

**CHILDREN
& FAMILIES**

Annual Report

2021/22



Working for every **child**

 **Hackney**

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Foreword

I am pleased to introduce the Children and Families Service annual report for 2021/22.

This has been another challenging year as we have continued our recovery from both the pandemic and the cyber attack in 2022. We have hit a key milestone in our recovery from the cyber attack with the successful reintroduction of our case recording system Mosaic in April 2022, and I know that this has come as a very welcome return for our practitioners. We still have lots of work to do with the development of our system and our reporting capability, so this marks the beginning of that development, and I do not underestimate the significant efforts that colleagues across the Service have made to get us to this position.

Our improvement progress was recognised during a positive focused visit by Ofsted in September 2022, who came to look at the experiences of arrangements for 'front door'

services, including decision-making and thresholds for referrals about children, child protection enquiries, decisions to step up or down from early help, and emergency action out of hours. I am delighted with the recognition of our strong practice in this area and will be working with leaders to drive our improvement actions even further to address the recommendations made during the visit. These recommendations included the need to strengthen our supervision arrangements, and to ensure caseloads are manageable so that cases can be transferred in a timely way to the correct team.

Our entire community was shocked to learn of the experiences of Child Q. This has led us to redouble our focus on anti-racism. I was very proud to be part of our first Anti Racist Praxis Conference in May 2022, focusing on the process of unmasking, repairing and preventing the hidden wounds of racial trauma, in attempts to address racialised trauma experienced within

services by our Black and Global Majority children and families. The conference was followed by a week of learning for our staff with a series of keynote speakers and several workshops across four days, aiming to equip staff with vital knowledge and skills to begin to understand and unpick the trauma of racial oppression.

We have opened ourselves up to learning as never before - over the past year we have had a number of peer reviews and good practice visits by experts from the Government to shine a light on our good practice and help us think about improvements we need to make. This has included a peer review by the Local Government Association (LGA) looking at our offer to vulnerable adolescents in February 2022, which found that we have shown incredible resilience and commitment to our families during a very challenging period. The peer review team reviewed 16 of our adolescent cases and were highly

complimentary about our child-focused practice. The LGA also recognised Young Hackney as a fantastic resource. Peer reviewers also highlighted things for us to improve, such as our communication and evidence of our early help offer. The report highlighted the need for our partners to do more work regarding anti-racism and highlighted the work being done on decolonising the curriculum by our Education team and schools. Additionally, there are recommendations for schools and the police to firstly safeguard our children rather than criminalise or exclude. The review also highlighted that we don't currently have a clear practice model, and work has begun on refreshing this.

We also hosted a peer review by the Youth Justice Sector Improvement Partnership in May 2022 looking at our governance of youth justice work which highlighted our engaged

Councillor Anntoinette Bramble

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



political leaders who are keen to learn and make a difference for our most vulnerable young children. Peer reviewers were impressed by our First Time Entrants performance, low reoffending rates and multi-agency working. It was clear to reviewers how highly our children thought of the staff they worked with, and peer reviewers were impressed with our focus on disproportionality. Peer reviewers also highlighted that we need to strengthen the support given to Black and global majority staff members and support Board members to observe the work on the ground. We have already begun work to review the operational and strategic board arrangements and terms of reference to ensure

that we are bringing the lived experience of the children and families we are supporting into the Board. I know that we want to ensure stronger involvement of our children at all levels so that we are making improvements that make a difference to them.

We also hosted a visit by Mark Riddell, the National Implementation Advisor for Care Leavers to look at our offer to care leavers in May 2022, as well as a visit from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities looking at our housing offer to care leavers the same month. Both visits have supported our work to think about our new Corporate Parenting Strategy which

we are working to have ready for the end of the year. Mark noted that we are ambitious, aspirational and have a passionate leadership management approach when it comes to our care leavers. Mark made a set of recommendations that were also agreed by senior officers and operational staff, and he will be looking at our progress in a follow-up review six months after the visit.

These reviews of our services have enabled us to develop our evidence for change and we are about to embark upon a transformation programme to provide responsive and seamless services for children and their families that is ambitious for our children and underpinned by

anti-racism, systemic and trauma informed practice.

In between all of these peer reviews and visits, I am conscious that work continues as usual for our dedicated practitioners. I want to thank them for their efforts in keeping our children safe, and for their resilience in the face of a very challenging period, which I am under no illusions of having ended. I am optimistic that things will only improve for us with a committed leadership team in place, a solid foundation for recording our work with children and our highly skilled workforce.

Priorities for the year ahead



1. 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, 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.



2. Proud to 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.



3. 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 in order to improve outcomes for children. 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.



4. 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 informed by knowledge of adolescent development and contextual safeguarding.



5. Proud to be Anti-Racist: Our leadership and practice will address racism and discrimination leading to disproportionality in the experiences of our children and families and of our staff in the workplace whilst also seeking to influence the broader context of our children and families lives.



6. 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, promote consistently good or better practice achieve best outcomes for our children.



7. 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.

Ofsted focused visit



Ofsted undertook a focused visit in Hackney Children and Families Service in September 2022 looking at our arrangements for ‘front door’ services, including decision-making and thresholds for referrals about children, child protection enquiries, decisions to step up or down from early help, and emergency action out of hours.

Inspectors found that the MASH is making the right decisions to get support for children quickly, with good use of historical information, outlining strengths and areas of concern to inform decision-making. This is supported by strong management oversight arrangements. The early help hub in the MASH is ensuring that children receive the correct level of support quickly - and staff are reporting the difference that early help staff are making. Strategy discussions are working well. Inspectors found that most children receive proportionate responses that meet their needs and that action for children at immediate risk is timely and effective. There has been a significant and impressive decrease in Serious Youth Violence - this has been due to Hackney’s focus on this area, with ongoing commitment to the early help offer. Young Hackney is a strong offer to children and young people in Hackney.

Inspectors thought that assessments are good quality - they are child-focused, well informed by current and historical information with clear analysis. Children’s needs are well assessed including their identity needs. Children’s lived experience came across, with their wishes and views of assessments recorded. Multi-agency partners, parents, children and young people, inform assessments and this information informs ongoing intervention or early help

referrals. Risk to children during adolescence is identified and addressed in consultation with the CiU.

Inspectors think that senior leaders are driving necessary changes to improve practice at a pace that suits the workforce and allows for the ongoing delivery of safe services. Our committed and skilled staff feel supported through the implementation of the new practice framework, with a focus on anti-racist, trauma-informed, and a systemic approach to practice. Staff told inspectors that they feel listened to, valued and supported.

Inspectors also found that caseloads within the Access and Assessment team, and for some newly qualified workers are too high, and recording of supervision is inconsistent. This has meant that some assessments are not in timescale. Inspectors also noted that we need to improve our recording of supervision.

We welcome the recognition of strong practice in our MASH and Assessment teams and we will be working with our staff to ensure practice is strengthened even further in the coming months.

Key data about the Children and Families Service



3,707 referrals were received in 2021/22, a 27% increase from 2,930 received in the previous year. 1,935 referrals have been received between April and September 2022.



3,293 social work assessments were completed, a 15% decrease from the 3,858 completed in 2020/21. 2,075 assessments have been completed between April and September 2022.



211 children were supported on Child Protection Plans as at 31st March 2022, a 11% decrease compared to 237 children at the same time in 2021. 186 children are supported on Child Protection Plans at the end of September 2022.



An estimated total of 16,676 young people accessed universal services offered through Young Hackney during 2021/22, based on 160,223 named and anonymous attendances. This reflected an increase of 170% of named individuals accessing Young Hackney Universal services from 2020/21, following the pandemic lockdown periods which had a significant impact on the 2020/21 data. Young Hackney delivered targeted support to 1,471 young people in 2021/22.



405 children were looked after as at 31st March 2022, a 6% decrease from 431 children at the same time the previous year. 404 children were looked after at the end of September 2022.



179 children entered care during 2021/22, a 3% decrease from 185 children in 2020/21. 95 children entered care between April and September 2022.



86 young people aged between 14 and 17 entered care in 2021/22, an increase from the 72 young people from this cohort entering care in 2020/21. This represented 53% of the total number of children who entered care in 2021/22, compared to 40% in 2020/21.



15.3% of looked after children had three or more care arrangements in 2021/22, compared to 10% in 2020/21. 14% of looked after children had three or more care arrangements as at the end of September 2022.



71.2% of children who have been looked after for more than 2.5 years were in stable care arrangements of more than 2 years in 2021/22, a decrease from 77% in 2020/21. 65% of children were in stable arrangements at the end of September 2022.



387 care leavers aged between 17 and 21 were being supported by the Leaving Care service at 31 March 2022, an increase of 11 from 376 at the same point in 2021. 357 care leavers were supported at the end of September 2022.



279 children and families were referred to the Clinical Service in 2021/22. There were 220 cases allocated for direct work in 2021/22, a 25% decrease from 284 cases in 2020/21. 79% of children and families referred were allocated for direct work In 2021/22, an increase of 10% compared to 2020/21.



The Experiences and Progress of Children Who Need Help and Protection

We are proud of the positive recognition of our strong practice at the ‘front door’ by Ofsted during their focused visit in September 2022. We have improved the timeliness of our assessments as well as clearer management oversight and quicker decision making for children, with an early help hub now established in the MASH. This means that children are more likely to get access to early help quicker, will only be subjects of statutory plans when

necessary and increasingly or the appropriate length of time to ensure their needs are met. There is good work taking place across the service but our focus is on ensuring consistency of support to all of our children and families. There is more work to do to ensure the quality and timeliness of plans and that children’s records are up to date, including records of supervision and visits to children.



“We are proud of the positive recognition of our strong practice at the ‘front door’ by Ofsted...”





Early Help

Early Help Review

Our ambition is that every child in Hackney who has additional needs is identified and their needs addressed at the earliest opportunity, providing support to help overcome challenges, build resilience for the future and stop needs escalating to a point where they may need the support of statutory services.

The Council's own Early Help services are part of a wider offer across Hackney; including by schools and settings, the health sector and the community and voluntary sector. We are implementing changes to ensure that our Early Help services are well placed to work effectively as part of that wider system of help. Changes implemented within the Council's Early help services sit within the wider transformation, and the intention to produce an Early Help Partnership Strategy in autumn 2022.

Research, consultation and feedback identified the following key strengths:

- The strength and range of the services delivered, including culturally appropriate opportunities, support, intervention and partnership working.
- The trusted role of Children Centres and Young Hackney Youth Hubs in the community.
- The importance of specialised services with specific expertise.
- The value of taking a multi-agency approach to Early Help interventions and the importance of strong relationships with key partners.

6 key areas have been identified for development:

- Visible, approachable services that are local and trusted.
- Effectively communicated support.
- Support which is able to meet the needs of the whole family, especially parenting capacity.
- Trusting and consistent relationships with practitioners.
- Support which is able to meet the specific needs of children, young people and their families, through specialist and expert interventions, including at key points in a child's, young person's or family's life.
- Interventions led by outcomes, impact and involvement of children and families.

Key activity to date:

- Implementation of a single 'request for support' form across SEND and social care.
- Development of the Early Help Hub within the Multi-agency Agency Safeguarding Hub as a single point of access for practitioners working with children, young people and families.
- Implementation of single assessment form and process across children's centres and council family support teams.
- Application of consistent practice standards including timescales for children being seen, completion of an assessment and a plan developed with the family.

- Formulation of proposals for a deferred prosecution scheme for youth justice and building upon the outcomes achieved through prevention and diversion to scope a deferred exclusions pilot.
- Conversion of some of the Young Hackney commissioning resources to a new grants programme promoting social inclusion, encouraging independence and developing personal resilience.
- Engagement and co-design with partner agencies to begin the development of a family hub model and sites to support the Early Help system and access and relationships with service users.
- Workshops across the partnership to promote use of the early help hub, the new request for support form and the Hackney Wellbeing Framework.
- Development of an Early Help sub group of CHSCP - this is due to meet in September 2022.

A new Early Help pathway was introduced in April 2022 and it is too early to yet see the impact of this and flow to/from statutory services. A dip sample of ten Family Support Service case records in June 2022 has shown that the majority of families are being contacted and seen in line with our newly developed practice standards (90%). Where families have not been seen in line with expected standards there has been evidence of management action.

Insight from the Hackney Supporting Families Programme indicates that 32% of the total cohort of families identified under the 'significant and sustained progress' measure (over 1,600 families) have received intervention with successful outcomes via Early Help provision.

