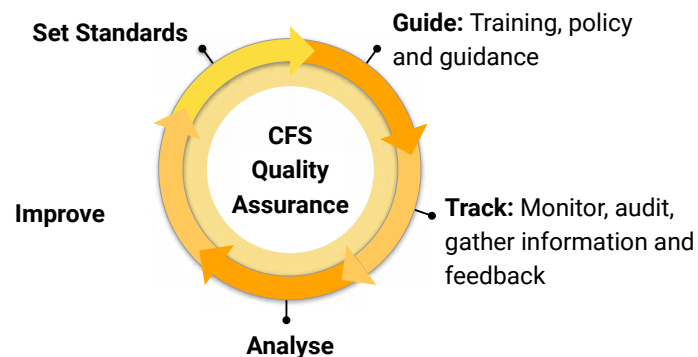
# Quality Assurance



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. A revised quality assurance framework was developed in March 2020, to ensure our quality assurance is soundly evidence-based.

The framework sets out how Hackney learns from all quality assurance activity completed to ensure children and families are being supported in the right way at the right time, and to ensure we understand what difference has been made. The framework sets out the approach and how learning is embedded and evidenced in practice. The quality assurance framework for CFS was evaluated in January 2020 by the Safeguarding and Learning Service, working closely with the management teams of each service area in CFS. The evaluation was modelled on an evidence-based approach to quality assurance in Children's Services developed by Research in Practice (*Building a Quality Culture in Child and Family Services*).

The Quality Assurance Framework provides insight into current levels of confidence about the quality of service delivery and the degree to which this is having a positive effect on children and their families in Hackney. Key to this is measuring impact - it is critical to understand what difference Hackney Children and Families Service and our partners are making for children. Outcomes for children are at the centre of our framework.



## There are 5 stages in the framework cycle:

- **Set standards:** Setting out our expectations from practitioners
- **Guide:** Deliver training, policy and guidance to reach standards
- **Track:** Monitor, audit, gather information and feedback
- **Analyse:** Consider and evaluate the information gathered - what did we learn, what was the impact for children?
- **Improve:** Identify actions to continuously improve

Once improvements that we want to see are identified, we will refresh and update our standards, using research to inform best practice and the cycle begins again - monitoring and auditing to understand whether changes have the desired impact for children. The role of the Performance and Practice Oversight Group is critical in overseeing the quality assurance cycle for the Children and Families Service.

## Role of Performance and Practice Oversight Group (PPOG) in Quality Assurance

The fortnightly Performance and Practice Oversight Group, chaired by the Director of Children and Families, has a critical role in the quality assurance of the Children and Families Service as the forum where quantitative and qualitative learning is brought together and improvement actions are tracked. The purpose of this meeting is to quality assure against the standards that have been set for practice across CFS and to respond

to changes in the flow of cases through the child protection system. To this end:

- Weekly data on caseloads is produced and key performance information is reviewed at each meeting.
- Every month, a focused meeting on either audits or 'feedback loops' is held - to ensure that qualitative information about the quality of practice is being considered and triangulated alongside data. Feedback loops include family feedback, child protection chair/Independent Reviewing Officer escalations, learning from Children's Rights Officers, complaints and compliments, feedback from staff, feedback from partners and learning from elsewhere.
- PPOG highlights issues and areas requiring further exploration and triangulates multiple sources of information.
- PPOG directs audit/brief reviews/ feedback/ other quality assurance activity and looks at findings.
- PPOG directs improvement actions and measures the impact of these actions.

## Audits

A comprehensive programme of audits for 2020 is in place, with 415 audits and dip samples completed between 1st January and 30th September 2020. The programme consists of scheduled and unscheduled (in response to emerging issues) full and brief audits, as well as dip samples - all tracked centrally. Alongside this, each service area undertakes routine audits that they administer themselves. Audits are discussed with units as they are undertaken and we ask children/carers/families to share their views and experiences about our social work intervention so this can inform our analysis of impact. Learning from multiple audits is pulled into reports to analyse themes and identify improvement actions - these reports are shared with practitioners and discussed at the Performance and Practice Oversight Group. An action tracker monitors progress against these actions.

CFS undertakes quarterly Case Review Days which comprise a number of full case audits undertaken by all Service Managers. The Case Review

Days in 2020 have focused on the Public Law Outline process, long term cases, and 16 and 17 year olds coming into care. These are all areas which were identified as particularly challenging or have been included in the post Ofsted service improvement plan. Each audit looks at five areas when considering the quality of work: child focused practice, outcome focused plans, quality of interventions, management oversight, and identity. Audit scores through Case Review Days have been consistent across the year with an average score of 2.6 overall (where 4 is outstanding and 1 is inadequate), meaning practice requires improvement to be good, with 62 % of these audits rated as good (3) or outstanding (4). It is expected that practice as evidenced through audits will improve further as the changes and developments introduced through the post Ofsted service improvement plan embed and the impact of these practice changes can be evidenced. These audits provide a baseline to measure our progress against and further quality assurance activity will focus on these areas of developing practice.

Particular areas of strength identified in Case Review Day audits include child focused practice (2.8 average score and 68 % good or outstanding), work around identity (2.7 and 64 % good or outstanding) and the quality of interventions (2.6 and 61 % good or outstanding). Audits consistently highlighted the strength of direct work with children and relationships with families.

Areas which continue to require further improvement include management oversight (2.5 and 49 % good or outstanding) and outcome focused plans (2.5 and 42 % good or outstanding). The common theme for improvement identified in audits was around having a clear plan of intervention as well as a contingency plan to be enacted if the intervention was proving ineffective. Audits identified a number of administrative changes which could support practitioners in these aims for example improving ICT systems and increasing management oversight. Further work is also taking place in relation to embedding practice standards and effective interventions, and significant improvement activity has taken place over recent months in relation to management oversight and outcome focused plans (further details are included on pages 10 and 11).

Further learning from these and other audits can be found in the service specific sections of this report.

## Side by Side exercise

In September 2020, CFS undertook a 'Side by Side' exercise, meeting with frontline practitioners to:

- Understand how practice has been affected by COVID-19
- Understand current practice
- Identify strengths within the service and also areas which may require improvement

In total 52 meetings took place with frontline staff, conducted by Service Managers, Heads of Service and the Director of Children's Services. The interviews had two parts, the first looking at staff well being and the second looking at particular types of cases which may have proved challenging or were a concern. The aim of the process was to look at CFS systemically to identify strengths and areas of concern. The feedback from this exercise is still being collated and a formal report and action plan will be developed in October 2020. Staff have highlighted that contributing to and learning from such processes being shared with them is important and makes the exercise meaningful.



## Discussions on staff well being highlighted both positive and negative effects of lockdown:

- Practitioners felt supported by managers with 89 % saying they had been as or more available during the pandemic than usual.
- Staff also felt that within their units they were able to work with each other to ensure they managed to continue good practice with children and families despite the restrictions.
- Units are meeting more frequently virtually and staff appreciated this regular contact.
- Staff also reported the emotional challenges of the new arrangements - difficult conversations being held within practitioners' homes can leave workers feeling without a private space to relax.
- Many staff reported missing the ad hoc support, both from colleagues and managers, provided within an office environment.
- Reduced travel time allowed more time for work to be completed - meetings with other professionals were an area where it was highlighted that new ways of working might be taken forward after the pandemic, both due to travel and the effectiveness of meetings.

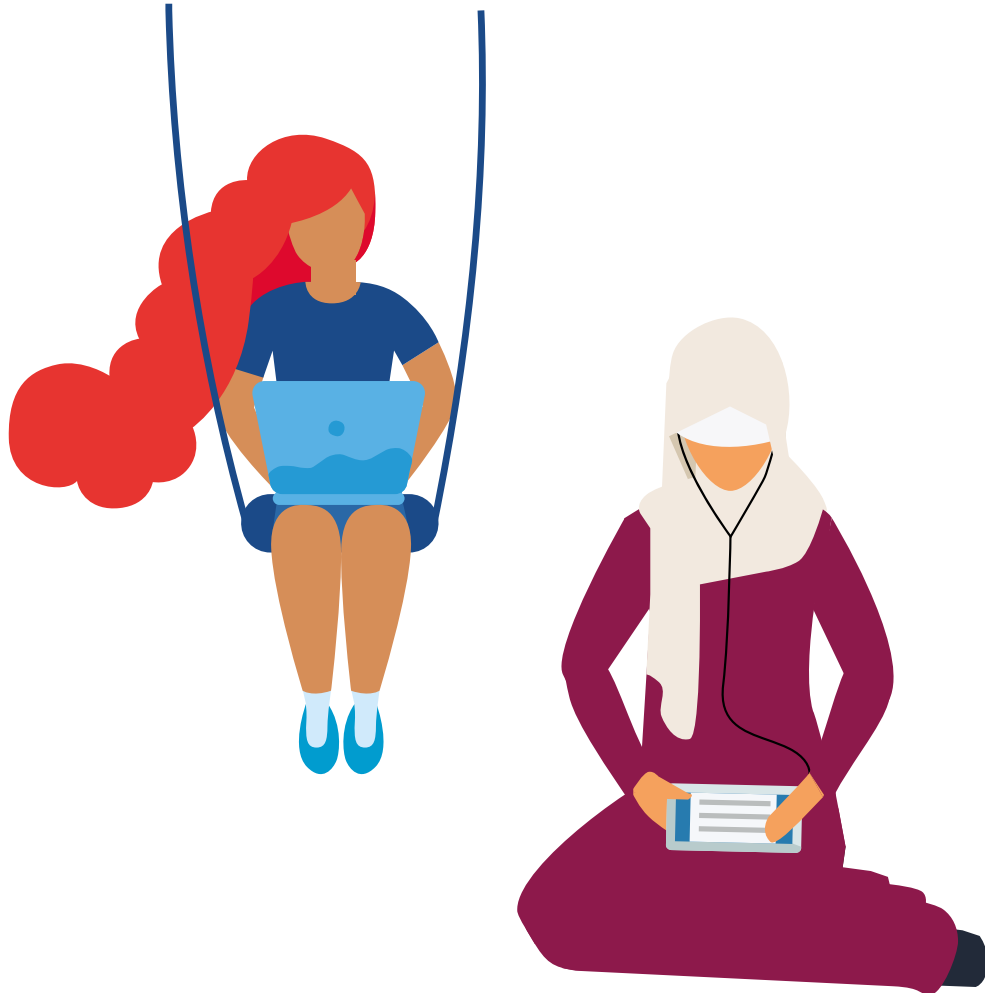
## Areas of practice which were 90% rated 'good' or above included:

- Cases where change had been achieved for a child
- Managing high risk cases during the pandemic
- Working with young people who go missing
- Working with hard to engage fathers or male caregivers
- Working with at risk children under the age of 1



### Other positive areas of practice included:

- Children and families being involved in planning developing the effectiveness of the intervention
- More frequent contact with children and families was possible in some cases and supported the development of relationships to create change
- Hard to engage young people responding more positively to virtual contact than in-person meetings including with the clinical service



### Areas where staff identified more challenges included:

- Assessing risk and developing relationships during lockdown
- Obtaining the voice of the child through virtual visits
- Difficulties in support from partners, especially intervention services who had not been available during lockdown
- Having time to use the practice standards effectively to support work with families
- Support with placement stability for Looked After Children
- Cases with extra familial risk as a concern
- Some difficulties in closing or transferring cases during the pandemic

# Workforce Development



The Children and Families Service is committed to ‘growing our own’ staff. A Workforce Development Strategy for 2019 - 22 is in place to further develop our workforce to meet the need for accountable, flexible and highly skilled practitioners and support staff. This strategy covers recruitment and training and is managed via the fortnightly Workforce Development Board, chaired by the Director of Children and Families.

