

Report Title:	Children and Families Service Annual Report 2020-2021
Meeting for:	Children & Young People Scrutiny Commission
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Report Summary

The Children and Families Service (CFS) Annual Report is shared to update elected councillors on developments and key performance trends within the Children and Families Service in Hackney during 2020-2021. The report has been tabled for discussion at the Children and Young People Scrutiny Commission.

Overview of developments and areas of note:

- Hackney Council experienced a service-wide cyber attack in October 2020 that significantly disrupted services across the board, including the Children and Families Service. Alongside the challenges of the continued Covid-19 pandemic, the service adapted to working with this adversity, and continued to offer support to Hackney children and families.
- In July 2020, the Children and Families Services committed to create and implement the anti-racist action plan, including the Anti-Racist Position Statement which demonstrates the plan to improve the experience of the children and families of Hackney who are disproportionately affected by racism, as well as the experience and progression of staff. In June 2021, a new Diversity and Inclusion Lead started in role in the Children and Families Service, who steers the work of the anti-racist action plan.
- Throughout 2020/21, there have been a number of changes to senior leadership impacting on the Children and Families Service. A stable senior management team is now in place: the new permanent Director of Children's Social Care started in June 2021, the new Group Director for Children and Education started in August 2021, and the new Chief Executive started in October 2021. Within the Children and Families Service, a new permanent Head of Corporate Parenting was appointed in October 2021.
- In May 2021, Hackney Youth Justice Service participated in a HM Inspectorate of Probation thematic inspection on the theme of the experiences of black and mixed heritage boys in the youth justice system. Inspectors named Hackney as a good practice example for the effective use of data to assess the quality and impact of service delivery for this cohort of boys, and were positive about our practice in this area. However, overall inspectors found "significant deficits" in the quality of work conducted nationally by youth offending services and partner agencies with black and mixed heritage boys, noting the disproportionate numbers of black and mixed heritage boys in the youth offending service. We are continuing to learn and improve our services based on the findings of this national thematic inspection.
- In July 2021, Ofsted undertook a two-day focused visit in Hackney on the theme of arrangements for Children in Need, and children supported by a Child Protection Plan. They found evidence of dedicated scrutiny by senior leaders and strengthened management oversight, that risk to children is understood and responded to appropriately, and clear planning and decision-making provide direction and clarity to

our work. Most importantly, inspectors found that children are safe. The service continues to work towards achieving consistently good practice to meet our aspiration to provide good and outstanding services for the children and families in Hackney.

Key performance information:

- 2,930 referrals were received in 2020/21, a 42% decrease from 5,031 received in the previous year
- 3,858 social work assessments were completed, a 22% decrease from the 4,923 completed in 2019/20.
- 237 children were supported on Child Protection Plans as at 31st March 2021, a 3% decrease compared to 245 children at the same time in 2020.
- An estimated total of 6,179 young people accessed universal services offered through Young Hackney during 2020/21, based on 58,047 named and anonymous attendances. This reflected a reduction of 72% of named individuals accessing Young Hackney Universal services from 2019/20, linked to pandemic lockdown periods.
- 426 children were looked after as at 31st March 2021, a 1% decrease from 432 children at the same time the previous year.
- 182 children entered care during 2020/21, a 21% decrease from 229 children in 2019/20.
- 72 young people aged between 14 and 17 entered care in 2020/21, a large decrease compared to 119 young people from this cohort entering care in 2019/20. This represented 40% of the total number of children who entered care in 2020/21, compared to 52% in 2019/20.
- 10% of looked after children had three or more care arrangements in 2020/21, compared to 12% in 2019/20.
- 77% of children who have been looked after for more than 2.5 years were in stable care arrangements of more than 2 years in 2020/21, an improvement from 64% in 2019/20.
- 376 care leavers aged between 17 and 21 were being supported by the Leaving Care service at 31 March 2021, a 12% increase compared to 335 at the same point in 2020.

The Children and Families Service priorities for 2020-2021:

- **Proud to be Hackney:** We will reset the Practice Model for Hackney Children's Services, so it describes a whole system approach to supporting children and families. The refreshed vision of practice will describe our values and principles. It will outline how children and families can expect to be supported from education, and/or early help, right through to leaving care or transition to adult services. Every practitioner will employ a systemic approach as a way of understanding the lived experience of our children and families. We will focus on relationships and work collaboratively. We will always recognise that individuals are embedded in their social context and remain curious about this. This practice model will enable us all to understand our roles and responsibilities as part of a wider system supporting Hackney children. It will focus on making a difference for every child.
- **Proud to keep children safe and listen to children and families in the shaping of our services:** Our practice will ensure that the voices of children and their loved ones will shape the multi-agency plans of support that are offered to them. We will strengthen our commitment to ensuring that all children and families have the opportunity to share their experiences with us, in order to inform the strategic development of our services.
- **Proud to work with partner agencies to help children and families get the right support at the right time:** We will support the ongoing development of a culture within Hackney where we work collaboratively to hear the voices of children and

families, with the aim of co-creating solutions as a partnership to meet children's needs. We will hear and be appreciative of multiple professionals' perspectives and voices about how children's needs can best be met, and ensure as a partnership that we are clear on our roles, responsibilities and associated powers.

- **Proud to work with partners to improve safety for adolescents in the community:** We will foster trusted relationships with young people, within which they will experience safety in the context of their families, peer groups, schools and neighbourhoods. Young people in Hackney will achieve positive outcomes, agency and independence as a result of responsive support and engagement, which is informed by knowledge of adolescent development and contextual safeguarding.
- **Proud to be Anti-Racist:** Our leadership and practice will address racism, discrimination and disproportionality in the experiences of children and families, and of our staff in the workplace, whilst also seeking to influence the broader context of children and family's lives.
- **Proud to promote a learning culture focused on outcomes for children, where great practice can flourish:** Our Quality Assurance Framework and Workforce Development Strategy are inextricably linked, enabling us to become an organisation that focuses upon learning and development - quality assurance activities are embedded across the service at all levels and drive practice improvement, with a strong commitment to feedback mechanisms to support learning, promoting consistently good or better practice to achieve best outcomes for our children
- **Proud to support our workforce to do their very best for children in Hackney:** We recognise that having a skilled, resilient, stable and engaged workforce, equipped with the tools they need to do their jobs well, is crucial to achieving the best possible outcomes for children. We acknowledge that this requires a relentless focus on the recruitment, development and retention of staff. We want to demonstrate that we are proud of our staff, and want them to be proud of working for Hackney's children. We hope to promote Hackney as a great place to build a career working with children and families.