The Early Help Hub screening process has placed particular focus on obtaining explicit consent from parents (and where age appropriate young people), providing families with a clear understanding of what targeted early help services offer, and ensuring that the voice of young people is respected. Services have reported that this has been positive in helping them to develop better working relationships with children and families.

In 2023, Hackney will open children and family hubs. Hubs will offer a universal 'front door' for families with children and young people aged 0-19 to access integrated whole-family support services and provide the framework for locality-based delivery of targeted early help.

Next steps:

- Continued development of children and family hub model with partner agencies and residents.
- Ensuring Council services are able to record using the same system.
- Shared performance indicators, including embedding the new Supporting Families outcomes framework.
- Reviewing commissioning to ensure it is evidence based and impactful.
- Creation of Multi-agency Early Help Strategy to deliver on the partnership's collective responsibility for the early help system.
- Integration of early help and children and adolescent mental health services to a shared single point of access.
- Ongoing delivery of actions identified, to embed anti-racist practice across Early Help services.





Young Hackney is the Council's integrated early help 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 prosocial behaviours and build resilience. The service incorporates universal youth, play, sports and participation activities and opportunities, targeted early help support for those young people and families who need it, and more specialist substance misuse, health and wellbeing, young carers and crime prevention

and diversion interventions. Young Hackney workers ensure the voice of the young person and 'think family' are at the centre of practice, and are considerate of the strengths and needs of parents and carers as individual assessments and plans are developed.

An estimated total of 16,676 young people accessed universal services offered through Young Hackney during 2021/22, based on 160,223 named and anonymous attendances. This reflected an increase of 170% of named individuals accessing Young Hackney Universal services from 2020/21, following the pandemic lockdown periods which had a significant impact on the 2020/21 data. Young Hackney delivered targeted support to 1,471 young people in 2021/22.

Evidence of Impact

Young Hackney Audits

From March 2022 to July 2022, the Young Hackney service has completed 17 audits using their routine audit form.

Findings:

- Overall, audits were rated as 59% *good* and 41% *requires improvement*.
- 94% of children audited were seen in line or partially in line with practice standards.
- Auditors thought that recording needs to be improved in 65% of files.

- In 53% of files, key actions had been followed up on, within agreed timescales, and were seen to be having an impact by auditors.

Recommendations:

- There is a need to improve recording including management oversight recording.
- Some assessments of risk and plans including safety plans need to be reviewed and updated where necessary.
- Significant family members, particularly fathers to be included in plans and intervention.



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.

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
No. of first time entrants to Youth Justice system in Hackney	88	79	67

The overall number of young people entering the youth justice system for the first time in Hackney in 2021/22 was 67, a 15 % decrease from 79 young people in 2020-21. This remains below national and statistical neighbour averages.

88 % of the young people referred to the Youth Justice Prevention and Diversion Team via Triage in 2021/22 were successfully diverted from becoming first time entrants to the youth justice system. However, early help for young people at risk of becoming involved in crime is still not effective enough at preventing the most serious youth crime: the small number of young people referred to the Prevention and Diversion Team from Triage who have gone on to enter the youth justice system have in many cases faced extremely serious charges against them.

Evidence of Impact

Youth Justice Service Peer Review - May 2022

The Youth Justice Sector Improvement Partnership undertook a peer review on Governance in the Youth Justice Service at our invitation in May 2022 and found that:

- Board and leaders are strategically willing to try new and creative ways of working e.g. deferred exclusions.
- Engaged political leadership.
- Good improvement in First Time Entrants performance, and low reoffending rates.
- The Out of Court Disposal Panel is multi agency with Speech and Language Therapists and clinicians attending.
- There are good practice level relationships with the courts and Judges, who trust the assessments made by the YJS.
- Young people report that they have a good relationship with their worker.
- Positive to see a focus on addressing disproportionality.

Peer reviewers also made some recommendations for improvement, including the need to:

- Strengthen the support given to Black and global majority staff members.
- Support Board members to observe the work on the ground.
- Review the operational/strategic board arrangements and terms of reference.
- Bring the lived experience of the children and families we are supporting into the Board.
- Stronger involvement of young people at all levels.
- Consider identifying a smaller number of key themes/priorities and evidencing impact rather than working through an extensive action plan.
- Encourage Board members to actively lead on agenda items and improve evidence of links to other strategic plans.



Domestic Abuse Intervention Service

The Domestic Abuse Intervention Service (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 works with clients and partner agencies to assess and reduce risk and offers an assertive, interventionist, social-work-informed approach to protecting victims from harm, using the Safe and Together model which 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 service also intervenes with perpetrators of domestic abuse to reduce the risk they pose. The service leads within the Council and across the partnership on Eliminating Violence Against Women and Girls and on providing and developing Hackney's Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) for 'high risk' cases and delivers training also to partner agencies.

The average weekly number of referrals into DAIS across 2021/22 was 23, slightly below the weekly pre-Covid rate of 25 cases per week. From April

2022 to September 2022 there has been an average weekly referral rate of 25 cases.

The Domestic Abuse Prevention Programme, working with those who harm others through their behaviour, is a 26 session programme that continues to operate virtually on a rolling basis. Since April 2022 to October 2022, so far 8 people have completed the programme.

The fortnightly virtual MARAC (Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference) is a multi-agency meeting to discuss and take action on cases of domestic abuse where there is a 'high risk' of death or serious injury. Numbers have continued to rise during and following the Covid restrictions. 2021/22 saw a total of 694 cases discussed at MARAC, an increase of 15% on the 595 cases heard in 2020/21. If the rate from April - September 2021 is maintained across the remainder of this year, there will be 734 cases heard, an increase of 23% on 2020/21. In two years, cases heard at MARAC have risen by over 200, from 492 in 2019/20 to 694 in 2021/22 which is a rise of 41% over 2 years. Around half of all MARAC cases have children living in the household; this has remained consistent over recent years.

Evidence of Impact

Domestic Abuse Intervention Service (DAIS) Audits

The DAIS has completed 59 audits throughout 2021-22, using the DAIS full audit form.

Findings:

- 73% of audits completed rated practice as 'good' or 'outstanding'.
- 95% of cases audited took the client's history and any current vulnerabilities into account.
- 98% of cases audited properly identified and responded to child / adult safeguarding concerns.
- In 79% of cases audited, the client had been provided with effective and comprehensive safety and support planning work.
- In 61% of cases audited, there was evidence of a sensitive response to the cultural and diversity needs of the client.
- In 81% of cases audited, auditors felt that the client had been supported to act for themselves and engage with services.
- In 84% of cases audited, auditors felt there was evidence of robust case management and supervision, ensuring effective recording practice and appropriate support from intake to closure.

- Auditors felt that there had not been active engagement with the perpetrator service and evidence of working together to manage risk in 67% of cases audited.
- Auditors felt that casework and case file recording met best practice in the majority, but noted some gaps in recording.

Recommendations:

- Continue to embed practice around engaging with abusers, and holding abusers to account for their abusive actions.
- Managers to provide oversight around why cases are not discussed at unit meetings and record rationales of why direct contact may not be made.
- All cases that were opened pre-cyber attack and are still open need a summary of intervention pre-cyber attack.
- DAIS management group to consider how to better capture management oversight.
- Consider how to overcome blocks and barriers of professional network, no following up action from MARAC/complex case forum.



Identifying and responding to children's needs and appropriate thresholds

Contacts, referrals and assessments

Contacts

	Outturn 2019/20	Outturn 2020/21	Outturn 2021/22	Apr - Sept 2022
Number of contacts	16,044	11,473	12,746	7,174
% of contacts progressing to a referral	27 %	26 %	29 %	27 %

There has been an 11 % increase in contacts over the past year, however this has not yet reached pre-pandemic levels. Hackney did not see the immediate rise in contact levels that many local authorities experienced following the pandemic, but we have had a steady increase in contacts over the last year. This is to be expected in the context of increasing demand for children's social care on a national and local level.

We have also changed the way that contacts are recorded, with information requests now not captured as a contact and referral record which they have been historically. This will potentially account for the volume of contacts being less than expected.

Purposeful work has been undertaken through the revision of the Hackney Child Wellbeing Framework, the shift to a Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub, Early Help Hub and the introduction of a consultation line. The positive impact of the consultation line will also mean that requests for support that do not meet thresholds are not coming through as contacts. However, there is still some 'oversharing' from some agencies, mainly the Police, which is being addressed.

Referrals

	Outturn 2019/20	Outturn 2020/21	Outturn 2021/22	Apr - Sept 2022
Number of Referrals	5,031	2,930	3,707	1,935
Rate of Referrals per 10,000 population	788	459	581	303 (Annual est 616)
Statistical neighbours	581	497	579	n/a
England	535	494	538	n/a

	Outturn 2018/19	Outturn 2019/20	Outturn 2020/21	Outturn 2021/22	Apr - Sept 2022
Percentage of cases which were re-referrals which had been open in the past 12 months	16 %	16 %	18 %	17 %	19 %
Statistical neighbours	17 %	18 %	18 %	18 %	n/a
England	19 %	19 %	19 %	22 %	n/a

There has been a 27 % increase in the number of referrals received. Re-referrals within 12 months at the end of March 2022 were at 17 % and this is in line with statistical neighbours. The rate of referrals for the year 2021-22 was 581, higher than the 2020-21 rate of 459. 29 % of contacts have proceeded to referrals compared with 26 % for 2020-21. This is an anticipated increase given the impact of COVID-19 upon children's attendance at school and visibility to multi-agency professionals.

Assessments

	Outturn 2019/20	Outturn 2020/21	Outturn 2021/22	Apr - Sept 2022
Number of social work assessments completed	4,923	3,664	3,293	2,075
Rate of assessments per 10,000 population	771	604	516	325 (Annual est 630)
Statistical neighbours	529	477	533	n/a
England	554	518	533	n/a

	Outturn 2019/20	Outturn 2020/21	Outturn 2021/22	Apr-Sept 2022
% of social work assessments completed within 45 working days	64 %	78 %	82 %	61 %
Statistical neighbours	88 %	94 %	90 %	n/a
England	85 %	89 %	84 %	n/a

The rate of completed assessments has reduced by 15 % compared to 2020-21. The rate of assessments completed within 45 working days was 82 % for 2021-22 compared with 78 % for 2020-21. Performance for this measure declined in the early months of 2022, in the context of changing back to Mosaic recording system, some notable staff challenges as a result of staff sickness (including due to COVID-19), staff changes and some performance management concerns, with only 45 % of assessments completed in 45 days as at the end of April 2022. Following the embedding and support of newly appointed staff, and concerted management oversight, performance is beginning to stabilise and we were reassured by the feedback from inspectors during the recent Ofsted focused visit in September 2022.

In 2021-22, 70 % of assessments completed resulted in no further statutory social work action, an increase compared to 66 % in 2020-21. As at the end of September 2022, this rate has now decreased to 51 % of statutory assessments completed resulting in no further statutory social work action- this is a positive development in the context of the introduction of Early Help Assessments within the Family Support Service in April 2022.

“...this is a positive development in the context of the introduction of Early Help Assessments within the Family Support Service in April 2022.”

Evidence of Impact

Assessment leading to no further social work action - June 2022

As a result of high numbers of assessments leading to no further social work action, a dip sample of 45 cases was undertaken.

Findings:

- 89% of referrals met the threshold for statutory assessment (Hackney Child Wellbeing Framework)
- In 98% of audits, the outcome of the assessment was in line with thresholds
- In 87% of audits, the auditor did not think that an alternative course of action could have been taken - for some cases an early help assessment would have been better

- Auditors think a DAIS worker in the MASH would enhance early safety planning for victims of domestic abuse.

Recommendations:

- Identify a DAIS practitioner to be located in MASH to ensure that effective safety plans are created at the earliest opportunities for victims of domestic abuse.
- Delegated authority to be implemented to under 5's MAT services to ensure consistency of threshold application.
- Early Help assessments to be utilised more where children are perceived to be in need of support, rather than at risk of significant harm.

Local Area Designated Officer

Organisations where employees and volunteers work with children (including foster carers and prospective adopters) are required to have clear and accessible policies and procedures to manage occasions when allegations are made against staff or volunteers. As part of that, organisations have to appoint a Designated Safeguarding Lead to whom the allegations are reported, who would then report it to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) who has the responsibility to manage and have oversight of allegations.

The LADO service received 311 contacts during 2021-2022 which is an increase of 137 (44 %) on the previous year (174 contacts). It is therefore evident that the number of contacts have returned to the previous trajectory

of year-on-year increases in the LADO contacts received prior to the Covid-19 pandemic (there were 309 contacts during 2019-20).