There is an extensive training and learning programme which includes a comprehensive ASYE (Assisted and Supported Year in Employment) programme for newly qualified social workers with 17 social workers in placement at September 2020, a staff training programme, and service-wide Practice Development Days that all practitioners attend. The training programme is informed and developed with feedback from staff.

Hackney also organises Practice Weeks where training is provided by staff on areas of specialist knowledge on topics which have been indicated as important by quality assurance work. There have been two Practice Weeks organised this year, one on working with fathers in January 2020 and another on neglect in June 2020. The week on neglect was held virtually and featured 14 sessions covering 10 different topics including chronologies, systemic approaches and children with additional needs. There were 225 attendees, an average of 16 participants per session. Feedback for the sessions was overwhelmingly positive with 81 % of respondents saying they found the session Excellent or Very Good, and 87 % saying they would be Very Likely or Likely to make use of the training in their future practice.

A new exit interview process has now been in place since April 2020. All staff leaving the organisation are being offered the opportunity to contribute feedback through exit interviews. Over the past 3 months, 11 exit interviews were conducted with staff leaving the organisation. Key findings from exit interviews are being analysed in more detail and are discussed at the Performance and Practice Oversight Group meetings focused on ‘feedback loops’, where actions and next steps are identified.

Following feedback from the staff workshops held in February 2020 that staff felt they could be more supported in ensuring their wellbeing and personal development needs are effectively met, our Workforce Development Action Plan includes a review of staff check-ins to ensure they are appropriate for this purpose. This work will include consultation with staff on what they want from this process and how this could be implemented.

## Cases per social worker (based on FTE equivalents)

	2017	2018	2019
<b>Hackney</b>	19	17	18
<b>Statistical Neighbour</b>	16	15	15
<b>Inner London</b>	16	16	15
<b>England</b>	18	17	17

Hackney’s caseload is slightly higher than the average for England and significantly higher than those in other inner London and statistical neighbour boroughs. During the coronavirus lockdown, the number of referrals, and therefore caseloads in Access and Assessment and Children in Need teams, decreased.

## Percentage of agency staff

	2017	2018	2019
<b>Hackney</b>	26.7	27.6	28.1
<b>Statistical Neighbour</b>	23.3	23	23.1
<b>Inner London</b>	27.7	25.5	25.2
<b>England</b>	15.8	15.4	15.8

There has been a slight increase of 0.5% in the number of agency staff, in line with the increase of 0.4% across England. The number of agency workers in Hackney partially reflects measures that were put in place during the year to temporarily increase social work capacity to respond to increases in demand. As these roles are temporary they cannot be recruited to on a permanent basis.

## Percentage rate of social worker turnover

	2017	2018	2019
<b>Hackney</b>	12.7	12.4	8.3
<b>Statistical Neighbour</b>	16.4	18.3	16.8
<b>Inner London</b>	15.9	19.1	16.1
<b>England</b>	13.6	15.2	15.1

Hackney's social worker turnover was already lower than both its statistical neighbours and England and it has substantially reduced by 4% over the past year. Social worker turnover in Hackney is now half the rate of its statistical neighbours.





# Early Help and Prevention



## Strengths and Progress

**Creative response to COVID-19 by Young Hackney** - At the start of lockdown the team mobilised quickly to develop an online youth hub providing a virtual programme of activities and support for children and young people. Following the easing of COVID-19 restrictions, Youth, Play, Sports and Business Support staff worked closely with Health and Safety colleagues to adapt services and successfully reopen our youth hubs, adventure playgrounds and borough-wide youth sports programme on 29 July 2020. The team worked collaboratively with Council colleagues and voluntary sector partners to ensure children and young people have access to a wide range of activities and support this Summer. The service held a really successful programme of activities for 6-19 year-olds (and up to 25 with special educational needs) throughout the holiday period. Young Hackney Targeted Early Help teams have continued to support children and young people through physical and virtual support and are helping young people to re-engage with education. Young Hackney's online youth hub continues to compliment physical delivery 5 days a week.

**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 an embedded clinical psychologist and has continued to operate throughout lockdown. The flexible, agile nature of the support offer has allowed the team to have wide-reach across Hackney with evidence of high engagement, and repeat engagement. Complementing the direct provision, the Hackney team has worked with a number of partner organisations to develop a network of trusted relationships and safe spaces; by upskilling external staff and practitioners, and the wider

community on concepts of community psychology and learning from contextual safeguarding.

**Domestic Abuse and Intervention Service continues to support victims in Hackney** - there was a 50 % increase in referrals relating to domestic abuse during lockdown. Additional resources were allocated to the team and support for victims remained operational throughout the lockdown period. When the COVID-19 crisis took hold and lockdown measures were put in place to limit how and when people could meet, delivery of the Domestic Abuse Perpetrator Programme (DAPP) was suspended due to a lack of evidence supporting the effectiveness of delivering DAPPs using video conferencing software and caution about increasing the risk to victims. In the interim, referrers are being supported to engage with perpetrators and manage risks adopting the Safe and Together approach. The team continues to work with social workers across CFS to embed the Safe and Together model and to support the development of effective interventions which protect victims and support perpetrators in changing their behaviour.

**Reduction in youth reoffending** - the number of young people reoffending in the youth justice system fell by 33 % from 2018/19 to 2019/20. The number of first time entrants rose but only slightly. In response to COVID-19 restrictions all YOT cases were risked-assessed and then reviewed weekly, relating to the level of wellbeing, harm and re-offending that each child was assessed as being at risk from, or posing to others. All young people were provided with a high level of contact throughout lockdown; ranging from daily to weekly contact depending on their risk and vulnerability. This included weekly contact with children in custody. Reparation activities have been innovatively developed to ensure young people have been able to meet the requirements of their community order, for example through a project of mask-making kits compiled and delivered by post.



## Areas for development

**The Early Help review is continuing** - 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 enhanced performance information to early help managers and practitioners.

**Addressing disproportionality in youth justice** - four key activities have been identified and agreed by the Safer Young Hackney Board to focus efforts on reducing disproportionality. These are:

- Exploration of a deferred prosecution scheme for the borough.
- Improving parental understanding and engagement with Early Help and Youth Justice Services.
- Working with the Safer Young Hackney Partnership to increase oversight and accountability of school exclusions.
- Training for partners on SYH Board, Magistrates and District Judges, on SaLT, Unconscious Bias and Trauma Informed Practice and a review of sentencing decisions by ethnicity, age and gender.



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. 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.

### Universal Support Hubs

The number of named individuals accessing Young Hackney universal provision decreased by 5% in 2019/20 compared to the previous year. 22,787 named individuals accessed Young Hackney provision in 2019/20, compared to 24,024 named individuals in 2018/19. There were 170,780 attendances by named children and young people aged 6-19 years during 2019/20 at the wider youth provision delivered through Young Hackney and

commissioned services for young people. This is a 3.6% decrease compared to 2018/19 when there were 177,299 attendances by named children and young people. Part of this decrease may be explained by the increasing concerns from parents about the risk of COVID-19 which began in March 2020, before the Government official lockdown date of 23 March 2020. Many people began to work from home, and vulnerable children or children in families with those at risk began to be educated virtually/at home.

### Substance Misuse Team

The Substance Misuse Team supports children and young people aged 6-25 years who are directly affected by substance misuse, or affected through their parent's misuse. Interventions take a tailored and holistic approach that builds young people's resilience and addresses issues of family and relationships, finances, education and housing, while liaising with other services/partners as necessary. Over 2019/20, the team worked with 210 young people on a targeted basis – as compared to 202 in 2018/19. The service also delivered outreach sessions to young people in schools and youth hubs.

### Individual Tailored Support

At any one time, Young Hackney are working with approximately 600 young people through the Early Help teams, providing tailored individual support. The most common presenting areas of need include: difficulties with emotional wellbeing and mental health, difficulties with familial, peer and intimate relationships, vulnerability to criminal exploitation and other types of extra-familial harm, challenges with expected behaviour in school, attendance and truanting, risk of becoming not in education, employment or training (NEET) and risk of offending. Young Hackney targeted interventions were delivered to 1,434 individual young people requiring bespoke early help support in 2019/2020, including the Substance Misuse and Prevention and Diversion teams. This was a 12% increase from 1,283 young people in 2018/19.

### Young people not in education, employment or training

The out of school careers service provided by Prospects has continued to ensure young people are supported to re-engage in education training or employment. The combined NEET and unknown data for the 30 June 2019 (Final Data Directory) was 4.2% which is ranked third lowest within eight Central London Boroughs (average 6.1%). The latest data (September 2020) shows Hackney's combined NEET and unknown data to be 4.1%. (London 4.2%, National 5.5%) hidden young carers.

### Young Carers

Young carers are children and young people under 18 who provide regular or ongoing care and emotional support to a family member who is physically or mentally ill, disabled or misuses substances. A young carer becomes vulnerable when the level of care giving and responsibility to the person in need of care becomes excessive or inappropriate for that child, impacting on his or her emotional or physical well-being or educational achievement and life chances. The multi-agency Hackney Young Carers Steering Group monitors and support the Hackney Young Carers Project.

The Young Carers Project came in-house in November 2019 and the Young Carers team was established to deliver consistency for existing young carers and to continue to identify and support children and young people with caring responsibilities in the home. 40 new referrals were received for Young Carers in the first 3 months of the service coming in-house, a large number coming in following a Young Carers Awareness Day in January 2020. At the end of March 2020, there were 290 identified young carers in Hackney. Hackney Young Carers Project provides a variety of support services which includes group work, and one to one work with children in more complex situations.

Term-time clubs took place weekly such as cooking and homework clubs, and one additional term time group that varied by term consisting of drama, sewing or cinema club. Positive activities and fun holiday sessions were well attended by the young people, and there were support groups in four secondary schools in Hackney.

A weekly Young Carers youth group was established at the Forest Road Youth Hub which had small but consistent attendance, and regular trips were popular across all ages. Two of the support groups at secondary schools were restarted with plans to expand this offer.

A template for practitioners to use when completing a Young Carers Needs Assessment was developed and rolled out across Young Hackney for use. Young Carers with support needs were allocated 1:1 support through the Targeted Support Units in Early Help. An identified gap for Young Adult Carers led to collaborative working between Adult Carers Services and Young Carers.

Areas for development over the next year will include ensuring we consistently meet the statutory requirements for annual reviews of Young Carers assessments, transition assessments and work around identifying hidden young carers.



## Youth Justice

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. 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 end of March 2020, 59 % of young people on youth justice orders were attending and engaging in full time education, training or employment (ETE), a decrease compared to 70 % at the end of March 2019. This is due to a change in the reporting rules for this data rather than

a decline in performance – we now include the ETE attendance of young people on post court orders, which includes older children with more previous offences and poorer educational engagement histories.

Overall, Hackney has a relatively low proportion of 10-18 year olds involved in the youth justice system. The number of young people re-offending in Hackney within a 12 month period has significantly decreased over the last year, from 71 at the end of March 2019 to 47 at the end of March 2020, a 33 % decrease year on year.

The number of young people entering the Youth Justice System for the first time in Hackney increased from 82 in 2018/19 to 88 in 2019/20. Hackney's first time entrant rate per 100,000 has increased from 326 in 2018/19 to 349 in 2019/20, this is higher than the most recent 2018/19 statistical neighbour average (312).