The occupations with the highest number of contacts were teachers (29 %), school support staff (23 %) and nursery workers (17 %). This is a slight change to previous years as the norm until this period was school support staff receiving the highest number of contacts. The increase for teachers is noteworthy, given it has risen by 7.4 %. The three occupation groups with the highest number of contacts remain unchanged. Again, the postulation is that these three groups will remain consistent as it is likely attributable to the higher ratio of children to staff given schools and day care provisions have higher numbers of children accessing services compared with health or leisure facilities for example.

Evidence of Impact

LADO audits - July 2022

Practice audits of LADO work are conducted every 6 months by the Service Manager and Practice Development Managers in the Safeguarding and Reviewing Team. The most recent audit in July 2022 looked at 6 LADO cases.

Findings:

- 100% of referrals were rated as good or outstanding.
- 100% of audits found decision making to be good or outstanding.

- 100% of audits found partnership working to be good or outstanding.
- 100% of audits found evidence that there were positive outcomes/positive impacts on the child's plan as a result of LADO intervention, with practice rated as good.



Making good decisions and providing effective help

Strategy Discussions

The CHSCP continues to promote the CHSCP strategy discussion protocol through regular 'Things You Should Know' briefings and animated video guidance for multi-agency professionals. The CHSCP Quality Assurance Sub-Group maintains oversight of the quality of strategy discussions via audit and tracks the progress of multi-agency improvement actions. The most recent audit was commissioned using external auditors in March 2022.

Broad findings in audit rounds demonstrated good timeliness, with evidence of sufficient information sharing, understanding the child's needs, decision making and planning. No cases were escalated as a concern. Good practice was identified in response to cases of serious youth violence (in line with recommendation 9 of the Child C SCR and the identification of trusted adults). Recording, the focus on all household members / significant

others and the consistent use of the CHSCP template remain areas for improvement. The introduction of Mosaic should support practice in this respect.

825 Section 47 investigations began in 2021-22, in line with 836 the previous year. This represents a rate of 129 Section 47 investigations per 10,000, which is less than statistical neighbours (175 in 2020-21) and the England average (164 in 2020-21).

32% of Section 47 investigations progressed to an Initial Child Protection Conference in 2021-22, a decrease from 37% in 2020-21. This is in line with statistical neighbours (32% in 2020-21) and lower than the England average (37% in 2020-21). 24% of completed Section 47 investigations progressed to an Initial Child Protection Conference between April and September 2022.

Evidence of Impact

CHSCP external review by independent auditor: Strategy Discussions followed by ICPC - March 2022.

The City and Hackney Safeguarding Children Partnership (CHSCP) selected a total of 15 Strategy Discussion minutes which were followed by an Initial Child Protection Conference (ICPC) over the preceding months from November 2021 to March 2022 for audit.

Findings:

- The reviewing of partner contributions was reliant on the content of the Hackney child's file only.
- The strategy discussion template and the conference report template have been revised to request/ensure explicit reflection on ethnic/cultural/identity issues. This review found that the templates are not being used consistently.

- In sibling groups with a wide range of ages of children, the risks and needs of each child when discussed together can become diluted and the analysis of parental capacity lost.
- There is clarity around the threshold and rationale from agencies, however category selection and application is less clear.
- Each agency tracks their own report submission and quality and whether the report has been shared with families.

Recommendations:

- Further emphasis is needed in strategy meetings on clearly defined actions to ensure information is sought and shared and pulled through in submissions to conferences.
- Where a family is already open to Hackney, this needs to be made clear and recorded in the strategy discussion minutes as well as any dates of recent strategy meetings relevant to the episode of concern/incident, and that actions and plans to support and safeguard children are clearly recorded with clear timescales and noting the responsible professional/agency. This will be further strengthened with the consistent use of the strategy discussion template.
- Where there are multiple risks identified in a family, these should be separated out in the strategy discussions with clear plans to manage each concern and who/which agency should be responsible.
- Identify a process to record if agencies have submitted reports and when.

Section 47s that do not go to ICPC dip sample - June 2022

Following a high volume of Section 47 investigations that did not go to ICPC (reaching a peak of 85% in March 2022), a dip sample of 30 cases was undertaken.

Findings:

- In 96% of cases, it was appropriate to escalate to S47.
- In 96% of cases, it was appropriate to not go to ICPC.
- Auditors noted that clear disclosures of children being hit with implements led to appropriate escalation
- In 10 of these cases - auditors noted positive engagement with parents, some of whom showed remorse for causing harm to their children, which resulted in children no longer being perceived as at risk of significant harm.

Recommendations:

- Greater clarity around the use of Independent Chair consultations to be shared across the service.
- Develop Practice Guidance on when to initiate an assessment under Section 17 rather than step up to Section 47.
- Think about racism throughout the CFS system decision making points and in supervision.

Children supported on Child in Need Plans

	Jan 2021	July 2021	Sep 2021	July 2022
Snapshot of children supported on Child in Need Plans (within the Children in Need Service)	865	699	619	495

There has been a decrease in the number of children supported on Child in Need Plans, which is linked to increased oversight by managers to ensure that children are on the correct plan according to thresholds, as well as a corresponding drop in referrals and assessments over the same period. We have adjusted our expected practice standard for Children in Need Visits to a minimum of 20 working days to ensure social work activity is purposeful and meaningful for children and to ensure plans progress. Senior management oversight on Child in Need plans at agreed points is occurring and is evidenced on the file and reducing drift.

Evidence of Impact

Audit of Progression of Child in Need Plans at 3 months - April 2022:

6 audits were undertaken with 5 cases graded as good and one rated as requires improvement.

Findings:

- Clear evidence that the plan was progressing, with timely visits and reviews that made reference to the plan.
- Good quality visit recording and children were seen on their own. Visits were focused and purposeful.
- All audits had evidence of both timely visits and Child in Need reviews taking place within the practice standards.
- Referrals recommended through the plan were actioned in a timely way.

- Plans were generally of a good standard and thresholds met for Child in Need.

Recommendations:

- Recording needs to be stronger, including consistent recording of management oversight on the file.
- There needs to be clearer contingency planning for children when the plan is not progressing.
- Case Holders need to ensure that identity is captured beyond the assessment for the child.

Service Managers will undertake an audit of Child in Need cases at 6 months to ensure the plan is progressing in the child's timescale.

Children supported through Child Protection Plans

The number of children supported on Child Protection Plans decreased over the course of 2021/22, representing an 11 % decrease. 91 % were reviewed in the required timescales. The number of children starting and ceasing Child Protection Plans has reduced over the last 6-12 months, with 193 children as at the end of June 2022 down from 237 as at 31st March 2021. 35 % have been open for under 3 months and 1 % for over 2 years or more. The number and rate of children supported on a Child Protection Plan continues to reduce.

Number of children supported on Child Protection Plans

March 2020	March 2021	March 2022	Sept 2022
251	237	211	186

Children supported on Child Protection Plans per 10,000 population aged under 18

	March 2020	March 2021	March 2022	Sept 2022
Hackney	38	37	33	29
Statistical Neighbour	39	39	42	n/a
England	41	41	42	n/a

The rate of children supported on Child protection Plans per 10,000 is 29, this is significantly below statistical neighbours and national averages.

This decrease is mostly accounted for by the 14 % decrease in Initial Child Protection Conferences with 267 held in 2021/22 compared to 312 in 2020/21. The duty consultation process between our Safeguarding and Reviewing Team (Child Protection Chairs) and the social work units has better supported appropriate threshold decisions for children.

Duration of closed Child Protection Plan (percentage)

	March 2020	March 2021	March 2022	April to Sept 2022
Under 3 months	24 %	34 %	19 %	19 %
3 - 6 months	17 %	31 %	12 %	12 %
6 - 12 months	40 %	32 %	38 %	39 %
1 - 2 years	16 %	20 %	30 %	27 %
2+ years	3 %	3 %	1 %	3 %

At the end of March 2022, 24 (10 %) children were subject to a Child Protection Plan for a second or subsequent time (based on data restored from 2016). There was a 21 % decrease in children becoming subject to a Child Protection Plan over the last year from 308 children down to 242 children.

There was a 15 % decrease in children ceasing a Child Protection Plan over the last year, from 313 down to 267. This reduction is due to improved management oversight and key interventions being delivered in a more timely manner. Throughout the pandemic our numbers of children supported through Child Protection Plans remained high as a result of plans remaining open for longer than anticipated whilst key interventions for some families remained unavailable. Since the end of lockdown and all services being fully available, these Child Protection Plans have been able to progress and gradually our numbers have decreased.

Evidence of Impact

Child Protection Monitoring Meeting dip samples

A Child Protection Impact and Tracking Meeting is held every 6 weeks consisting of Service Managers and Heads of Service which systematically reviews Child Protection Plans that have been open 9-12 months, 13-15 months, 16 months+, repeat plans, and plans ending at the first review, to ensure appropriate application of thresholds and timely progression of plans.

In May, July and September 2022, Child Protection Monitoring Meeting dip samples were undertaken, with 14 dip samples completed in total. 9 of these plans were 15+ months old, 1 was 3 months old (ending at the first RCPC), and 1 was a repeat Child Protection plan, with the remaining 3 categorised as 'other'.

Findings:

- 57% of audits were rated as good.
- 63% of plans were written in a concise, child friendly way. The remaining 36% partially met this requirement.

- 86% of files had a reasonable 3-5 goals. All of these goals were realistic and linked to what needed to change for the child - 64% fully, and 36% partially.
- Clear, proportionate timescales were noted in 93% of files - 79% fully, 14% partially.
- Chair's oversight was seen in 92% of files - 46% fully, 46% partially.
- In 86% of files, there was evidence of progression of the plan - 50% fully, 36% partially.
- Clear contingency plans for if change was not made were present in 93% of files - fully in 79%, partially in 14%.
- 43% of plans acknowledged and addressed issues of ethnicity, culture and identity - half of these fully, the other half partially. The remaining 57% did not do this.

Child Protection Plans - visits

As at 10th October 2022, 88 % of children supported through Child Protection Plans have visits recorded within 20 working days. Recording of visits is being monitored to ensure all children are seen in a timely way in accordance with their plans. There is urgent escalation to the Head of Service if this is not happening, with identification of alternative

practitioners where there are gaps in staffing. There are a small number of children supported through Child Protection Plans where there are difficulties in gaining entry to the family home within statutory timeframes. Actions to address these delays are monitored at a Head of Service level.



Public Law Outline (PLO) and court proceedings

As of 31st March 2022, there were 16 children in pre-proceedings. As at the end of September 2022 there were 12 children in pre-proceedings.

	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
Hackney number of care applications	107	78	51
Hackney care applications per 10,000 child population	16.4	11.8	7.6
England care applications per 10,000 child population	10.8	10.5	9.6

As at 30th September 2022, there were a total of 149 children in care proceedings. We have issued care proceedings for 57 children from 1st June

to 30th September 2022. The overall increase in number is as a result of the delays and increasing length of Care Proceedings so children are being subject to proceedings for longer. We have had an increase in the number of Supervision orders, Special Guardianship Orders and Child Assessment Orders.

The time taken to complete care and supervision proceedings was an average of 47 weeks in Hackney in 2021-22, the national average for this period has not been released. This is an increase for Hackney from 38 weeks in 2020-21, and the national average of 41 weeks in 2020-21. 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.

Within the clinical court clinic, 21 cases were discussed in 2021/22, a decrease from 27 cases discussed in 2021/21. The clinical court work completes court work assessments in line with the emerging practice model - privileging a systemic approach, paying attention to social context and is informed with a trauma informed lens. 11 clinical court work assessments were completed in 2021/22 a decrease compared to 17 in 2020/21.

Evidence of Impact

Public Law Outline (PLO) Audits

10 audits of the PLO process were completed in July 2022.

Findings:

- All children had decisions from Legal Planning Meetings (LPM) ratified at Children’s Resource Panel (CRP), where necessary.
- 60% of PLO letters were sent within timescales. These letters were clear about concerns and what needed to happen to improve outcomes for children, however auditors noted that letters could be more concise and use less jargon.
- In 40% of audits, the PLO meeting took place within 15 days of the CRP decision, with auditors noting that delay is often due to a solicitor for parents not being instructed in time for the meeting.
- In all 10 of the files audited, the PLO minutes were noted to be of good quality and were largely placed on the file in a timely way. The introduction of the PLO Unit Coordinator has helped to standardise this.
- In 50% of audits, Family Group Conferences (FGC) took place during the PLO process. This is an improvement in comparison

to practice observed 12 months ago. Auditors note that parents' legal representatives often do not support FGCs.