## 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 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



## Domestic Abuse Intervention Service

The Domestic Abuse Intervention Service (DAIS) joined the Children and Families Service as part of the Early Help and Prevention Service in April 2017 and is co-located with other services in CFS. DAIS works with anyone experiencing domestic abuse who is living in Hackney, aged 16 or over, of any sex and gender, and of any sexual orientation. The service assesses need; provides information and support on legal and housing rights; and supports service users with court attendance and to obtain legal protection. The service also works with perpetrators of domestic abuse to try to reduce risk. The team works closely with professionals across the Council and external partnerships and DAIS provides support through a linked worker in the First Access and Screening Team (FAST), where referrals for early help and safeguarding services for children and families are received and processed. DAIS workers provide consultation and expert advice, guidance and training to other staff in the Children and Families Service. A Domestic Abuse Housing Specialist has been seconded to the Housing Needs Service to support with the response to domestic abuse across the Housing Partnership.

Hackney Children and Families Service is embedding the Safe and Together model within their social work and early help interventions, to 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 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.

DAIS received an average of 25 referrals per week in 2019/20, similar to the rate received in 2018/19. This followed a 61 % rise in referrals between 2015/16 and 2018/19. The impact of the lockdown in response to coronavirus led to a 50 % increase in referrals between 23 March 2020 and 4 July 2020 as compared to the same period in 2019. DAIS adapted its core service delivery to ensure continuity of service while at the same time leading within the Council and across the Hackney partnership on the promotion of a joined up, adaptive and resilient response. DAIS remained fully operational and the Council has allocated additional resources to expand the staff team to meet this demand. Referral numbers have now stabilised to an average of 26 between August and September 2020.

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 scrutinised by the Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) lead. 492 cases were heard at MARAC in 2019/20, a 9 % increase from 2018/19 when 450 cases were heard. 110 of the total number of cases heard at MARAC in 2019/20 were 'repeat' referrals, a 3 % decrease from 2018/19 when 113 of the total were repeat referrals. In 2019/20 of the 492 cases, 253 (49 %) there were children in the household.





# 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. 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 2019 - March 2020

<b>Number of new cases</b>	476
<b>Total number of cases</b>	992
<b>% of positive CHI-ESQ* feedback</b>	83 %
<b>% of positive SDQ** improvement</b>	78 %

\*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.

## 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. Three 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.

## 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. The Cool Down Cafe

launched early Spring 2020, supported by our Trusted Relationships Clinical Psychologist and in collaboration with the wider CAMHS Alliance. The Cool Down Cafe aims to provide children and young people with a relaxing and informal space to discuss their health and wellbeing, connect with peer mentors, and be signposted to support where necessary.

### **Moving Forward**

This new five-week group aims to support unaccompanied asylum seeking children/young people, facilitated by a Clinical Psychologist to help address problems that unaccompanied asylum seeking children experience whilst settling in to the U.K. Upon screening, many of the attendees were experiencing trauma symptoms, involving sleep and anxiety problems. Psychoeducation was covered in addition to relaxation and grounding techniques, sleep hygiene, and practical living skills.

### **Fostering Changes Nurturing Attachments**

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. This training is run regularly throughout the year.

### **Therapeutic Support Group for Foster Carers**

The Therapeutic Support Group for Foster Carers provides a supportive and reflective space for Foster Carers to discuss challenges they may experience in their caring roles. Solutions and reflections are shared in relation to specific instances of challenges to continue to build a therapeutic parenting approach, in accordance with techniques described in the *Foster Changes, Nurturing Attachments groups*.

### **New Beginnings**

The New Beginnings twelve-week group aims to support new mothers in the facilitation of attachments to their newborn babies. The group encourages mothers to reflect on their own experiences of childhood, and to develop an awareness and understanding of which behaviours help to create a secure attachment.

### **Family Ties**

The Family Ties group for children and parents aims to reduce the impact of parent conflict on children. This group is run in collaboration with the Anna Freud Centre and was piloted with our service throughout Autumn 2019 with success.

### **Kidstime**

Kidstime is a group for children, young people, and their parents who are affected by mental health issues in their family, and uses drama so that young people can explore things they are worried about. Children and young people begin to develop new ways of coping with difficult situations at home, in school, or in their daily lives.

### **Compassion Focused Therapy Group**

The Compassion Focused Therapy Group is a six-week group aimed to provide parents with the opportunity to develop ways of being more kind and compassionate to themselves. The group is likely to benefit parents that have a tendency to criticise themselves or their parenting, as well as parents that report low self-esteem and low confidence. The group focuses 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.

### **Weapons Awareness Programme**

The Weapons Awareness Programme is facilitated by our Forensic Psychologist linked to the Contextual Safeguarding team following the violent attacks that happened in Hackney.



# Family Intervention and Support Service - 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.**

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 progressed as a referral to Children's Social Care if the threshold for a statutory assessment is met. If the threshold is not met but the family is still in need of support, FAST supports them to access universal and targeted early help provision such as the Family Support Service, Young Hackney, or Children's Centres.

Access and Assessment units complete assessments in response to referrals accepted by FAST and complete short term work with families. If further statutory support is needed, the case is transferred to the Children in Need service at a time which is beneficial to the family.

The Out of Hours Social Work Service, or Emergency Duty Team (EDT), forms part of a 24-hour and seamless front line child protection service delivered by experienced and senior social work staff from across CFS working on a voluntary rota basis. The service meets the local authority's out of hours statutory social care responsibilities in safeguarding the welfare of children.

The Disabled Children's Service is also managed within the Access and Assessment team, assessing disabled children's needs and providing appropriate support to them and their families.

The No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) Team supports families with No Recourse to Public Funds advice and practical support, which can include

among other things the provision of accommodation, subsistence payments and immigration advice. During 2019/20 the NRPF team worked with 87 families and 134 children. In January 2020, this team was renamed the No Recourse to Public Funds and Private Fostering team and now provides support to children living outside their immediate families in what are known as private fostering arrangements. There were 9 children in the borough known to be living in private fostering arrangements as at 30 September 2020. As with other local authorities, there may be private fostering arrangements which we are not aware of, however this figure is in line with our statistical neighbours.



## Strengths and Progress

**Front Door Review** - a review of arrangements for the front door for CFS was initiated in April 2020. The review aimed to ensure timely and appropriate decisions are made at the front door so children can access the right services to meet their needs or be protected from harm at the right time for them. The review includes actions in response to the Ofsted inspection along with a First Access and Screening Team (FAST) Strategic Plan. The review is focused on improving partnership working and information sharing along with streamlining referral processes for early help and children's social care. Significant progress has been made and the review is due to be complete by the end of October 2020. There is further work to be completed in relation to ICT systems changes, a new referral form and support for staff in decision making around risk.

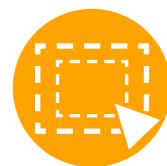
**Co-located workers in FAST** - as part of the response to coronavirus in March 2020, the input from education and early help practitioners into the front door was strengthened. When schools referred children who they were having difficulty making contact with to FAST, FAST had access to a group of managers from Hackney Education who could provide expert advice and support, which reassured both social care and schools. Workers from Early Help were able to support referrers to understand what support they could provide and, more widely, share knowledge and support informal training.

**Improved involvement of partners in strategy discussions** - In December 2019, working agreements were signed with the Police to set out pathways for engaging officers in strategy discussions, with a specific focus on children at risk of domestic abuse and extra-familial risk. As at 31 July 2020, strategy discussions this financial year have included Police 99 % of the time and health colleagues 72 % of the time.

**Improvement in the quality of plans made during strategy discussions** - an audit of the quality of the plans made to safeguard children as a result of strategy discussions in June 2020 had an average score of 2.6 (where 1 is rated inadequate and 4 is rated outstanding), indicating practice requires improvement to be good. As a result of our improved partnership involvement, a subsequent sample of strategy discussions completed in September 2020 rated practice in this area at 3 (good). Bi-monthly samples of strategy discussions will continue to monitor progress in this area.

**More timely assessments** - 64 % of assessments were completed in 45 days in 2019/20. Performance in 2019/20 was impacted by a significant increase in referrals between October 2019 and February 2020. As at 31 August 2020, 80 % of assessments were completed within 45 days in the financial year and in the week ending 25 September 2020, 97 % were completed within 45 days. Some of this increase will be attributable to the reduction in caseloads as a result of the impact of coronavirus restrictions.

**Changes to private fostering** - responsibility for assessing private fostering arrangements was moved from the Children in Need service to the No Recourse to Public Funds team in January 2020. The team reviewed open cases which transferred to them and strengthened our support for children



## Areas for Development

**Further work to improve strategy discussions** - the audit completed in June 2020 identified that strategy discussions are timely but that more work needs to be done to ensure that other partners such as schools are present and that they contribute meaningfully to plans. Local practice guidance on strategy discussions is being updated to include information about mutually agreed expectations with police, health and other multi-agency partners. This will be embedded by delivering targeted joint training and development sessions in relation to roles and expectations delivered in autumn 2020. The attendance and contribution of partners continues to be monitored via the bi-monthly samples.

**Improvements to working with partners** - further opportunities for co-location of key partner agencies alongside FAST are being considered once Hackney Service Centre is COVID secure. Improvements in ICT to enable more effective multi-agency information sharing are being developed.

**Assessment of neglect** - A practice week for staff on the topic of neglect was held for staff in June 2020. This included a number of training opportunities and development of practice guidance and information being shared with staff. However there is further work to develop and deliver a full training programme to understand the cumulative impact of neglect and to ensure staff have the right tools to measure it. This will be developed over winter 2020.

**Improving review assessments** - practice guidance will be updated to define expectations and processes for review assessments and to support improvement in the quality and strength of those review assessments.

**Child Sexual Abuse practice guidance and training** - an audit of cases where sexual abuse within the family was suspected was completed in January 2020 and had an average score of 2.5, indicating that practice requires improvement to be good. New practice guidance was developed to support practitioners in response to the audit in March 2020. This has been embedded with virtual training delivered by a forensic psychologist and the Assistant Head of FISS. Additionally, 20 practitioners are undertaking specialist practice lead training with the Child Sexual Abuse Centre, an independent organisation which seeks to improve best practice and prevention in this area. The training aims to develop practitioners' understanding, skills and confidence and they will also be supported to disseminate information and learning throughout the organisation. A review audit is planned for autumn 2020 to see the impact of the new guidance.



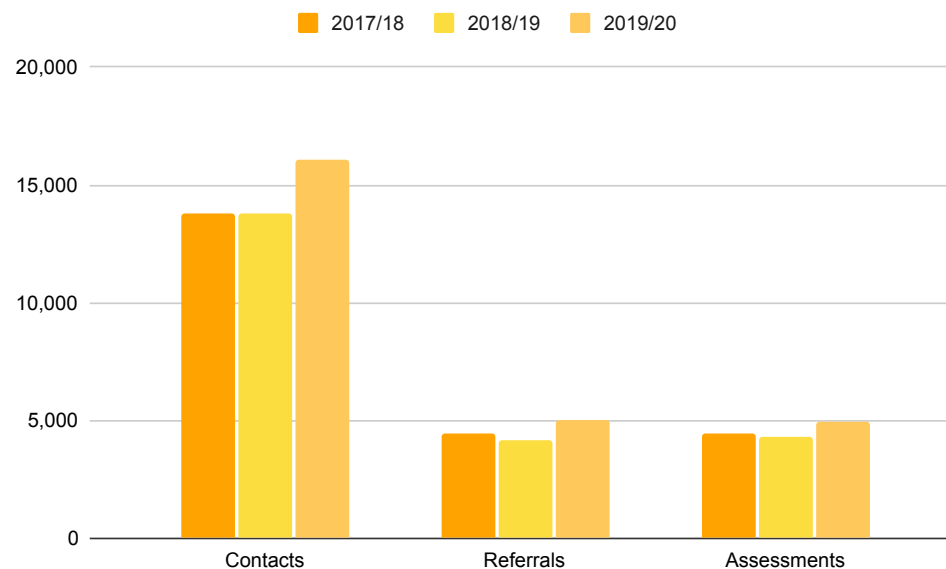
## Contacts, referrals and assessments

**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 into the Access and Assessment Service for an assessment to be completed.