- Placement Planning Meetings (PPM) were used to support decision making in 90% of the children's files audited, marking an improvement in the use of PPMs in the PLO process.
- For all of the relevant children, proceedings were initiated within the expected timescales.
- For 9 out of 10 children, the auditors felt the PLO process was meaningful and effective.
- 5 of the 10 children had support which was stepped down/due to be stepped down following the PLO process, suggesting the process improved outcomes for these children.

Recommendations:

- A glossary of terms was created, to be sent out with the PLO letters and leaflet, to assist parent understanding.
- Led by PLO practice leads, training around writing concise PLO letters with a focus on language use needs to be delivered, and best practice examples of PLO letters should be shared with practitioners.
- PLO practice leads will share the PLO practice guidance across all service areas.



Clinical Support

Clinical Service

The Clinical Service aims to integrate a mental health and wellbeing offer across the Children and Families Service as we know that children and young people who access children's social care are at greater risk of mental health difficulties. By moving to a 'stepped care' clinical model the service is able to work with a broad range of children and families from early intervention, as well as for our most vulnerable children and young people in care or on the edge of family breakdown, in a responsive, targeted offer. The Clinical Service offers both a direct and indirect offer:

- Indirect Clinical Offer: This is open to all families and individuals open to the Children and Families Service. The main part of this

offer is consultation, but also includes training, supervision and court work. Clinicians complete assessments for court proceedings as part of the Public Law Outline. These range from assessments with parents, individual children or family groups, making use of specialist assessment tools and approaches as applicable.

- Direct Clinical Offer: This is only available to children and families in the Children and Families Service with an allocated social worker, or open to the Youth Offending Team. This includes those in receipt of a Child in Need plan, a Child Protection Plan or Children in Care.

279 children and families were referred to the Clinical Service in 2021/22. There were 220 cases allocated for direct work in 2021/22, a 25% decrease from 284 cases in 2020/21. 79% of children and families referred were allocated for direct work. In 2021/22, an increase of 10% compared to 2020/21. There were 591 consultations completed and 261 Talk Together appointments offered in 2021/22. 11 clinical court work assessments completed in 2021/2022.



Participation and direct work with children and families

Hackney Youth Parliament

Hackney Youth Parliament represents the views of young people in the borough. They aim to advocate on behalf of all their peers and contribute to positive change for all young people. They run campaigns about important issues, and hold regular events and consultations.

There are currently six elected members of the 2021-22 Youth Parliament, who were elected in June 2021. Over the next year Hackney Youth Parliament is set to work on a series of campaigns to improve the lives of young people and the services they receive. This work will aim to tackle inequalities young people face, and will focus on issues such as mental health, work and policing policies.

Hackney Youth Parliament will also increase awareness of positive opportunities available to young people through organising fun events and activities. Hackney Youth Parliament will be launching the new Youth Opportunity Fund in October 2022 so youth projects in the borough can apply for funding to improve the lives of young people after lockdown.

Children's Rights Service

Hackney's Children's Rights Service provides a range of support to children and young people who are supported by, or have been supported by, Hackney Children's Social Care, with priority given to children who are looked after, leaving care or supported on Child Protection Plans. The team provides an independent service that helps young people have their voice heard through advocacy; represents children's wishes and feelings; and provides information to children and young people about their rights and entitlements.

The team also offers an Independent Return Home Interview service to young people who have been reported missing by their parents or carers. This provides a safe space to allow young people to talk in confidence about their experiences and to create safety plans. During 2021/22 there were 1,043 recorded missing episodes, an increase compared to 2019/20 when there were 821 recorded missing episodes. Due to the cyber attack we cannot report accurately on the data for missing episodes during 2020/21.

Unfortunately due to the impact of the cyber attack it is not possible to report on the numbers of Return Home Interviews that have been completed during the year. Following the move back to Mosaic in April 2022, work is underway to improve both the recording by practitioners and the reporting functionality around Return Home Interviews. Children's Rights Officers continue to attend the daily discussion with Hackney Missing Police to actively follow up with children who are or have been missing in the Borough. Children's Rights Officers continue to work with young people from a harm and risk reduction perspective; supporting young people to develop their own safety plans, implementing actions they realistically feel they can take to reduce risks. 'Safety Planning with young people' workshops have been regularly offered to staff during the year, and this will continue.

Since April 2020 we have embedded the automatic offer of advocacy for all children aged over 5 years who have started to be supported by a Child Protection Plan following an Initial Child Protection Conference. During 2021/22, 127 children were opened to the service through the automatic Child Protection Advocacy route. 54% of children accepted the Child Protection Advocacy Offer and 46% declined the offer. It is positive that over half the children supported by a Child Protection Plan have assessed independent advocacy but this remains an area we wish to improve.

Evidence of Impact

In December 2021, 9 audits of Children's Rights work were completed which found good practice overall.

Findings:

- Regular visiting/frequent contact, flexible to support the needs of the child (in person and virtual) and good recording noted.
- A strong example of advocacy, seeking and supporting the wishes of the child, including thoughtful and sensitive discussion and recording on the file.
- There needs to be consistent recording around whether children's views were shared with the Chair of the Child Protection Conference where the child is receiving advocacy by the Children's Rights Officer.

Recommendations:

- The need to consider how the service ascertains that feedback has been given to the child about how their voice was shared at their Child Protection Conference and the impact of this.
- Including meaningful discussion about culture/identity in advocacy support.
- Ensure all communication is recorded on children's files so the journey and link between events is clear.

A child made the following comments about her Children's Rights Officer:

“She listened to me and played games with me.”



Identifying and responding to all types of abuse recognising the vulnerability of specific groups of children

Safeguarding children during adolescence

Local Government Association (LGA) peer review - February 2022

In February 2022, the LGA undertook a peer review at Hackney's invitation to look at our work with children during adolescence across the Children and Families Service. The challenge team were appreciative that we were still in the midst of the pandemic and the cyber attack with an interim system. But in spite of this, they found that we have shown incredible resilience and commitment to our families. The LGA found:

- The team reviewed 16 of our children's files and were highly complimentary about our child-focused practice.
- The LGA also recognised Young Hackney as a fantastic resource but they think we need to do more to communicate the offer we provide, evidence outcomes and link better with the wider offer for children during adolescence in the borough.
- Management structures may need to be addressed to benefit communication and reduce silo working - The report highlights the need for our partners to do more work regarding anti-racism and highlights the work being done on decolonising the curriculum by our Education team and schools. Additionally, there are recommendations for schools and the police to firstly safeguard our children rather than criminalise or exclude.
- The review highlighted that we don't currently have a clear practice model, and work has begun on refreshing this.

Key recommendations included:

Strategic approach and partnership working

- a) Ensure greater strategic join-up between education, including schools, social care and other partner agencies to better understand the causes and consequences of exclusions and reduce these from the current high levels.
- b) Ensure there is a whole system approach across the Partnership to working with vulnerable adolescents, based on a shared responsibility for better outcomes underpinned by joined up performance and other information and analysis.
- c) Engage with and support the police to develop greater understanding of the negative impact of some of their interactions with young people and encourage a safeguarding-first approach.

Organisational arrangements and practice

- d) Develop a clear practice model for children's services which is well understood across the service and partners.
- e) Develop an outcomes framework and measures to better evidence the impact of the comprehensive range of resources deployed through Young Hackney and the wider early help offer. Use this information to ensure these resources are well targeted and have the maximum impact.

The offer to children during adolescence

- f) Use the opportunities provided by the planned introduction of Family Hubs and the implementation of the Early Help Strategy to focus on whole family working and associated impact measures.
- g) Develop an edge of care strategy, informed by the analysis that led to the edge of care pilot, to provide support to the wider cohort of children at risk of entering the care system including through earlier intervention.

- h) Re-focus on the risks associated with child sexual exploitation, alongside the wider concerns regarding child criminal exploitation.
- i) Complete work on a communication strategy to young people, parents and professionals, so that professionals working with young people are able to better provide advice to families and children about the wide range of different support services that are available.

Evidence of Impact

Live Learning Audit on Extra-Familial Harm - March 2022

To complement the Local Government Authority Peer Review on vulnerable adolescents that took place in February 2022, a live learning audit around extra familial harm began in March 2022.

The percentage of audits scoring good was 27%, made up of 3 files scored as good, 6 files scored as requires improvement, and 2 files scored as inadequate.

Findings:

- Auditors felt that child focused practice remains a strength. Relationship-based practice and consistent lead professionals acting as 'trusted adults' was a strength which helped to drive change for children and helped to keep them safe.
- Practice by the Context Intervention Unit (CIU) and the Extra Familial Risk Panel (EFRP) was commended across multiple audits, for its helpful intervention in strong risk conceptualisation, direct work, peer mapping and safety planning.
- Strengths were identified where management oversight was delivered from all levels in the service, including around challenging police conduct in relation to strip searching of

children. Audits highlighted a lack of supervision and child summaries on files, alongside general management oversight.

- High staff turnover in CFS has led to multiple social workers working with children, coupled with delay in transfer between service areas led to drift in intervention delivery for some children.
- Auditors felt that there was more scope to challenge police on concerns of criminalisation of children who are being exploited, and adultification of children who need safeguarding.

Recommendations:

- Refocus on safeguarding children at risk of extra-familial harm, particularly sexual exploitation. .
- Tighten management oversight including summaries, supervision and summaries - ensuring files are up to date.
- Managers at all levels to ensure that our Practice Standards and core Practice Guidance is discussed in supervision, management and team meetings and that managers at all levels ensure practitioners are making use of practice guidance.

Neglect

Following the feedback from Ofsted during our 2019 ILACS inspection that a small number of children on Child Protection Plans were experiencing neglectful circumstances for too long, we have undertaken much work to strengthen our management oversight and decision-making for these children. In 2021 the City and Hackney Safeguarding Partnership (CHSCP) initiated discussions with NSPCC to introduce the Graded Care Profile II across the Hackney partnership. A multi-agency steering group was established in

September 2021 to progress the implementation of the GCP2 and support the existing arrangements in place to respond to neglect. This group has met on seven occasions. Capacity challenges in the early stages – alongside the focused requirements of the NSPCC - impacted on the pace of the partnership in getting the project started. We are now in a much stronger position and there has been both recent and significant traction. The NSPCC is content with the latest updates and the range of activity that has taken place to prepare for the eventual launch of the tool. A defined implementation plan is in place with staff 'Training for Trainers' beginning in November 2022.

Evidence of Impact

Live Learning Audit on Neglect - November 2021

In October-November 2021, a Live Learning Audit was undertaken looking at cases where neglect had been identified or suspected. The case list was challenging to develop due to the reporting limitations of the interim social care recording system. 11 audits were completed, with audits scored for overall practice from 1 (inadequate) to 4 (outstanding). 5 cases (45%) were scored as Good and 6 (55%) of cases scored as Requires Improvement. 'Child focused practice' was clearly identified as a strength with 9 out of the 11 audits being scored as Good for this area of practice. 'Management oversight driving change' is the area of focus that scored the lowest with 5 audits identifying this as an area which requires improvement and 2 identifying this as inadequate.

Findings:

- Practitioners have a good understanding of the children and families they work with and form meaningful relationships with them.
- Strong plans were detailed with clear goals and actions in line with the identified concerns, and progress was effectively monitored.

- The child's voice was often visible in the case file and there were good examples of effective direct work.
- Recording, particularly of visits and supervision, was identified as a gap in almost all audits, underlying the ongoing challenge of the interim system.
- Staff changes were noted as an issue in 4 audits. Three auditors noted the disruption that change of a social worker can have for engagement with families and progression of the plan due to the critical need to re-form relationships to effectively drive forward the plan.
- The cyber attack impact continued to be felt, with a lack of history and incomplete chronologies as a result. This means that it is harder for workers to know when to escalate cases, as full analysis of history is not always possible. Analysis of full information and analytical skills in social workers are critical, particularly when identifying neglect.



Recommendations:

- This audit highlighted the need to improve our multi agency working with Adult Services, this would mean stronger joint planning for young people approaching 18 and prevent delay.
- There is a need to progress to using a consistent approach to understanding and evidencing the impact of long term neglect through the Graded Care Profile.
- Continue to promote the inclusion of fathers and male caregivers in planning for children.
- There is a need to strengthen the way in which Family Group Conferences are offered to families, ensuring they are presented as an intervention families are entitled to before other interventions or legal action may be considered.