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

	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
<b>Contacts</b>	13,802	13,767	16,044
<b>Referrals</b>	4,430	4,190	5,031
<b>Assessments</b>	4,438	4,290	4,923

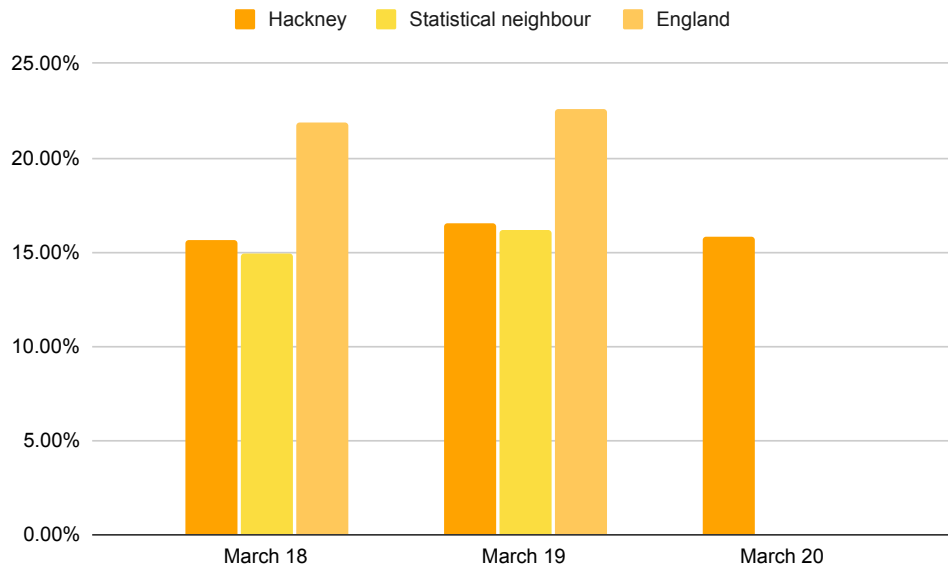




During this period there was a 16.5% increase in the number of contacts and a 14.8% increase in the number of assessments completed. The percentage of contacts accepted as referrals increased slightly from 30% to 31%.

### Percentage of cases which were re-referrals which had been open in the past 12 months

	March 18	March 19	March 20
<b>Hackney</b>	15.6%	16.5%	15.8%
<b>Statistical Neighbour</b>	14.9%	16.2%	n/a
<b>England</b>	21.9%	22.6%	n/a



### Length of assessments

Between April 2019 – March 2020, 64% of assessments were completed within 45 days. This is lower than the most recently published statistical neighbour data – 88% of their assessments were completed within 45 days over a 12 month period as at 31 March 2019. Our assessment timescales have improved since March 2020, with 80% of assessments between April-August 2020 completed within 45 days, and 94% of assessments in September completed within 45 days. There was a significant increase in the number of assessments completed in the second half of 2019-20, from November 2019 onwards that impacted on our ability to improve assessment timescales following a continued focus on this area in 2019-20. Once this high volume of cases moved through the system, the decrease in the number of assessments in 2020-21 has meant that assessment timescales have improved significantly.





## Private Fostering

A child under the age of 16 (under 18, if disabled) who is cared for, or proposed to be cared for, and provided with accommodation by someone other than a parent, person with parental responsibility or close relative for 28 days or more is described as being privately fostered. Local authorities do not approve private foster carers, but are required to assess a private fostering arrangement to ensure that the welfare of privately fostered children is being safeguarded and promoted. A review of all private fostering arrangements open to Children in Need units, 15 in total at the time, was conducted in January 2020 and a new Private Fostering Policy was rolled out the following month. As at 30 September 2020, only nine private fostering

arrangements were open to Hackney. Seven of these are held by the No Recourse to Public Funds and Private Fostering team, with the remaining two being held by Child in Need units who were already making arrangements for permanency for the young people in question when the new policy was put in place. The team had been in the process of assessing a number of new arrangements but these children returned to their families due to COVID-19. All open cases have been known to Hackney for over a year and have been ratified by the Care Planning Panel (CPP). All private fostering cases were audited in June 2020 and in five out of the nine cases rated 'Good' or 'Outstanding'. Practice in all cases was seen to be improving and there were no safeguarding concerns identified. Further work needs to be done however to ensure the whole of the host family and the children's fathers are included in work to assess private fostering arrangements.





## Disabled Children’s Service

The Disabled Children’s Service (DCS) was part of the Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) service within Hackney Education until line management responsibility transferred to the Family Intervention and Support Service in April 2019. DCS operates a social model of disability in offering assessment and intervention in line with the Children Act to families who are experiencing crises due to the disability of their child and or social isolation as a result of their child’s disability in accessing universal or targeted services. All referrals for an assessment from DCS are made through the First Access and Screening Team (FAST).

At the end of March 2020, the service was working with 402 children and young people. Of these, 267 were male and 132 were female (3 children were not yet born). This is an increase of 20 % compared to 2018/19, when the service was working with 336 children and young people.

The Disabled Children’s Service worked hard during the lockdown period to be responsive to the needs of disabled children and their families. Many young people’s education was disrupted which impacted on their routines and stability. There were also heightened concerns about children’s health needs. Initially there were concerns about maintaining existing support packages but these continued where families were happy for them to do so (some families did not want the risk of carers entering the home). DCS maintained high levels of contact with families and put in additional support where needed.



## Age breakdown of children open to Disabled Children’s Service

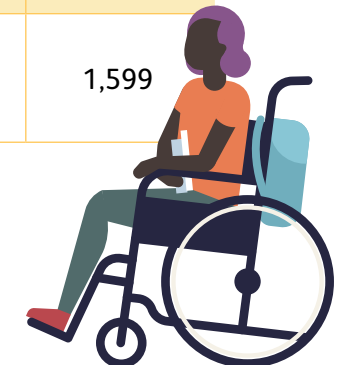
Age	Number of Children
5 or under	39
6 - 8	67
9 - 11	104
12 - 14	79
15+	113
<b>Total</b>	<b>402</b>



## Short Breaks Service

Short breaks are defined as any service or activity outside of school hours which gives the family of a disabled child or young person a break from their caring responsibilities, and gives the disabled child or young person an enjoyable experience. There are currently seven commissioned short breaks providers in Hackney, including providers offering support specifically within the Orthodox Jewish community.

	March 2018	March 2019	March 2020
<b>Number of young people accessing short breaks</b>	1,257	1,400	1,599





# Family Intervention and Support Service - Children in Need



The Children in Need Service is responsible for the safeguarding of children and young people assessed as being 'at risk'. Work undertaken in the service includes child in need interventions, child protection interventions, court proceedings and statutory family support to help children remain safe with their families.

Children thought to be at risk of significant harm are discussed at an Initial Child Protection Conference to determine whether a Child Protection Plan is necessary. The plan will outline the multi-agency interventions and support that will be put in place to reduce the risk of harm to the child 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).



## Strengths and Progress

**Strengthening the Public Law Outline (PLO) process** - in order to strengthen the work undertaken with families as part of pre-proceedings work before a case is taken to court, a number of actions have been undertaken to support workers in ensuring decisions are timely and all options for children are considered as early as possible. This included strengthening the initial information sent to parents when PLO is initiated with a clearer initial template for letters to parents and a leaflet explaining the importance of the process and possible outcomes being produced in November 2019. The letter template is due to be refreshed again in December 2020. In January 2020, the permanency planning meeting process was strengthened to include early contingency planning, additional management oversight and ICT changes made to support this process. In March 2020, practice guidance in this area was updated to support staff in

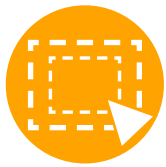
making good quality decisions and effective plans for children. Further work to embed these changes is ongoing.

**Long term cases including neglect** - an audit of cases which had been open for more than 12 months was undertaken in April 2020. The average score for overall practice in these cases was 2.6. The findings as part of this audit supported the development of the training offered as part of practice week in July 2020 including around goal focused planning, tools to measure change and communicating with children. As part of this audit, it was identified that parents with learning disabilities are over-represented in this cohort. In addition to holding a training session with Adult Services, a case consultation forum is in the process of being set up to support work in this area.

**Improved oversight** - Child in Need cases which have been open over 9 months and new assessments where more than three assessments have been carried out in 18 months are now audited by a Service Manager. An analysis of these audits is planned for October 2020.

**Missing young people** - from July 2020 all children who have gone missing are offered a return home interview with a Children's Rights Officer. Children's Rights Officers are independent of children's social care and provide a consent based intervention which supports young people. In addition to this there has been work to strengthen links between Police and CFS to support information sharing. A Missing Children dashboard containing this information is being created on our management information software and is expected to go live in by the end of 2020.





## Areas for Development

**Further work needs to take place to strengthen the Public Law Outline process** - an audit undertaken in February 2020 showed that overall practice in this area scored 2.6 (where 1 indicates practice is inadequate and 4 indicates that practice is outstanding) indicating that practice requires improvement to be good. A further audit in June showed the same score. Areas identified for improvement included embedding a new joint protocol with Legal Services to ensure high quality, timely decision making for children and timely responses to escalating concerns. The protocol is due to be completed in October 2020. A further audit to test whether improvements have been embedded and are improving practice is planned for December 2020.

**Enhancing children's participation** - work is underway to further involve young people in creating their plans and expressing their views in decision-making forums for Children in Need (CIN) and Child Protection cases using the successful child-centred approach of LAC Reviews 'Our Reviews, Our Choice' to inform the approach. Direct work tools were developed in September 2020 to support practitioners in enabling children to express their views. A sample to establish a baseline is planned for the autumn and a full audit to monitor the impact of these changes is planned for January 2021.

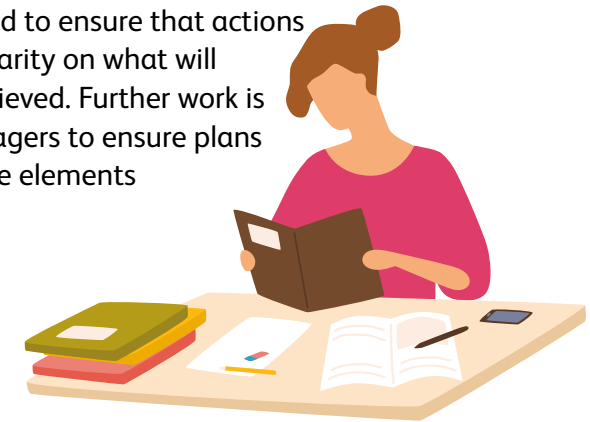
**Goal focused planning** - a dip sample of goal focused plans completed in June 2020 rated the quality of plans as 2.6, requires improvement to be good. The audit found that while plans had clear and understandable



goals, more work was needed to ensure that actions have clear timescales and clarity on what will happen if change is not achieved. Further work is planned with frontline managers to ensure plans are not signed off until these elements are complete.