Disabled Children's Service

We continue to focus on driving improvements in the Disabled Children's Service through a strategic action plan.

All new referrals for an assessment from the service are made through the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) and all children of school age should have an Education, Health and Care Plan in place.

At the end of March 2021, the service was working with 374 children and young people. Of these, 258 were male and 116 were female. This is a 7% decrease compared to 2019/20, when the service was working with 402 children and young people.

Age breakdown of children open to Disabled Children's Service

Age	Number of Children
5 or under	42
6 - 8	76
9 - 11	87
12 - 14	79
15+	90
Total	374



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. As at the end of September 2022, there were 1,776 children accessing short breaks provision, 266 of whom also access a care package.

	Mar 2019	Mar 2020	Mar 2021	Mar 2022	Sept 2022
Number of young people accessing short breaks	1,400	1,599	1,388	1,542	1,776

Since April 2021, children receiving care packages who are also on Child in Need Plans in relation to safeguarding concerns have transferred to the Disabled Children's Service. This minimises transitions, provides more consistency and ensures that processes are clearer for families. As at the end of September 2022, there were 23 children on Child in Need Plans, 2 children on Child Protection Plans and 1 looked after child receiving support from the Disabled Children's Service.

The care packages for all children have been reviewed in the last year or are currently in the process of being reviewed - this is a significant improvement from 2019 when CFS took over the service, at which point there were numerous care packages which had not been reviewed in three years. Since April 2021, assessments for 630 children have been completed by the Disabled Children's Service.

Prior to 2022, the Disabled Children's Service support was delivered by 5 commissioned providers and 12 spot-purchased providers. In 2022, the Disabled Children's Service completed a commissioning cycle and have now commissioned 33 providers to deliver the service.

Evidence of Impact

Disabled Children's Service audits - throughout the quarter

Between April-June 2022, 4 audits of the Disabled Children's Service were completed using the C&F assessment generic audit form.

Findings:

- The auditor highlighted child-focused and well written assessments as strengths.
- 50% of children were seen within 5 days of allocation. In the 50% that were not, there was a rationale for this recorded on the file.
- 100% of the children were seen at least every 20 days since the first visit.
- 75% of the children were spoken to alone, and the one child who was not spoken to alone had a rationale recorded on file for this.
- The voice of the child was evident on all files, but only partially in one of these.
- For 50% of the children, the child(ren)'s ethnicity and identity was considered as part of and used to inform the assessment, and the other 50% partially evidenced this.
- Children's fathers were only included in 50% of the assessments, and there was no rationale about this on one file.

- Recording was of good quality in 75% of the files audited.
- The auditor felt that all assessments were proportionate in terms of depth and timeliness of activity in relation to level of need.
- There was sufficient evidence of management oversight in 75% of files.

Recommendations:

- The diversity and identity section needs to be completed meaningfully on assessments.
- In some cases, management oversight needs to be strengthened to ensure it is in line with assessment standards, such as the requirement to put oversight on file within 20 days of assessments being initiated and where children/families are not seen or contacted within timescales.
- Work will be undertaken with Disabled Children's Services CSWs around prompt allocation of assessments and timely contact with families, even where safeguarding concerns are not identified.



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. As at 9th September 2022, 11 private fostering arrangements were open to Hackney. All private fostering children's records are audited regularly.



Evidence of Impact

Private Fostering Audits

In August 2022, all 11 of the privately fostered children's files open to Hackney CFS were audited.

Findings:

- 11 audits with 36% rated as Good, compared to 100% rated as Good or Outstanding in October 2021
- Practice was rated as RI for 3 children (27%), and Inadequate for 4 children (36%).
- 36% of households had up to date DBS checks for all adults
- 50% of PF arrangements had been reviewed annually and presented to Care Planning Panel
- In 27% of cases, parents had not been involved in the most recent assessment of the PF arrangement

Recommendations:

- Additional management oversight has been put in place via a Consultant Social Worker tasked to monitor practice with this cohort.
- Any identified immediate actions have been shared with case holders and progress against these are being monitored.
- A Private Fostering improvement action tracker has been created.
- A briefing has been presented to all staff as a reminder of the criteria for Private Fostering and relevant staff will be suitably trained so they are familiar with private fostering notification timescales and are able to recognise private fostering arrangements at the earliest opportunity.

Children missing education

As of August 2022, there were 213 children electively home educated (EHE) by their parents. Numbers increased in Autumn 2020 in response to the Covid-19 pandemic however numbers have steadily fallen back over time but remain above pre-pandemic levels. A new EHE policy and assessment framework was introduced in June 2020 and is now embedded into practice. New referrals receive a suitability assessment within 12 weeks of referral and an annual assessment. 95 % of our current cohort were seen within 12 weeks.

Locally, the majority of children missing education (CME) are from the Orthodox Jewish community, with these children attending unregistered education settings (UES) on a full time basis, where we are unable to assess the suitability of their education. As of August 2022, there are 808 registered children missing education, with 754 from the Orthodox Jewish community. Processes are in place for tracking CME in and out of the borough and steps are taken to visit the known Orthodox Jewish families to check on children's wellbeing, though impact here is more limited.

For many years, we have been lobbying for the Government to legislate to regulate the settings children attend, which the government is proposing to do in the current Schools Bill. Locally an unregistered education settings protocol coordinates a multi-agency response to new settings or incidents involving a known setting. Strengthening our relationship with the Orthodox Jewish communities in respect of UES and the children who attend them remains a focus for our work.

Since the last Ofsted inspection in 2019 work around EHE and CME has undergone extensive improvements with new policies, procedures and practice now embedded.





The Experiences and Progress of Children in Care and Care Leavers

Our practice for looked after children and care leavers continues to strengthen, with changes to decision-making panels for children at the edge of care and in care ensuring that only those who cannot safely live at home are coming into care and we hope to strengthen our work for our adolescents on the edge of care further over the coming year. We have work

to do to improve health checks, particularly dental checks, for our children and are focusing on ensuring we provide good transitions for our care leavers, with improvement in pathway plan completion rates a key area of focus. There is good work taking place across the service but our focus is on ensuring consistently high standards of practice for all of our children.





Making good decisions for children

Information about our looked after children

As of end September 2022, there were 404 Looked after children, down from a peak of 470 in November 2020. We believe numbers of looked after children increased as a result of family stressors related to lockdown, with them coming down again and stabilising with a renewed focus across the service on ensuring right children come into care at the right time.

Number of children in care

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	End of Sept 2022
Number of children in care at snapshot date	432	426	406	404
Children entering care	228	182	163	95 (April-Sept)
Children leaving care	208	181	187	98 (April-Sept)

Rate of children in care

	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	End of Sept 2022
Rate of children in care per 10,000	68	67	64	63
Statistical neighbours	60	63	n/a	n/a
England	65	67	n/a	n/a

Rates of looked after children per 10,000 in Hackney are now similar to our statistical neighbours. 31 (8%) of these children are unaccompanied minors, with the number of unaccompanied minors remaining below pre-pandemic levels.

Age breakdown of looked after children at 31 March

Age	2020		2021		2022	
	Eng	Hackney	Eng	Hackney	Eng	Hackney
Under 1	5 %	20 (5 %)	5 %	18 (4 %)	N/A	15 (4 %)
1 - 4	14 %	35 (8 %)	14 %	47 (11 %)	N/A	49 (12 %)
5 - 9	18 %	55 (13 %)	19 %	57 (13 %)	N/A	49 (12 %)
10 - 15	39 %	173 (40 %)	39 %	157 (37 %)	N/A	155 (38 %)
16+	24 %	149 (34 %)	23 %	147 (34 %)	N/A	137 (34 %)

Age of children entering care

Age	2020		2021		2022	
	Eng	Hackney	Eng	Hackney	Eng	Hackney
Under 1	19 %	22(10 %)	20 %	23 (13 %)	N/A	23 (14 %)
1 - 4	17 %	28 (12 %)	18 %	19 (10 %)	N/A	15 (9 %)
5 - 9	16 %	26 (11 %)	17 %	20 (11 %)	N/A	19 (12 %)
10 - 15	27 %	71 (31 %)	26 %	49 (27 %)	N/A	40 (24.5 %)
16+	20 %	81 (36 %)	20 %	71 (39 %)	N/A	66 (40.5 %)
Total		229		182	N/A	163

34 % of our looked after children are aged 16 and 17; we continue to have a high proportion of adolescents coming into care. Analysis indicates that these children have a family history of trauma, educational exclusion, extra-familial risk and have significant risk factors for adolescents on the edge of care (with Black Caribbean and African backgrounds strongly over-represented). This analysis is informing the development of our Edge of Care strategy. Levels of children accommodated under Section 20 continue to fall. More work is required through the Edge of Care strategy to try and support children to safely return home to parents or family from care, whether they are in care short or long-term.

There are some indications that a renewed commitment to a foster-first approach is achieving good outcomes for our looked after children and care leavers with 74 % of looked after children in foster care arrangements as at March 2022 - an improvement from 71 % at the end of 2020/21; 34 children (17 %) were living in residential homes as at March 2022, a decrease from 20 % the previous end of year and down from high point of 40 children in 2019/20. As at the end of September 2022, this was down to 29 children. 36 children (8.5 %) aged 16 or 17 were living in semi-independent homes at the end of March 2022, down from a high of 50 in 2019/20. As at the end of September 2022, this number was 36 (9 %). There has been an increase in the use of Staying Put arrangements, with 15 % of

children in these settings at the end of March 2022, an increase from 10 % last year. As at the end of September 2022, there were 54 (15 %) care leavers living in staying put arrangements.

The number of looked after children on remand has increased from 4 % 2020/21 to 8.4 % 2021/2. New practice guidance on reducing criminalisation of looked after children has been developed. A senior management oversight forum to quality assure practice for looked after children open to the Youth Justice Service was introduced in June 2022.

We have had a renewed focus on a foster-first approach to adolescents entering our care in the past year and have been successful in reducing our number of 16 and 17 year olds living in semi-independent accommodation. A new accommodation pathway for supported accommodation began in April 2022. This commissioning contract was developed with input from our care leavers and with a key focus on the importance of providing local high quality homes for our young people. An emphasis on psychologically-informed environments is built into the contract.

Around half of looked after children are on full care orders (218 children or 54 %); this is mostly unchanged from the previous reporting period (2020-2021). 75 % of our looked after children are in foster placements, an increase of 71 % during the previous year.

The destinations for children leaving care in 2021-22 were as follows:

Returned home	54	Custody	1
Special Guardianship Order	16	Other	113
Adoption	3		

Edge of care pilot

The number of children and young people entering into care in Hackney had been increasing steadily over the past 10 years. It was hypothesised that this may be due to a lack of fidelity to the original innovative model 'Reclaiming social care' as well as other external factors (specifically, a rise in poverty rates, and high extrafamilial risks). The Edge of Care pilot was designed as a way to understand whether the number of children entering into care proceedings can be reduced by the use of an intensive, therapeutically informed innovative interdisciplinary approach targeting children at the right time on the care pathway. The new Edge of Care service works with children, families and the wider network offering support at the critical moment when children are on the 'edge of care' with the aim of preventing family breakdown and reducing the number of children entering into care.

Hackney successfully won funding from 'What Works for Social Care' to evaluate the effectiveness of the Edge of Care pilot. This is a mixed methods evaluation design with the goal of understanding the complex factors moving families towards and away from the edge of care or transitioning young people in care back into their families. This evaluation draws on quantitative analysis and qualitative feedback to inform a sustainable Edge of Care service that fits the local Hackney context.

The Edge of Care service works with families who have a child or children on a statutory social care plan or with those who are in the process of receiving a Children and Families assessment. The Edge of Care service provides intensive, relational and intentional support to families where there is a risk of one or more child(ren) entering into care and where the home environment and care given is assessed by the social worker as safe for the child or children to remain. Drawing on a systemic and trauma informed approach, the service tailors interventions according to the families needs while promoting anti-racist practice. Families who are open to the Edge of Care service often have multiple risk factors that include intra/extra familial risk.

Social workers refer families into the Edge of Care via the Children Resource Panel; referrals are discussed at panel and if appropriate the Edge of Care service seeks to offer follow up within the week.

Evidence of Impact

Missing Looked After Children Audit Overview

Between October - December 2021, 10 audits were undertaken on care experienced children and young people who had repeated missing episodes over the past 3 months. The looked after children and young people audited were chosen because they had the most frequent missing episodes over recent months. All were under 18 at the time of audit: 8 were held in the Looked After Children service and two in Leaving Care. Half were male and half were female. 80% were from a Black or global majority background.

Findings:

- 60% were rated as Good or Outstanding.
- In 40% of the audits, the children or young people were visited in line with Practice Standards; 40% partially in line and 20% not in line with expectations.
- In 70% of audits there was evidence of sufficient management oversight.

Recommendations:

- Monthly meeting to be established with Missing Strategic Lead to review practice with frequent missing looked after children.
- To ensure compliance with Practice Standards for visits and case supervision, weekly reports will be monitored by the Corporate Parenting management team.

Anti Racism Parenting Audit - March 2022

Between February and March 2022 a total of 14 audits were undertaken within Corporate Parenting. A selection of looked after children, care leavers and carers' files were audited, and all children and young people whose files were audited were of Black or Global Majority backgrounds and the carers files audited were caring for children from Black or Global Majority backgrounds. Auditors rated 79% of files Good or Outstanding.

Findings:

- 5 out of 8 auditors felt there was evidence of the child's family relationships being sufficiently supported, and a further 3 felt there was partial evidence of this. There were strong examples of carers who are proactively supporting children's identity needs.
- Examples were seen of sensitive work by practitioners to explore children and young people's identity, but there was lack of evidence of practitioners talking to Black and global majority children and young people about racism, and/or encouraging carers to do the same.
- Children looked after and care leavers were mainly seen in line with practice standards, and recordings of these visits were regular and of good quality. Four audits specifically noted that the child or young person was seen far more regularly than practice standards dictate.
- Several audits commented on the high quality of supervision records, and/or case summaries, and/or Look After Child Review documents, with six auditors making specific comments about one or more of these key documents being written in child-focused and engaging language.

Recommendations:

- Auditors recommended that allocated practitioners need to do more to explore directly with children their understanding of their cultural heritage and any questions about this they may have.
- Auditors recommended that practitioners explore explicitly with carers what they could, should and are doing to promote children's sense of pride in their heritage, and talk to them about racism.
- Auditors also recommended that basic ethnicity recording needs to be improved, and progress in promoting more family time needs to be more timely.

Children in care - visits

As at 10th October 2022, 54 % of looked after children were visited within 30 working days (6 weeks), 29 % of looked after children were visited within 6-12 weeks. Looked after children who are in settled care arrangements will usually have agreements have been made with their Independent Reviewing Officers that they need to be seen at a minimum of 12 weekly.



Fostering Service

As of August 2022, Hackney Fostering Service had 174 supported Fostering households. 53 % of Hackney carers live in the borough. This is positive in terms of supporting Hackney's looked after children to remain close to home, wherever possible and safe, which minimises disruption, for example, in their education provision and key personal and professional relationships. The continuation of the Mockingbird Model has been embedded, with a focus in 2022/23 to embed the two newest Constellations and, towards the end of the year, we hope to be in a position to launch the fourth Constellation. Long-term, our vision is that all Hackney foster carers will be part of a Mockingbird Constellation.

Fostering recruitment and retention continues to perform well, with an ongoing increase in fostering households year on year. There has been an increase over the past few months of children coming into care and being placed in temporarily approved connected carers. Whilst this is a positive outcome for most, the number of unregulated connected carers remains too high: delays in court proceedings, often due to difficulties in court

time-tabling, has been a barrier to the positive progress of plans for Special Guardians for many children.

The Fostering Service has maintained a strong recruitment record over recent years, despite a very challenging national context. We remain ambitious for the year ahead, with a target of recruiting 15 more new fostering households.

Form F	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Enquiries	327	272	222
Approvals	8	15	14

Hackney has engaged a diverse audience interested in becoming foster carers, through a mixed media approach and a flexible way of working. In order to maintain a competitive fostering offer with other local authorities, over the following year we are hoping to secure agreement for Council tax exemption for Hackney carers and to progress ideas for other benefits, such as discounts on local leisure activities.

The service is aware of the challenging role of a foster carer, and has a range of support systems in place in addition to the individual statutory support and supervision received from allocated fostering social workers. The vacancy rate for foster carers has fallen to 7% at the end of September 2022, down from 37% since the introduction of the Consultant Matching Officer in April 2018. Foster carers are able to attend a peer support group led by an Assistant Psychologist and a senior Social Worker. In addition, foster carers can access clinical support in relation to the young people they are caring for - often this will also involve an exploration of their journey to fostering and how this has shaped their approach to parenting, and some foster carers find this beneficial in managing their own emotional wellbeing.

In March 2022, the first Annual Foster Carers Survey was launched. 43 carers (25% of the 170 fostering households) responded, indicating a sense of

what should be prioritised in the year ahead, and how they felt the needs of children and young people were being met by the networks around them. We are committed to learning from our foster carers about what we are doing well and what we can do better. This year, for every foster carer that is deregistered, the Fostering Service Manager will offer a formal exit interview, as an opportunity to gather feedback in order to support the ongoing development of our service. In the year 2021/22, there were 17 resignations, compared to 13 in the year 2020/21.

Hackney's Supported Lodging Scheme launched in 2018 as an additional option for young people preparing to leave care, to offer young people aged 16+ the opportunity to live in the home of an approved person who will help them prepare for independent living. This provides the young person with a safe and supportive environment to develop the practical skills and emotional maturity needed to move on and cope with living independently. As of March 2022, Hackney had 7 young people living in supported lodgings arrangements. The target for the forthcoming year is to recruit a minimum of a further 3 Supported Lodgings hosts and continue to promote this as an alternative to supported accommodation, where appropriate.



Evidence of Impact

Foster carer survey 2022

The Fostering Service undertook an annual survey of foster carers and in 2022, 43 foster carers completed the survey.

The survey findings indicate that overall, foster carers feel well supported by the Fostering Service. There are areas for further development, both in relation to the support carers receive from the Fostering Service and in relation to the needs of children in their care being met. In particular, foster carers were not confident that the mental health needs of children in their care are well met, nor that professionals would challenge racism and discrimination if this was experienced by children in their care. The results of this survey will contribute to the development of the Fostering Recruitment and retention strategy 2022/23.

Findings:

- 79.1% of carers agreed or strongly agreed they were happy with the level of support they received from the fostering service.
- 81.4% of carers agreed or strongly agreed that supervision helps them understand the child's Care Plan and their role in helping to achieve this.

- 81.4% of carers felt the training offer for foster carers is relevant and supports them to do their job better.
- 81.4% of carers agreed they are well supported to understand and respond to the complex needs of children or young people in their care.

Carers were asked what they feel the fostering services priorities should be for the forthcoming year for our ongoing service development.

They were given 7 options (including 'other') and asked to choose their top 3 priorities.

- Champion the voice of foster carers in professional networks (81.4%)
- Develop the training offer for foster carers (53.5%)
- Improve the support offer for foster carers out of office hours (53.5%).

Quotes from foster carers:

“ I feel very well supported in all areas. ”

“ I feel I'm valued in my role as a foster carer. ”



Participation and direct work with children in care and care leavers

Hackney of Tomorrow (HoT) - Children in Care Council

Hackney of Tomorrow have continued their involvement with recruitment, foster carer training and attendance at the Corporate Parenting Board. Over the past year, Hackney of Tomorrow has delivered a series of successful participation projects, which have enabled children in care and care leavers to shape and influence multiple aspects of Hackney's Corporate Parenting service, including:

- In April 2021, HoT undertook a youth inspection of the Looked After Child Review process. Some of the key findings of the inspection were that young people felt as if their Reviews were overcrowded with professionals and other adults who were not initially known to them. In addition to this, Junior HoT members found that young people often feel as if their Reviews don't focus enough on their thoughts and feelings. As a result of this inspection, the head of the Safeguarding and Reviewing team initiated several actions which aim to improve young people's experiences of LAC Reviews - including the provision of a pre-meeting option sheet, through which young people can state who they would like to attend and where they would like their meeting to be held.
- HoT have been working alongside the Placement Management Unit in the re-tendering of contracts for the semi-independent accommodation providers as full members of the commissioning board.
- Following their involvement in the commissioning process for the Ferncliff Centre in 2020, members of Junior HoT carried out a Youth Inspection of the renewed service in June 2021. This inspection took place during an in-person visit to the centre, during which Junior

HoT members reviewed changes that have been made in line with the renewed service specification, which had been updated during the commissioning process the previous year. Whilst performing the inspection, young people also interviewed several members of staff, asking questions relating to improvements and the recommendations that HoT members had made following the award of the contract in 2020.

- In April 2022, Senior HoT members took part in a co-production workshop for the development of a website dedicated to providing housing advice to care leavers from Hackney.
- In September 2021, members of Junior and Senior HoT took part in a consultation led by the Director of Children and Families, the Head of Corporate Parenting and the Director for Hackney Education. During this consultation, young people discussed how being in care had affected their experience of education. The findings from this consultation were used to inform strategy for Hackney Education and the Virtual School.
- From May to November 2021, young people from HoT engaged in an extended consultation, led by the Clinical Service. Young people were asked to speak about the struggles of transitioning from 'being in care' to becoming a 'care leaver'. Young people made recommendations which ranged from supporting young people to access advice about entering the private rental market, to developing an in-house life skills programme developed and delivered by Hackney's Corporate Parenting Service. These recommendations have been incorporated into Hackney's Corporate Parenting Action Plan and Sufficiency Strategy which will be launched in January 2023.

Evidence of Impact

Feedback from children and young people in care - annual survey 2022

Each year, the Corporate Parenting Service carries out a survey of our care experienced children and young people to gather their feedback, in order to inform our plans for service development. This year, we have based the survey on the Hackney Promise to looked after children and care leavers, as we were keen to hear how they feel we are doing well and where we need to do better in respect to our promises to them.

105 responses were received and the headline findings against key promises were as follows:

- **We promise that you** will be at the centre of all meetings about you, even if you choose not to attend. Where you do come, you will be supported to take part in a way that feels comfortable for you - 78% of children and young people felt that this promise is being kept.
- **We promise that if** you need to move home, we will share as much information as we can, as early as we can, about why and

where you may be moving to - only 48% of children and young people felt that this promise is being kept. This suggests there is more work to do in this area.

- **We promise to help you** to find the right school, college, course or job for you - 72% of respondents felt this promise was being kept.
- **We promise that when** you are struggling with your emotional well-being we will talk to you about this and try to get you the support you need - 73% of respondents felt this promise was being kept.
- **We promise that we** will let you know all the options that are available to you at important crossroads in your life, to help you make decisions that are right for you - only 56% of children and young people felt that this promise is being kept, clearly indicating an area for focused improvement work.

We plan to use what our children and young people tell us to help inform our priorities for the next 3 year

Corporate Parenting Strategy and Sufficiency Strategy, 2023-2025.

We plan to repeat this survey annually, which will allow the results to be compared with previous years.



Helping and protecting looked after children

Independent Chairs and Looked After Child Reviews

518 looked after children received a review between 1 April 2021 and 31 March 2022, and 1,068 Looked After Reviews took place during that period. Due to the cyber attack we are unable to compare the number of reviews taking place in this year compared to last. However, we are aware that we were able to increase the number of reviews taking place in timescale to 90 % which is an improvement on previous years. Where reviews are not held in timescale the Service Manager will make a note of the reasons for this on the child's Mosaic record. Requests to change the planned date of a Review, if within 6 weeks of the meeting, needs to be agreed by the respective Heads of Service. Depending on the needs of the child the Chair may meet or speak with the child in the interim.

As at March 2022, 56 % of minutes from Looked After Reviews were completed within the timeframe of 15 working days, which was down from 71 % in January 2022. From January - March 2022, 76 % of Looked After Child Reviews were held face to face or in a 'blended' way. Of those reviews which were expected to be held in person (excluding those 6 month paper based reviews for children who have annual review meetings) only 9 Reviews were held virtually to enable the best participation possible at the request of the child.

Following the disruption of COVID-19 to in person meetings, we have moved back to a model of ensuring children are seen in person as part of their review meeting. At times some older children continue to prefer virtual attendance but the Independent Chair will always try to meet with them separately and see their care arrangement. Some children's homes have continued to limit the number of visitors able to attend, to try and limit the

possible infection risks. In these circumstances children are asked which person they would wish to have in person at the meeting.

During 2021/22 93 % of looked after children aged over 4 years participated in their Looked After Reviews in some way whether directly, through an advocate, or another method. 15 % of children were under 4 years old at the time of their review and so there is no expectation of a formal contribution from them, and 6 % of children did not attend or convey their views to the review. This is a slight decrease from previous years. The data continues to show that participation in reviews is good.