### Contextual safeguarding -

An audit of cases where there was extra-familial harm, focusing on cases moving from Access and Assessment to Children in Need units, was undertaken in May 2020. The average score for these cases was 2.6, requires improvement to be good. While thresholds were being applied well, further work was needed on ensuring the focus of intervention was clear. An audit of cases featuring extra familial risk in August 2020 also identified that workers were struggling to make change and wanted clarity on their roles and responsibilities. This feedback has been incorporated into the plans for the new Contextual Intervention Unit, who will provide consultation and advice to social workers and review currently open cases to ensure interventions are appropriately targeted.



## Number of Child Protection Plans

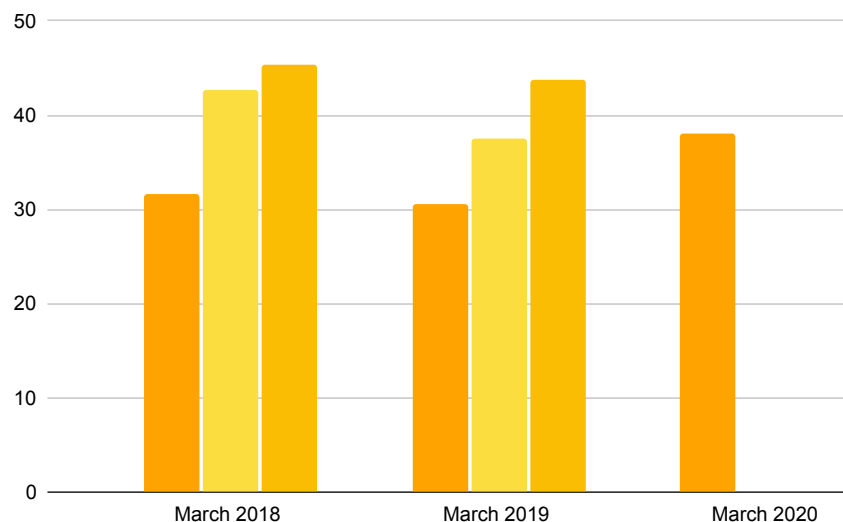
March 2018	March 2019	March 2020
200	194	251

## Children subject to Child Protection Plan per 10,000 population aged under 18

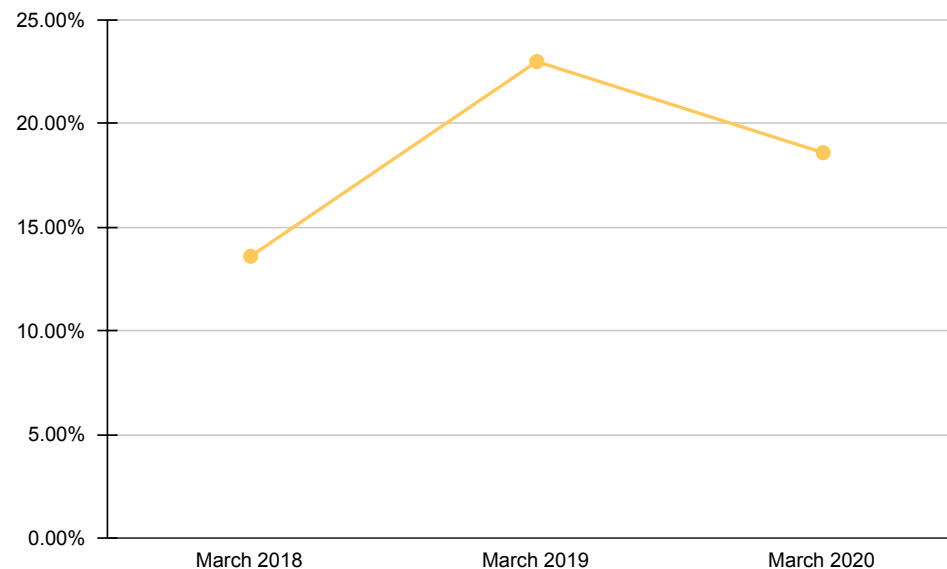
	March 2018	March 2019	March 2020
Hackney	31.7	30.5	38.0
Statistical Neighbour	42.7	37.5	n/a
England	45.3	43.7	n/a



**The number and rate of children on Child Protection Plans increased** significantly over the course of 2019/20 following increased management oversight after Ofsted's focused visit in February 2019.



## Percentage of children who became subject to a Child Protection Plan for a second or subsequent time



	March 2018	March 2019	March 2020
Hackney	13.6%	23%	18.6%
Statistical Neighbour	15.8%	16.5%	n/a
England	20.2%	20.8%	n/a



**The number of children on repeat Child Protection Plans decreased** in 2019/20 compared to 2018/19, following increased focus on the effectiveness of interventions before plans come to an end. This rate has continued to improve and between April - August 2020, currently stands at 15.4%.

## Duration of Child Protection Plan (percentage)

	March 2018	March 2019	March 2020
Under 3 months	33 %	27 %	24 %
3 - 6 months	12 %	30 %	17 %
6 - 12 months	22 %	24 %	40 %
1 - 2 years	34 %	13 %	16 %
2+ years	3 %	6 %	3 %



The time taken to complete care and supervision proceedings was an average of 32 weeks in Hackney in 2019/20, compared to a national average of 34 weeks. This is an increase for Hackney from 28 weeks in 2018-19, and the national average of 32 weeks. This has increased nationally since April 2020 due to the pressures on the court system as a result of the COVID-19 lockdown. The national average target for the length of court proceedings is 26 weeks.



The percentage of children on Child Protection Plans lasting 2 years or longer has decreased from 6 % in 2018-19 to 3 % in 2019-20.

## Court proceedings

The number and rate of care applications increased in 2019/20 and was higher than the national rate of care applications.

	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
<b>Hackney number of care applications</b>	83	66	107
<b>Hackney care applications per 10,000 child population</b>	13.1	10.3	16.4
<b>England care applications per 10,000 child population</b>	11.9	11.3	10.8

# Corporate Parenting

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.

The 'Hackney Promise to Children and Young People in Care' outlines 16 promises around what to expect from the Council and partner agencies when a young person is in care. The Promise was developed by our children and young people and has formed the basis for Hackney's Corporate Parenting Strategy.

Hackney's Children in Care Council, now known as Hackney of Tomorrow (HoT), provides looked after children with an opportunity to share their experiences of the care system and increase their ability to influence and improve the services they receive. The group also runs fun events, trips and workshops with other young people in care to ensure a wide range of views are captured.

Hackney of Tomorrow continued meeting virtually throughout the lockdown period, with weekly meetings taking place. The meetings have been used as a platform from which young people can continue to participate in and influence the services they receive from Hackney. In order for Care Council Members to maintain communication with their Corporate Parents, these meetings have also been attended by Service Managers.



## THE HACKNEY PROMISE TO CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN CARE

WE PROMISE THAT WHEN YOU BECOME A LOOKED AFTER CHILD OR YOUNG PERSON, WE WILL LOOK AFTER YOU THE BEST WE POSSIBLY CAN.

### COMING INTO CARE

WE PROMISE THAT WE WILL BE HONEST WITH YOU ABOUT THE REASONS FOR BEING LOOKED AFTER BY THE LOCAL AUTHORITY AND TELL YOU ABOUT DECISIONS THAT ARE BEING MADE.

WE PROMISE WE WILL SHARE AS MUCH INFORMATION WITH YOU AS WE CAN ABOUT YOUR FUTURE CARERS.

WE PROMISE WE WILL LISTEN TO YOU ABOUT WHERE AND WHO YOU WOULD LIKE TO LIVE WITH. IF WE CAN'T PROVIDE EXACTLY WHAT YOU HAVE ASKED FOR WE WILL EXPLAIN WHY THIS IS.

### BEING IN CARE

WE PROMISE THAT WE WILL LISTEN TO YOU AND TAKE TIME TO GET TO KNOW YOU AND DO OUR BEST TO MAKE SURE YOU FEEL SUPPORTED BY US.

WE PROMISE THAT, WHEREVER POSSIBLE, YOU WILL KNOW ABOUT AND BE READY FOR ANY CHANGES THAT ARE COMING.

WE PROMISE THAT WE WILL TALK TO YOU AND DISCUSS IF AND HOW YOU CAN BE SUPPORTED TO STAY IN TOUCH WITH YOUR FAMILY AND FRIENDS.

### EDUCATION

WE PROMISE TO LISTEN, RESPECT AND SUPPORT YOU IN WORKING OUT YOUR DREAMS AND AMBITIONS AND IN HELPING YOU ACHIEVE THEM, INCLUDING THROUGH MAKING SURE THAT YOU GET GOOD EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES THAT MATCH YOUR NEEDS.

### GETTING WELL AND STAYING WELL

WE PROMISE TO DO OUR BEST TO HELP YOU TO GET BETTER WHEN YOU ARE UNWELL AND TO HELP YOU TO STAY WELL.

WE PROMISE TO HELP YOU TO LEARN TO LOOK AFTER YOURSELF AS YOU GET OLDER.

### MEETINGS

WE PROMISE TO MAKE SURE THAT YOUR NEEDS, THOUGHTS AND IDEAS ARE TAKEN SERIOUSLY, THAT YOU ARE AT THE CENTRE OF ALL MEETINGS ABOUT YOU (EVEN IF YOU ARE NOT ABLE TO ATTEND) AND THAT YOU ARE SUPPORTED TO TAKE PART IN A WAY THAT YOU FEEL HAPPY WITH.

### YOUR RIGHTS

WE PROMISE THAT AT EVERY STAGE IN YOUR LIFE, YOU WILL KNOW WHAT OPTIONS ARE AVAILABLE TO YOU TO BE ABLE TO MAKE THE RIGHT CHOICES.

WE PROMISE THAT WE WILL HELP YOU TO FIND SOMEONE WHO YOU CAN SPEAK TO IF YOU ARE UNHAPPY ABOUT ANYTHING, INCLUDING ANYTHING THAT WE ARE DOING OR HAVE DONE.

### BECOMING AN ADULT

WE PROMISE THAT WE WILL PREPARE YOU TO BECOME AN ADULT AND SUPPORT YOU TO MAKE THE DECISIONS THAT ARE RIGHT FOR YOU.

WE PROMISE THAT YOU WILL ALWAYS HAVE SOMEONE TO TALK TO.





## Strengths and Progress

**Hackney of Tomorrow** - our Children in Care Council, Hackney of Tomorrow, has grown in size and increased activity over the past year, with weekly meetings taking place virtually during the lockdown and involving senior leaders as well as the Deputy Mayor. The group has also expanded to increase the participation of younger children. At every Corporate Parenting Board meeting, young people speak directly to senior leaders and Members on a range of issues that are important to them. During the lockdown, young people were allocated funds in response to the pandemic and assembled boxes of books, puzzles, activities, and treats that were then sent out to fellow looked after children and care leavers during the lockdown. Inside the boxes, Care Council members also enclosed letters from themselves and the Deputy Mayor. The aim of the project was to support other young people through this difficult time and 50 boxes were produced and sent to care leavers and looked after children nominated by their social worker.

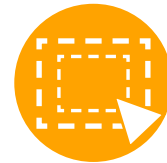
**Looked After Child review timescales and participation** - 87 % of reviews were held within timescale in 2019/20 compared to 85 % in 2018/19. This increased to 95 % as at 31 August 2020. 92 % of children over the age of 4 participate in their reviews.

**Creative practice during lockdown** - social work units in the Looked After Children and Leaving Care Services have been creative in carrying out virtual visits with children and young people. Examples of this include virtual cake baking competitions with a group of unaccompanied asylum seeking children, and social workers carrying out singing and dancing competitions by recording video clips and sharing these with their children and young people.

**Support with education during lockdown** - the Virtual School has ensured that children and young people have the ICT equipment they need to continue learning during the lockdown period.

**Increased Rapid Support Service** - Staffing capacity was increased in our Rapid Support Service from March 2020 during lockdown. This service provides additional support to prevent family breakdown, and supports placements for looked after children that are at risk of breakdown. This was in recognition that for some of our families, including foster families, there was likely to be increased pressure upon family relationships while the lockdown was in place.

**Improvements to care plans** - for Looked After Children a new standalone care plan went live in September 2020 that can be updated in between LAC reviews if there are changes to child's needs which require an updated plan. If needed, the plan can also trigger a new LAC review.



## Areas for Development

**Protocol for homeless 16 and 17 year olds to be further developed** - an audit of this cohort who had presented to CFS in the previous 12 months had an average practice score of 2.6, requiring improvement to be good. The existing protocol is in the process of being redeveloped and will be published in the autumn. A follow up audit will look at the impact the revised protocol has in ensuring these young people get the support which best meets their needs.

**Children on edge of care** - in response to the continuing increase of adolescents entering care, an edge of care strategy is in development. The first phase of this will include an in depth analysis of the drivers behind the increase in the number of children coming into care in Hackney to be able to identify effective responses and interventions.

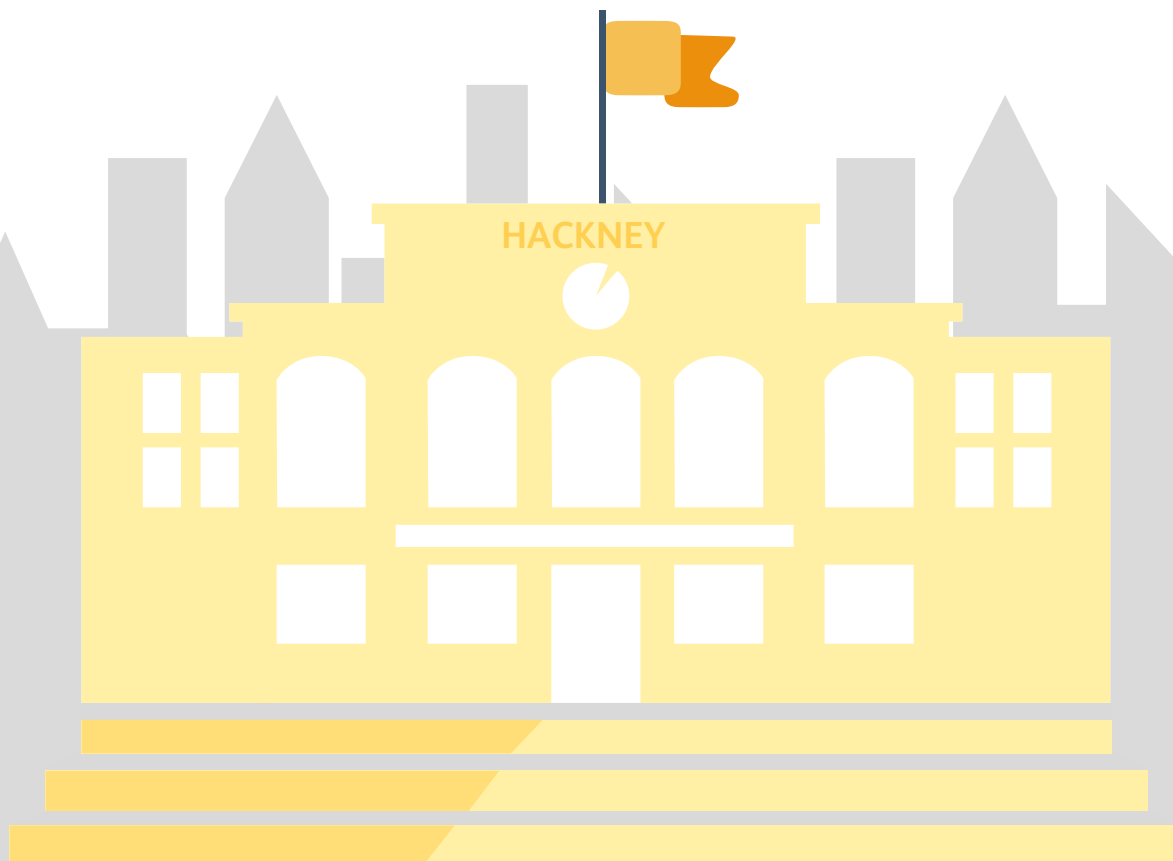
**Plans which are not in line with children's wishes** - these cases are to be consistently escalated to the Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO) for review and support to ensure children's views are heard. There have been delays in training staff in the new procedures due to the pandemic. Training was scheduled for March 2020 but is now anticipated in September 2020. Additional recruitment is also underway to support this work.

**Children's participation in their carers annual review** - a protocol is being developed to increase children's participation in foster carers' and connected persons annual reviews; this will also include the child's social worker view of how well the carer is able to meet the child's needs

**Looked After Children's immunisations** - the number of children recorded as having up to date immunisations is low and work is ongoing with the Council's Public Health Service to identify the reasons for this low figure and improve it across City & Hackney. Collecting and recording data on immunisations and dental treatment is a challenge nationally and the Hackney looked after children health team are required to contact General Practitioners for this information. Children and young people do not always see immunisation as a priority, in particular, they do not like having

injections and often exercise their right to withdraw their consent despite discussions about the benefits of immunisation. When children are identified at their health assessment to have an incomplete immunisation status, a recommendation is made in the health plan to complete the immunisations and allocated to a named person to follow up. Future work plans include uploading the information onto Mosaic in an easy to report way.

**Pathway plans for care leavers** - the percentage of pathway plans reviewed within the last 6 months for care leavers aged 18 and over as at 30th March 2020 was 61 %. A focus on improving these timescales over the past few months has resulted in an increase in performance in this area to 78 % as at the end of August 2020. Work will continue to drive improvements in the timeliness of pathway plan reviews.





# Looked After Children

## Number of looked after children

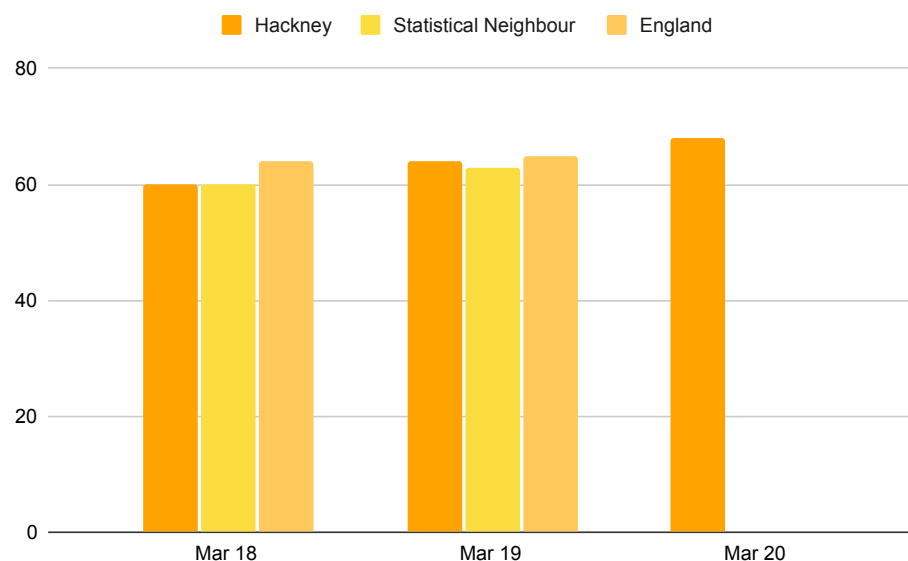
March 18	March 19	March 20
381	405	432



There was a 7% increase in the number of looked after children at March 2020 compared to the previous year. This is a significant increase and this trend has continued, with 457 children cared for as at the end of September 2020.

There are some areas where the local authority has no influence on whether children become looked after. The number of unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC), accommodated by the local authority as at 31 March 2020 was 45, 10% of the cohort. This is in line with the 44 looked after children (11% of the total cohort) who were UASC as at 31 March 2019.

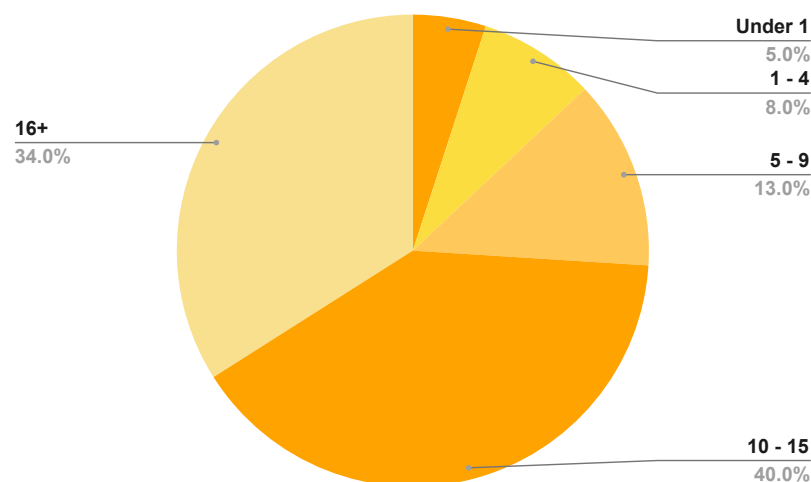
## Children Looked After per 10,000 population aged under 18 (at 31 March)



	March 2018	March 2019	March 2020
Hackney	60	64	68
Statistical Neighbour	63	60	n/a
England	64	65	n/a

## Age breakdown of looked after children at 31 March 2020

Age	2018		2019		2020	
	England	Hackney	England	Hackney	England	Hackney
Under 1	6%	25 (7%)	5%	19 (5%)	n/a	11 (3%)
1 - 4	13%	28 (7%)	13%	26 (6%)	n/a	36 (9%)
5 - 9	19%	64 (17%)	18%	58 (14%)	n/a	55 (13%)
10 - 15	39%	143 (38%)	39%	153 (38%)	n/a	163 (40%)
16 +	23%	121 (32%)	24%	149 (37%)	n/a	148 (35%)



## Age of children entering care

Age	2018		2019		2020	
	England	Hackney	England	Hackney	England	Hackney
Under 1	19%	32 (15%)	19%	24 (11%)	n/a	22(10%)
1 - 4	18%	22 (10%)	18%	22 (10%)	n/a	28 (12%)
5 - 9	18%	23 (11%)	18%	19 (9%)	n/a	26 (11%)
10 -15	28%	68 (31%)	28%	58 (27%)	n/a	71 (31%)
16 +	17%	72 (33%)	18%	89 (42%)		81 (36%)
<b>Total</b>		<b>217</b>		<b>212</b>		<b>228</b>



There was an 8% increase in the number of young people coming into care in 2019/20 from 212 to 228.