Reporting on Independent Chair oversight and escalation has been disrupted by the cyber attack and use of the interim system. The information available to 460 looked after children who had a review in this periods shows that in;

- 64.8 % of reviews - No escalation required prior to review
- 11.3 % of reviews - Escalation made prior to review and issue resolved
- 4.8 % of reviews - Escalation made prior to review and issue unresolved
- 19.1 % of reviews - Escalation required after the review

The vast majority of escalations continue to be resolved before involving Service Manager or Head of Services. There have been no cases which have required escalation to the Director or CAFCASS.

The thematic issues which are being raised through these escalations are fairly consistent over time and include; delay in implementing the Care Plan or specific actions on the Plan, a lack of recording of visits on file, difficulties in relation to family time arrangements, escalations to partner agencies where they had not implemented actions.

Given the national context in the past year in relation to the challenge of finding suitable care arrangements for children, there has been an increase in Independent Chair's concerns in relation to delay in finding appropriate care arrangements for children, when a move had been agreed. Independent Chairs have been mindful that a formal escalation won't change the national care picture, but have utilised the process to review how to support children in their current care arrangements, and consider approaches to searching for alternative care arrangements.

Last year also saw some challenges in relation to staff stability and the impact upon progressing plans for children in the context of staff turnover. Whilst managers were well aware of the challenges within their service area, Independent Chairs continued to highlight the need for reports to be available within statutory timescales prior to meetings, and for there to be staff attendance with knowledge of the child, family and their circumstances.

Evidence of Impact

Feedback from children who had a review during 2021-22:

‘Most of the time I’m confused why it still happens.
It doesn’t always feel like we stick
to a plan in the meeting.’

‘I was able to reflect on the things that I was doing
that could possibly cause mental harm to myself later on.
I was given a choice of multiple options on how to
deal with my mental health in the future.’

‘I get to make a plan that I can stick to - it makes
things feel less confusing.’

‘I like the fact that I received a warning about
the fact that my review was coming up.
It gave me time to think about what I wanted
to talk about.’

‘I get to at least tell them all what I want and
I think they listen to that.’



Health of looked after children

Physical health of looked after children

Further work is required to improve LAC health indicators, particular immunisation levels, SDQ compliance and dental checks. A new workstep is being developed in Mosaic, to use in collaboration with the Looked After Child Health team, to improve real time reporting and help drive up performance.

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

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Hackney	96 %	91 %	95 %
England	90 %	91 %	n/a

The number of children with an up to date health assessment has maintained a comparable performance to the England average.

Percentage of looked after children whose immunisations are up to date

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Hackney	57 %	59 %	56 %
England	88 %	86 %	n/a

The number of children with up to date immunisations is low, and work is underway with the Council's Public Health Service to understand and address this across the City of London and Hackney.

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

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Hackney	81 %	64 %	71 %
England	86 %	40 %	n/a

The number of children with up to date dental checks has improved from the previous year, and is significantly higher than the England average of 40 % in 2020/21, reflecting a dramatic decline in the availability of dental appointments during the pandemic.





Mental health of looked after children

The mental health of looked after children is at greater risk than other children due to their experiences before and during care. Attention is paid to the mental health of our looked after children annually and pre-transition (aged 17.5 years).

The Clinical service has partnered with Corporate Parenting to attend to the mental health needs of looked after children who are out of the borough. This has involved the piloting of a hybrid, then largely online service providing stability to children who are often de-stabilised when changes to their care arrangement occur.

The Clinical service are currently undertaking (as at July 2022) a review of all therapeutic care arrangements to ensure accommodation for our most vulnerable looked after children is attending to their emotional wellbeing and mental health. Securing CCG funding to support this and reduce the burden of high cost care arrangements is also a key element of this work.

There has been an increase in the proportion of Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire indicates 'cause for concern' for our looked after children. This is in line with national reports of increasing concerns about child and adolescent mental health, but is work underway to review how the mental health needs of our looked after children are being met and the CFS clinical contribution to this.

Strengths and difficulties questionnaire	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	England 2020-21	SN 2020-21
Children looked after for at least 12 months aged 4 to 16 with an SDQ score	77.0%	72.6%	82.8%	80%	86%
Average score per child	13.4	11.8	13.8	14	12



••• The mental health of looked after children is at greater risk than other children due to their experiences before and during care. •••



Annual SDQ scores are completed with all children who are looked after by Hackney. A score over the evidence based threshold results in a clinical consultation with an in-house clinician to undertake joint thinking about the mental health needs of each child, followed by a Talk Together Appointment (TTA) - a session with the child, social worker and clinician.

At each child's 17.5 year review, special attention is paid to their mental health here to ensure young people are supported in their transition to adult mental health services where needed. Screens at this point include the SDQ,

PHQ-9 and GAD-7. If thresholds are met, an ongoing clinical consultation is offered to support the social worker and young person to access adult mental health services where needed.

Corporate parenting and the clinical service have undergone a service wide review to analyse data around children who are looked after by us, access to mental health support, unmet need and gaps within the offer to guide a comprehensive offer to address the mental health of looked after children.

● ● ● At each child's 17.5 year review, special attention is paid to their mental health here to ensure young people are supported in their transition ● ● ●





Learning

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 4

The progress for pupils in Key Stage 4 is monitored throughout the year and where necessary individual targeted support is offered. Where it is felt appropriate, 1 to 1 tuition 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.

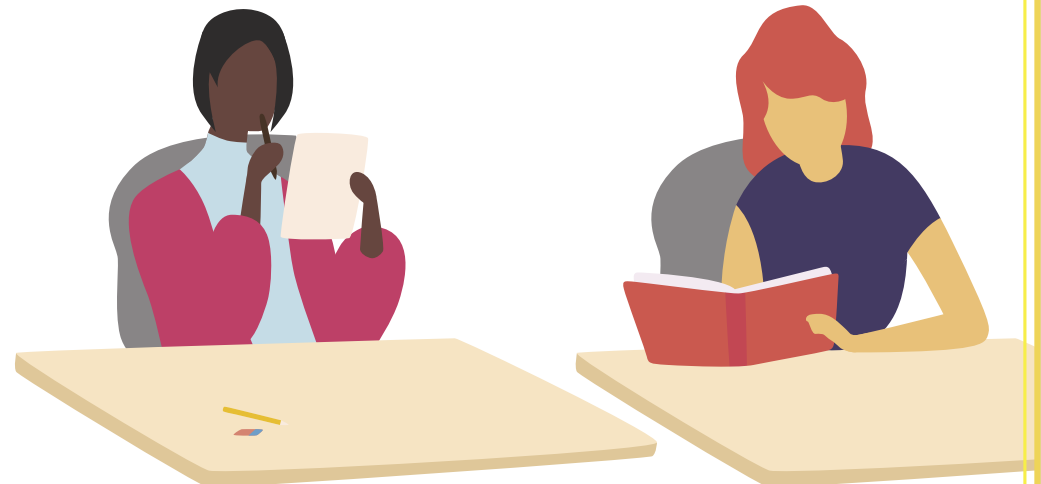
Key Stage 4 Attainment in 2021

Due to the Covid 19 pandemic children and young people did not complete GCSE examinations in 2020 and 2021. All grades were based on teacher assessments which will not be reported nationally. The teacher assessments below are based on all the young people in the cohort, and not as is usually reported, those pupils that have been in care for 1 year and more. This means that the results can be expected to be lower than in previous years. Given the fact that there is a large cohort in year 11 and includes a large number of pupils that it wouldn't usually, the assessments are fairly positive.

Percentage of children achieving Grade 4 at Key Stage 4

	Grade 4 and above
English Language	30 %
English Literature	27 %
Maths	22 %

There are no national comparable measures available for this year.



Key Stage 2

Pupils in year 6 are closely monitored and additional support is provided if it is necessary. 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.

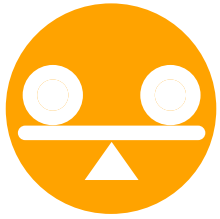
Due to the Covid 19 pandemic children and young people did not complete SATs tests in 2020 and 2021. Children were teacher-assessed against the national standard. The teacher assessments below are based on all the young people in the cohort, and not as is usually reported, those pupils that have been in care for 1 year and more.

Percentage of children working at the required standard at Key Stage 2

	Working at the required standard
Reading	47 %
Writing	42 %
Maths	53 %

There are no national comparable measures available this year.





Stability and permanence

Care arrangement stability

The Focused Visit in February 2019 raised questions about the strength of our planning for children and particularly raised a question about whether there are some children in Hackney that are living in situations where their needs are not being appropriately met for too long. A spotlight on the PLO pre-proceedings process queried whether this was being used enough to support timely decision making for children and parallel planning. Since then, we have introduced systems to ensure senior management oversight at key points for children subject to Child in Need and Child Protection Plans, to help make sure the right decisions are being made for children, at the right time. More attention has been paid to parallel, and triple, planning for children in the PLO process and to ensure this legal framework is being used effectively, early enough, to support long-term planning for children, avoiding the use of care proceedings where appropriate. Over time, our numbers of children in PLO have risen, from 9 children in PLO in July 2021, to 16 children at the end of March 2022.

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

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	Sept 2022
Hackney	12 %	10 %	15 %	14 %
Statistical neighbours	10 %	9 %	n/a	n/a
England	11 %	9 %	n/a	n/a

The percentage of children aged under 16 who have been looked after for more than 2.5 years, who have lived in the same home for over 2 years

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	Sept 2022
Hackney	66 %	77 %	71 %	65 %
Statistical neighbours	71 %	70 %	n/a	n/a
England	68 %	71 %	n/a	n/a

There has been an increase in the number of children experiencing three or more care arrangements over the course of a year - the 2021/22 outturn was 15 % which is higher than the statistical neighbour and national averages of 9 %. There has been a decrease in the proportion of children aged under 16 who have been looked after for more than 2.5 years, who have lived in the same home for over 2 years (71 % in 2021/22 compared to 77 % in 2020/21). Hackney's performance against this indicator is in line with the statistical neighbour and England averages in 2020/21. 2020/21 stability figures were particularly good, believed to be influenced by the context of lockdown in the pandemic. However, further analysis is underway on the cohort of children with 3+ care arrangements and those who have left long term homes to think about what we need to do to address this.

We have also taken steps to improve the process of oversight for planning for children once they enter a legal framework and beyond the conclusion of any legal proceedings, again to help ensure that the right decisions are

made for children, at the right time. For example through our Permanency Planning Meetings, which are overseen by senior managers, and ensure parallel planning is in place to consider alternative routes to permanency for long-term looked after children.

Care arrangement types as at 31 March 2022

Care arrangement type	Number of looked after children
Foster care arrangements	305 (75 %)
Placed for adoption	7 (1.7 %)
Care arrangements with parents	14 (3.5 %)
Secure units, children's homes and semi-independent living accommodation	79 (19.5 %)
Total	405 (100 %)

Care arrangements for looked after children by location at 31 March 2022

Care arrangements location	Number of children
Hackney	120 (26 %)
Under 20 miles from Hackney	227 (50 %)
Over 20 miles from Hackney	71 (17 %)

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

Adoption

Three children were adopted in 2021-22, with ten children adopted in the first six months of 2022-23 alone, all aged under 5 years old. Adoption levels were low in 2020/21, due primarily to court delays related to the pandemic (trend seen across Adopt London North). A significant number of adoption proceedings are expected to conclude in 2022/3.

There have been 16 Special Guardianship Orders (SGO's) in 2021-22, with a further 7 granted in the first six months of 2022-23. Greater attention has been placed over the past year on the prospect of progressing alternative routes to permanency through adoption or SGO for children in long-term care, with a small but significant number of positive outcomes to this approach.





Care Leavers and transitions

Care Leaver information

387 care leavers aged between 17 and 21 were being supported by the Leaving Care service at 31 March 2022, an increase of 11 (3 %) from 376 at the same point in 2021. 357 care leavers were supported at the end of September 2022. There were 63 care leavers aged 22 and older being supported as at 31st March 2022, lower than the 79 supported as at March 2021. This has decreased to 55 care leavers being supported as at 30th September 2022.

	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	SN 2020-21	England 2020-21
% of care leavers aged 19-21 who were in education, employment or training	65 %	56 %	69 %	55 %	53 %
% of care leavers aged 19-21 who were in suitable accommodation	86 %	87 %	88 %	86 %	85 %
% of care leavers aged 19-21 who were in higher education	10 %	11 %	16 %	8 %	6 %

69 % of Hackney care leavers aged 19 or 20 were in education, employment or training in 2021/22. This is higher than statistical neighbours (55 %) and last year's performance in Hackney at 56 %.