The number of children leaving care was 208, compared to 195 in 2018/19. The destinations of these children included:

<b>Returned home</b>	56	<b>Custody</b>	6
<b>Special Guardianship Order</b>	16	<b>Other</b>	110
<b>Adoption</b>	11		



## Placement Stability

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

	March 2018	March 2019	March 2020
<b>Hackney</b>	11%	13%	12%
<b>Statistical Neighbour</b>	12%	11%	n/a
<b>England</b>	10%	10%	n/a



The number of looked after children with three or more placements in one year decreased from 13% in 2018/19 to 12% in 2019/20.

The proportion of adolescents coming into care who have more complex needs and experience greater placement instability has increased. In recognition that this will be an ongoing issue in Hackney due to older children entering care, the Looked after Children Service holds a regular multi-agency meeting to focus on improvement work around placement stability and has focused on this issue in the 3 year Sufficiency Strategy.

## Percentage of children under 16 who have been looked after for more than 2.5 years were in stable placements of more than 2 years in 2019/20

	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
<b>Hackney</b>	62 %	62 %	66 %
<b>Statistical Neighbour</b>	69 %	70 %	n/a
<b>England</b>	70 %	69 %	n/a

Although this is a large percentage increase in stability for longer term placements, this refers to a small cohort of children in our care, meaning that small changes in numbers have a large impact on percentages, the difference between 62 % and 66 % relates to the difference of 6 children in a cohort of approximately 118 children. The placement stability working group continues a close focus on the experiences of all children in long term placements.

## Placement Types

Placement type	Number of LAC
Foster placements	323 (75 %)
Placed for adoptions	5 (1 %)
Placement with parents	16 (4 %)
Secure units, children's homes and semi-independent living accommodation	83 (19 %)
Other	5 (1 %)
<b>Total</b>	<b>432 (100%)</b>

The vast majority of Hackney's looked after children are placed with foster carers and the Service continues to increase the number of in-house carers available to support them. At 31 March 2020, 221 children were placed with in-house carers including connected persons carers and 102 children were placed with Independent Fostering Agency carers.

## Placements for looked after children by location at 31 March 2020

Placement location	Number of LAC
<b>Hackney</b>	100 (23 %)
<b>Under 20 miles from Hackney</b>	229 (53 %)
<b>Over 20 miles from Hackney</b>	58 (13 %)

There has been an increase in the percentage and number of children placed within 20 miles of Hackney, with 329 (76 %) of children placed within 20 miles during 2019-20, compared to 300 (74 %) in 2018/19. This is in part due to the increased use of in-house fostering placements. The majority of Hackney's looked after children are placed within commuting distance of Hackney. There is a strong focus on ensuring that all children, regardless of where they are placed, receive the same level of support.

**(Note - distance for unaccompanied asylum seeking children is not captured within this performance statistic)**



## Fostering Service

The Fostering Service approved nine mainstream foster carer households and five Supported Lodgings Hosts during 2019/20. This is fewer foster carers than the twelve mainstream carers approved in 2018/19 but more hosts; collectively this is a total of fourteen approvals for the year. The Fostering Service continues to develop their recruitment and retention strategy, using learning from recent years.

A total of 15 foster carers resigned or had their approvals terminated during 2019/20 due to a change in their circumstance, a standard of care issue or retirement. Research has shown that on average, approximately 13 % of foster carers leave their service each year nationally.

At the end of March 2020, there were 93 in-house mainstream foster carer households and 20 friends and family carers.

Of 432 looked after children in care at the end of March 2020, there were 323 children in fostering placements. Of these, 56 were placed with friends or family carers, 165 were placed with in-house carers and 102 were placed with independent fostering agency carers.

### Placement costs

Placement Type	Average weekly cost 2018/19	Average weekly cost 2019/20	Movement %
<b>In-house fostering</b>	£430	£453	5.35 %
<b>Independent Fostering Agency</b>	£910	£927	1.87 %
<b>Semi-independent</b>	£913	£1,208	32.31 %
<b>Residential</b>	£3,640	£3,575	(1.79 %)

The table above illustrates the difference in the average weekly costs for In-house Fostering placements (excluding Fostering Service staffing costs, foster carer training and other associated costs), Independent Fostering Agency (IFA) placements, Semi-Independent placements and Residential placements. We have seen a steady increase in the number of residential placements which has added to the financial pressures, with placements on average costing approximately £200k per year. As well as an increase in the number of placements we have also seen an increase in the unit cost (with semi-independent under 18 being the most significant increase. compared to the previous year). Residential placements represented 25 % of the total placements cost in 2019/20 however only 6 % of the young people in care placements. There has been a steady number of in-house fostering placements and an increase in number of IFA placements between 2018/19 and 2019/20. IFA placements on average are twice as expensive as in-house fostering placements. IFA placements made up 62 % of the total fostering placements in 2019/20. Residential and IFA placements collectively represent 59 % of the total care placements costs.

### Mockingbird Project

The Fostering Network’s Mockingbird programme is an innovative research-based method of delivering foster care using the Mockingbird Family Model, developed in the USA. 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 show improved outcomes for children, young people and carers, with improved placement stability, connection with siblings, and foster carer support and retention.

Hackney has committed to delivering the Mockingbird Family Model with the Fostering Network. The project launched Hackney’s first hub home in August 2019 and intends to launch a second constellation by the end of 2020 within Hackney. The service has started to identify satellite families who could potentially make up this constellation, and they are a diverse, eclectic and skilled group of foster families with a range of different needs.

The current constellation has been able to work well together and have managed to offer stability and support to the children and carers within it. The aims of the project have certainly promoted stability for children, offered support for carers and offered family membership within a community of foster families in a way that we have not seen before.

### Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) Unit

The UASC Unit was established in September 2019 to provide consistency and specialist support to newly arrived young people in the country who were claiming asylum. In part the thinking behind creating a UASC Unit came about following the Controlling Migration Funding we received from the Home Office. We recruited an outreach worker to support our UASC to integrate in Hackney as well as a fostering social worker to recruit foster carers to look after UASC as an alternative to semi independent accommodation.

Previously Access and Assessment received all Home Office referrals via a London wide rota as well as referrals for any unaccompanied young people presenting in borough and would transfer cases to the LAC Service at the first LAC Review, unless the age of the young person was disputed. This meant changing social workers early on for the majority of UASC, for whom forming a significant relationship is key. The majority of UASC are also aged 16 or 17 so may not have been held in the LAC Service for very long before transferring to the Leaving Care Service at 18, again limiting the time for developing a relationship with one social worker. UASC do not always have a Home Office decision by the time they are 18, and so this can be an anxious time and not a good point to have a change in social worker. By creating a specialist UASC Unit, young people can keep the social worker they are initially allocated to and also do not transfer to Leaving Care until they have had a favourable Home Office Decision. All 18+ Former UASC waiting on a Home Office decision are held by the personal advisor in the UASC Unit and as a result of the unit model, this advisor already knows the young people.

The Controlling Migration funding ends in October 2020 but a number of changes have already been embedded. The UASC unit has worked with

Hackney of Tomorrow (HoT) to develop a group specifically for UASC. We also recruited a Consultant Social Worker whose specialism is UASC who has been key in developing support for UASC and the knowledge base of social workers when completing Child & Family Assessments or Age Assessments. The CSW has developed links across LAC Health, Clinical Services, Legal and the No Recourse to Public Funds team to ensure that UASC receive support in their placements.

In August 2020, the Home Office commissioned beds at the Old Street Holiday Inn to disperse asylum seekers, some of whom applied to be age assessed as children. Due to their location the duty to assess falls on Hackney. We received ten referrals in August 2020, one in September 2020 and a further five in the first two weeks of October 2020. This has placed a great demand on the UASC Unit so an additional social work post has been created and the creation of an additional personal advisor role is being considered.



### The Virtual School

The Virtual School team provides additional educational support for children looked after, from early years all the way through to post-16 education and training opportunities, which provides continuity for children and young people in care. The Virtual School is well-resourced and includes a variety of roles including social pedagogues, learning mentors, an occupational therapist and speech and language therapists.



## Key Stage 2

Pupils in year 6 are identified for additional teaching support according to their academic level and the Virtual School intervention teacher delivers creative one to one sessions in Maths and English. Feedback from children and schools is very positive and the accelerated progress of each child is evident. All pupils are offered support for the transition to secondary school, and links are made with designated teachers before children transition to their new school.

### % of KS2 Pupils achieving the required standard or above in maths, reading and writing in 2019

	Reading	Writing	Maths
<b>Hackney</b>	70 %	70 %	70 %
<b>DfE region</b>	55 %	54 %	58 %
<b>England</b>	49 %	50 %	51 %

Hackney continues to perform well above average in both the local area and nationally.

## Key Stage 4

Pupils in Key Stage 4 are offered additional sessions of one to one tutoring in maths and English in both Year 10 and Year 11. Progress is monitored throughout and where necessary individual targeted support is offered. All Year 11 pupils receive support to identify appropriate pathways once statutory schooling has ended, and when necessary, are accompanied to college open days and interviews by a member of the Virtual School staff.

### Key Stage 4 Attainment 8 in 2019

Attainment 8 is calculated by adding up a student's points for their eight subjects and dividing by 10 to get their score. Students don't have to take eight subjects, but they score zero for any unfilled slots. (The maximum score possible is 80, assuming 8 A\* results).

	Attainment 8
<b>Hackney</b>	24
<b>DfE region</b>	20
<b>England</b>	19

Hackney continues to perform above average in both the local area and nationally.



## Health of looked after children

The Hackney Looked After Children (LAC) health service is delivered by a dedicated team closely aligned with Hackney's universal school-based health service and is co-located with the Virtual School to promote the delivery of a more holistic and integrated service to our looked after children and young people.

### Percentage of looked after children whose health checks were in time during a 12 month period

	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
<b>Hackney</b>	97 %	91 %	96 %
<b>England</b>	88 %	90 %	n/a

The number of children with an up to date health assessment continues to improve.



## Percentage of looked after children whose immunisations are up to date

	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
<b>Hackney</b>	77 %	70 %	57 %
<b>England</b>	85 %	87 %	n/a

The number of children with up to date immunisations is low, and work is underway with public health to understand this across City and Hackney.

## Percentage of looked after children who have an up to date dental check

	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
<b>Hackney</b>	82 %	71 %	81 %
<b>England</b>	84 %	85 %	n/a

The number of children with an up to date dental check is improving but we need to do further work in this area.



## Permanency Team

Following the transition of responsibility for the recruitment and support of adopters transitioned to the Regional Adoption Agency, Adopt London North, the Permanency team no longer provides any post adoption support. This means that access to records, intermediary work, letter box support, and support through the Adoption Support Fund for adopters has all moved to Adopt London North.

The core of the work held by the Permanency team is the assessment and support of Special Guardians including accessing the Adoption Support Fund (ASF) for this group of carers to provide therapeutic parenting support from externally commissioned providers. The team continues to work to increase awareness and uptake of the ASF with Special Guardianship families, who traditionally have been less aware of the potential benefits of therapeutic support. Recently, the Permanency team has assumed the oversight of our connected carers. This involves the ongoing support, training and supervision of 25 connected carer households.





## Adoption

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). In October 2019, Adopt London North took over responsibility for adoption services in Hackney - this means that they manage the recruitment of prospective adopters, matching children to adoptive families and the adoption process for children and families, as well post-adoption support.

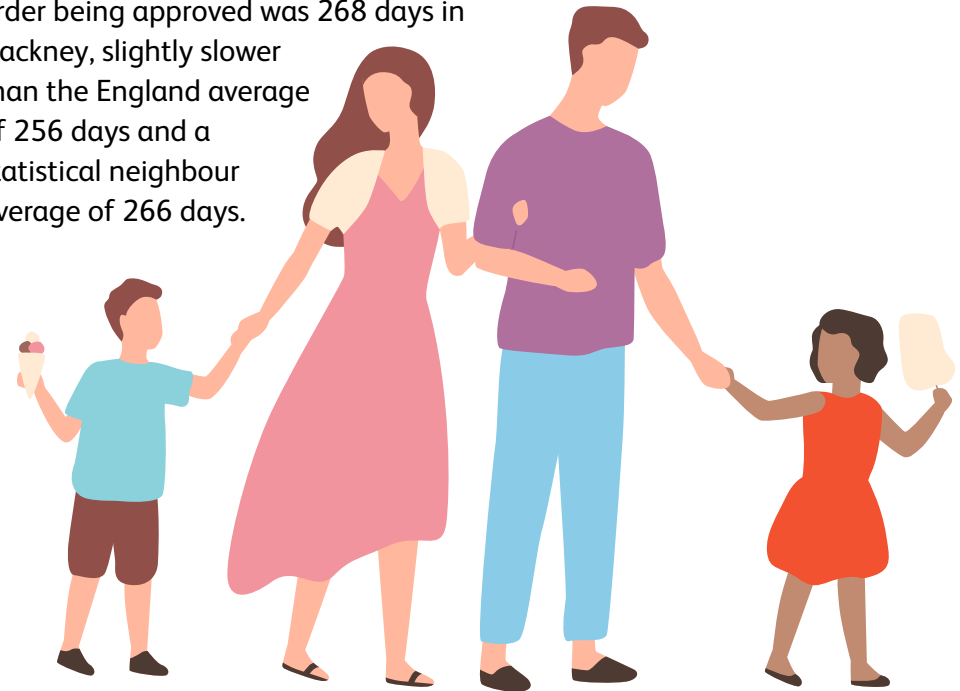
In 2019/20, 11 looked after children ceased to be looked after and were adopted in Hackney (5% of those children who ceased to be looked after in 2019/20) - similar to 12 children in 2018/19 and 12 children in 2017/18. This is in line with our statistical neighbours, who had an average of 12 children or 6% of children leaving care via adoption in 2018/19.



The average time in days between a child entering care and moving in with its adopted family (adjusted for foster care adoptions) in Hackney in 2019 was 268 days, this is faster than the England average of 363 days and a statistical neighbour average of 355 days.

The average time in days between a local authority receiving court authority to place a child and the local authority deciding on a match to an adoptive family was 111 days in Hackney, this is faster than an England average of 170 days and a statistical neighbour average of 221 days.

The average time in days between a child entering care and a placement order being approved was 268 days in Hackney, slightly slower than the England average of 256 days and a statistical neighbour average of 266 days.





## 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.

313 care leavers aged 17-21 were being supported by the Leaving Care Service, as at March 2020, a 2% increase compared to the 308 being supported at the same point in March 2019. This number has continued to rise and the service was supporting 326 care leavers aged 17-21 at the end of August 2020.

79 care leavers aged 22-24 were being supported at March 2020. This is a 20% increase compared to the 66 care leavers aged over 21 who were being supported by Leaving Care, as at March 2019. This number has continued to increase and the service was supporting 82 care leavers aged 22-24 at the end of August 2020.

As at 31 March 2020, 29 young people were living in Staying Put arrangements (continuing to live with their previous foster carer after they have turned 18), an increase compared to 25 young people as at the end of March 2019. This has increased to 36 as at the end of August 2020. In addition there are a number of young people who return to their foster carers during university holidays.

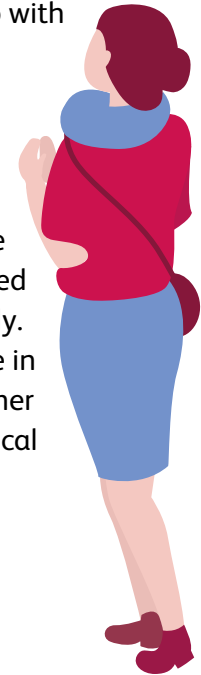
The percentage of care leavers aged 19-21 who were in suitable accommodation in 2019/20 was 87%, an increase from 80% last year. This is higher than the statistical neighbour average of 83% and the national average of



85%. Housing is a challenge both locally and nationally but the Service will continue efforts to improve the number of care leavers in suitable accommodation in partnership with the Council's Housing Needs Service.

The consistent support offered by the team during the last year has again resulted in a low number of care leavers who are NEET (not in education, employment or training). 65% of Hackney care leavers aged 19 - 21 were in education, employment or training in 2019/20 compared with 54% in our statistical neighbours and 52% nationally.

The percentage of care leavers aged 19-21 who were in higher education in 2019/20 was 10%. This is higher than the national average of 6% and the statistical neighbour average of 9%.



# Safeguarding and Learning

## Local Area Designated Officer (LADO)

The LADO investigates allegations of harm or a concern around the conduct or suitability of an adult to work or volunteer with Children. There were 309 referrals to the LADO in 2019/20, a 16% increase from 266 referrals in 2018/19. The annual increase is in line with the trajectory since the inception of the LADO database and record keeping, although there was a reduction in referrals during lockdown and the impact on referral rates after April 2020 is still to be analysed. There is a strong and effective working relationship between Hackney Education and the LADO service. This is particularly important as the majority of LADO referrals are from education settings. The LADO has worked extensively with the Head of Wellbeing and Education Safeguarding over the last year to address the ongoing difficulties posed by unregistered educational settings and the challenges around safeguarding in these settings.

## Independent Chairs

Hackney's Independent Chairs provide independent oversight of work with looked after children as well as chairing Child Protection Conferences. They hold regular consultations on determining whether cases meet thresholds for Child Protection and Conferences. The Independent Chairs also attend and contribute to multi-agency public protection arrangement meetings (MAPPA), the Children's Resource Panel, the Care Planning Panel, provide their written views for all Care Plans presented to Court, as well as having formal links to the Youth Justice Service.

After consulting with young people and partner agencies Hackney made the decision to move away from the traditional LAC review meeting process. Independent Chairs now use a range of tools and activities to engage and work with young people during their LAC reviews. Independent Chairs take a creative approach to LAC reviews, consulting with professionals, families and children before the review to ensure the LAC review is meaningful for the young person. LAC review reports are written by Independent Chairs directly

to the child/young person and, alongside the carers' and social worker's reports, these form part of the young person's life story work.

## Children's Rights Service

The Children's Rights Service offers children and young people access to confidential and impartial support on issues relating to the support they receive from the Hackney Children and Families Service. The Service also provides Independent Return Home Interviews to young people following a missing episode, and individual or group work for those experiencing or at risk of extra familial harm and exploitation. The Children's Rights Officers (CROs) aims to ensure that children and young people's voices are heard and their rights and entitlements upheld. While undertaking much of the work of a conventional advocate, the role has a specific focus on resolution and contributing to wider organisational learning. The number of Children Act complaints from looked after children in 2019/20 has remained the same as last year with zero complaints. The Service worked with 79 looked after children in 2019/20 with 48 children remaining open to the service at the end of the year. The service continues to be accessed by Care Leavers with 19 young people using the service last year. The service had referrals in 19 cases for young people who were at risk of or experiencing extra familial harm or exploitation, 17 of whom remained receiving support from the service at the end of the year.

The use of Independent Return Home Interviews continues to be effective in supporting young people to share information about push and pull factors, what happens when they go missing and what support they need to reduce further episodes. The implementation of a daily meeting with Missing Police has supported better working relationships, information sharing and development of robust risk assessments and timely plans to locate children and offer the appropriate support.

## Independent Visitors

Independent visitors are volunteers who develop a long term friendship with a young person in care. They undertake trips out with them to give the young people an opportunity to access hobbies and interests, gain independence skills and generally have a fun day out. On 3 April 2020, we received the Business Continuity Plan from Action for Children who deliver our Independent Visitors Scheme. Ordinarily 30 Looked After Children are seen on a monthly basis and taken out to do an activity. Following lockdown the Independent Visitors have had to adapt very quickly to keep children engaged during the lockdown with no face to face visits taking place.

The referral co-ordinator has continued doing matching meetings via Skype with children. Any match that was due to have ended for a care leaver post 18 due to young people moving on from their placements was extended to the end of lockdown in line with placements also continuing so that the Independent Visitor can see them through their next transition.

### **The independent visitors have used lots of imaginative ways to keep in touch including:**

- Drawing live portraits of each other over Skype.
- Virtual Pen pals – writing letters and sending it via email or Whatsapp.
- Choosing a recipe and cooking a simple meal together over Skype.
- Spotify app – creating a playlist and making it collaborative, sharing the playlist with the young person if they are also on Spotify. Adding upbeat songs to dance to and release positive energy.
- Listening to live streams of stories together.
- Virtual museum tours.

## Extra Familial Risk Panel

The Extra-Familial Risk Panel continues to be held fortnightly to ensure consistent oversight and planning for cases where young people are at risk of experiencing, or are involved in, harmful behaviours outside the home. There is strong multi agency attendance from Police, Education, Health, Youth Offending Team, Young Hackney and the Integrated Gangs Unit. The Panel develops operational actions which looks to reduce harm and disrupt exploitation of children. Themes and strategic issues from the Extra-Familial Risk Panel are shared with the Multi-Agency Child Exploitation (MACE) group for wider consideration and agency action. Both forums also report back any significant issues via the City and Hackney Safeguarding Children Partnership (CHSCP) Safeguarding Adolescents Group.

In 2019/20, 108 young people went missing from home or care on 821 occasions. In 66 % of the occasions where a young person went missing it is recorded that they were offered an interview and in 42 % of cases, the interview was accepted. A daily discussion is held with Hackney Missing and Exploitation Police to review cases of missing children and consider their vulnerabilities and support required. A fortnightly 'High Risk Case Alert' is sent to the Director and Heads of Service to ensure senior managers are sighted on young people who are presenting with the highest risk and ensure plans are in place to reduce this risk and minimise harm.

## Financial Performance

The outturn and the trend looks to continue through 2020/21 for the Children and Families Service on a net budget of £59.3m was an overspend of £2.1m after use of grants and reserves of £4.9m including a drawdown on the Commissioning Reserve of £2.3m. There has been a requirement to draw down from the Commissioning Reserve since 2012/13 due to the increased number of children in care and a shortage of in-house foster carers. The financial position for 2020/21 is a net budget of £60m for the Children and Families Service, and the service is forecasting to overspend by £3.3m (as at August 2020) after use of reserves and drawdown of grants totalling £5.9m (including full use of the commissioning activity reserve of £3.9m).

The Children and Families Service has continued to make significant contributions to the efficiency agenda of the Council. Over the previous eight years the service has delivered £11.5m savings with a further £60k being delivered in 2020/21. The increase in commissioning costs has been driven by an increase in the number of looked after children since 2011/12,

and this trend looks to continue through 2019/20. There is a continuation of a large proportion of children being placed with independent fostering agencies (IFAs) due to a lack of suitable in-house foster carers. The cost of an IFA placement is significantly greater than that of an in-house placement.

Hackney has also seen an increase in residential placements since 2015 adding considerable budget pressures with an average annual unit cost of £200k. We are also seeing a rise in the number of under 18s in high-cost semi-independent placements. Where young people in their late teens are deemed to be vulnerable, and in many cases are transitioning from residential to semi-independent placements, they may still require a high-level of support and in extreme circumstances bespoke crisis packages. These pressures have been recognised by the Group Director of Finance & Corporate Resources with a growth of £9.5m in total included in the budget.