The percentage of care leavers aged 19-21 who were in suitable accommodation in 2021/22 was 88 %, an increase from 87 % last year. 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.

There has been an increase in the percentage of care leavers who were in higher education in Hackney - from 11 % 2020/21 to 16 % in 2021/22, much higher than the national average of 6 %.

Pathway plans

Review Pathway Plan data performance has plateaued at around 60 % throughout 2021/22 to end September 2022. The Pathway Plan Panel chaired by the Practice Development Manager has addressed the most overdue Pathway Plans by setting deadlines and providing oversight of the 3 Leaving Care Units, which have large units with allocations between 121-132 care leavers. The length of time between Pathway Plan reviews has reduced significantly.

Updated care leaver local offer

Recent Corporate Parenting priorities for developing the Hackney care leavers local offer have included: housing pathways, employment support and apprenticeship opportunities, virtual and physical spaces for care leavers, subject access requests, access to discounted leisure activities, and council tax exemption for care leavers.

Evidence of Impact

Findings from National Implementation Adviser for Care Leavers visit - May 2022

On 24th and 25th May 2022, Hackney's Care Leaver Service undertook a visit from the National Implementation Adviser for Care Leavers, Mark Riddell. The service was credited for its ambitious, aspirational and passionate leadership management approach. The journey of continuous improvement against the backdrop of the pandemic and lockdowns were noted. A set of recommendations were also given and agreed by senior officers and operational staff, to form part of the follow-up review six months after the visit. These recommendations included: developing the 'Champion Model Approach' and introducing themed Boards, to strengthen the membership of the Corporate Parenting Board, to review the existing Housing Joint Protocol and DWP Protocol, to develop a clear set of pathways to adult and mental health services and for discussions around complexity to begin in care planning when children in care are approaching 14 years. **Five specific recommendations were also suggested as funding priorities:**

- To increase the number of ring fenced jobs and apprenticeships by looking at vacancies across the whole council.
- To review the current Council Tax Exemption in relation to following care leavers nationally.
- To review current caseloads and to consider whether a more multi-agency approach could be developed.
- To develop a health offer 18yrs to 25yrs which could include an offer of dental prostheses and/or glasses, etc. Alongside this to develop an offer to care leavers from the Clinical Service.
- To consider the development of a space for care leavers.

Visit by Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities - May 2022

On 25th May 2022, Hackney was visited by Kim Davis, Senior Youth Adviser in the Homelessness Advice and Support Team. During the visit, key strengths were identified in Hackney, including:

- Committed officers services who are open and motivated to prevent homelessness and improve outcomes for young people.
- Homeless and Rough Sleeping Strategy includes a clear focus on young people and care leavers.
- Homelessness Partnership Board in place.
- Housing Need leadership attendance at Corporate Parenting Board.
- Newly commissioned young person accommodation pathway April 22 with plans to increase provision in 2022.
- Edge of Care Service gives quick access to therapeutic and practical support to strengthen relationships to keep families together.
- Trauma and Psychologically informed approach - training for officers and embedded in commissioning.

Five recommendations were made to improve practice for young people, including the need to:

1. Review practice and assessment arrangements for homeless applicants to ensure compliance with legislation and the DfE/ DLUHC Joint Guidance Provision of accommodation for 16 and 17 year olds who may be homeless.

2. Update websites to provide user friendly advice and information for vulnerable groups, including care leavers and 16/17-year-olds.
3. Ensure Duty to Refer awareness across Children Services is improved, embedded in delivery, practice and recorded accurately.
4. Design a program of training and briefings across Housing Needs, Children's Services, and the wider community, to update and improve awareness of your youth homelessness practice, protocols, joint working, and support services available
5. Review current practice on accommodation and transition planning for care leavers, to start earlier, so care leavers are better informed, skilled and prepared for independent living and do not have to go via the homelessness route to access accommodation.

A 16/17 Year Old Homelessness Protocol is near completion and there is a plan to roll out with briefings to all relevant staff. From this point on all young people presenting as homeless will receive an improved service. The service is also developing a Google site for our Care Leaver Offer. 16/17 year olds will form a part of a wider piece of work on the Children and Education web presence. Ongoing work on care leavers housing includes exploring a wide range of options and initiatives to improve pathways, including a joint contract with housing for post-tenancy support from Settle, a voluntary organisation.

Preparing for independence audit in June 2022

14 audits were undertaken of looked after children aged 17/18 or carers of children that age, across Looked after Children, Care Leavers and Fostering, with 38% of audits rated as Good or Outstanding. Good practice included strong relationships between practitioners and children; strong Pathway Plans, which were written to the child in an engaging and accessible style; strong planning in place around the child or young person's accommodation options, both pre and post 18 and the quality and consistency of supervision records was praised specifically in 6 audits.

Areas for improvement included the need for more detailed exploration about specific independence skills; Pathway Plan recording needing to be up to date and in timescale; in some cases, there was a need for more frequent, consistent and persistent attempts to engage care leavers who have recently transitioned to adulthood, particularly those who have enhanced support needs; more attention could be given to the support needed by children transitioning to adulthood around family relationships; fostering recording, of visits and/or supervision and Independent Chair escalations -needing sufficient evidence on the child/carers file that the issue had been fully responded to and addressed.



The Impact of Leaders on Social Work Practice with Children and Families

Following a significant number of changes to our practice model in 2021, work continues to fully embed these changes and ensure that staff at all levels fully understand the expectations of their roles. Good progress is being made in terms of our focus on anti-racist practice and leaders are appropriately refining the approach to quality assurance to evidence the quality of practice and impact of changes. The complex work to develop

a comprehensive case recording system for the Children and Families Service has resulted in the successful reintroduction of Mosaic in April 2022, which staff have welcomed. Work continues to develop and mature our corresponding reporting ability now that we have a reliable and safe recording system.

...The complex work to develop a comprehensive case recording system for the Children and Families Service has resulted in the successful reintroduction of Mosaic in April 2022...





Strategic Leadership

Cyber attack

Hackney Council was victim of a criminal cyber attack in October 2020. This meant that staff were unable to access any historical case file information or reporting data on Mosaic as well as other critical council systems. Hackney Council immediately created an interim system that enabled us to continue working with families. The immediate recovery programme involved a drive for practitioners to record case summaries for all of their children and young people, whilst working with partners to gather as much information about the children and young people we were working with. The next phase involved working with our service provider to restore information that had been held on Mosaic.

In October 2021 a decision was made to restore Mosaic as our main case management system. A programme team was established and reported to a weekly Board meeting chaired by the Director of Children's Services. The programme was complex and involved migrating records from the interim system, matching historic records, developing cyber security with a new cloud based system and training all of our staff on Mosaic as the recovered system was not identical to the pre-cyber system. Work continues on recovering some historical data that has not yet been restored. There are still some data quality issues relating to data but we now are in a good position to meet statutory and local reporting requirements.

On 4th April 2022 the Children and Families Service returned to Mosaic. The development of live reporting tools (QlikSense) continued and has been live since July 2022. The decision to go live with Mosaic in advance of reporting tools being ready was to enable us to have accurate information to submit for statutory returns. Managers are now able to track progress of work at a level they had not been previously.

Historically Hackney Children's Centres have not been part of our recording system, and as part of our continued development, we plan to introduce all children's centres on Mosaic by December 2022. The impact of the work to restore Mosaic means we have a compliant and safe records system.

Driving improvement

CFS Service Improvement Action Plan

The service developed an improvement plan stemming from Ofsted findings in 2019. A further Ofsted visit in July 2021 showed significant improvement which enabled the service to reflect on which of the previous recommendations required further action, which have been successfully implemented or could be incorporated into 'business as usual' and what we need to consider to develop true ambition for our services for Hackney Children. In late 2021, the Children's Senior Leadership Team (CSLT), devised a refreshed plan and thematic areas agreed are as follows:

1. **Proud to** be Hackney
2. **Proud to** keep children safe and listening to Children and Families in the shaping of our services:
3. **Proud to** work with partner agencies to keep children safe and help children and families get the right support at the right time
4. **Proud to** work with partners to improve safety for children during adolescence in all contexts
5. **Proud to** be Anti Racist
6. **Proud to** promote a learning culture focused on outcomes for children, where great practice can flourish.
7. **Proud to** support our workforce to do their very best for children in Hackney

The full detailed Refreshed Children's Action Plan 2022 was launched in January 2022 and published publicly in February 2022. New governance arrangements have been established to drive and oversee progress and developments with the Children's Action Plan, this has included a new Service Improvement Monitoring Meeting (SIMM) Chaired by the Group Director for Children and Education. The SIMM meets every two months, reporting into the Children's Leadership and Development Board (CLDB), which meets on a bi-monthly basis, co-Chaired by the Chief Executive and Group Director, Children's and Education. An exercise has been underway throughout August and September 2022 to revise and streamline the existing Children's Action Plan which is in the process of being finalised, this process is expected to be completed by the end of September 2022 with a new public facing version published by the end of the calendar year. In addition the leadership team (Director and Head of Services) has met to undertake a weekly activity of 'action sprints' which has progressed work of the Children's Action plan and our Anti-racist action planning.

Progress against the Children's Action Plan continues to be overseen and monitored by a senior Governance Framework which includes a Children's Member Oversight Board (CMOB) and Children's Leadership and Development Board (CLDB). The Mayor and Deputy Mayor of Hackney Co-chair the Children's Member Oversight Board and the Chief Executive and Group Director Co-Chair the Children's Leadership and Development Board.

The action plan is also managed using an Agile approach with weekly 'Sprint' meetings chaired by the Director of Children's Social Care and attended by Strategic Leads with responsibility for overseeing and driving activities in relation to their respective areas of the action plan. These meetings are used to identify challenges and blockages as well as noting successes against the actions stipulated in the plan. This is a dynamic group which provides active scrutiny of developments against the plan and holds leads to account.

Focus on increasing the line of sight of senior leaders and management oversight

A number of changes were introduced in 2021 to increase the line of sight from senior leaders to frontline practice:

- Need to Know Briefings from March 2021 to ensure a clear line of sight up to the statutory Director of Children's Services on practice where there are matters of high risk, including for children and families.
- The regular quality assurance forum for all line managers up to the Director of Children and Families (more information on this is in the Learning Culture section below).
- The realignment of the Practice Development Manager role.

This is a culture change for Hackney and there is more to do:

- Develop a systemic senior leadership programme to ensure that a clear, robust, consistent practice leadership approach is established and embedded.
- Clarify respective roles and responsibilities for all positions in the management structure, particularly with respect to strategic development and service-wide practice improvement.
- Develop of a new Manager Action Learning Set.
- We have updated our Matrix of Responsibility to outline decisions being made at the right level of seniority at the right time in accordance with the child's needs, risk and harm

Supervision

The supervision model changed as a result of the significant changes we made to the Unit model approach in 2021, with children now allocated to individual social workers as opposed to a social work unit. From April 2021, individual Reflective Case Supervision was rolled out, supported by mandatory training. There is a focus on management oversight to ensure

that supervision is consistent with practice standards. Following the re-introduction of Mosaic, we are now able to track supervision timeliness across the Service and forward plan for future supervision so that managers have oversight of the progress we are making to support children and their families.

The Monthly Performance Oversight Board tracks performance including in respect of visits to children and supervision to drive forward improvements in practice. There have been some staffing and performance concerns contributing to the timeliness of supervision completion and uploading to files. A new supervision template is currently being trialled in the Child in Need Service to identify ways to streamline the process which currently requires practitioners to complete part of the form in advance. Fortnightly tracking meetings have been set up within the Child in Need Service as of September 2022

In line with the development of Hackney's practice model, Heads of Service have been developing the Hackney group supervision model which will draw on Systemic, trauma-informed and anti-racist practices, allowing us to embed and uphold the techniques that sit within these methods. The group supervision model is currently at its concept stage, where it is being co-produced by Practice Development Managers across the service. This is in addition to individual supervision and it is to enhance worker development.

Changes to the Hackney model of social work

As services integrate under one Hackney Children and Education Directorate, we will develop a practice model that underpins our approach in children's social care, education and health. We aim for the principles of this whole-system approach to be clearly embedded in how and why all professionals in Children and Education work with children and families living in the borough. A central drive for this change is that more can be done in Hackney to support children and families to facilitate change, support resilience and improve the life chances of all children living in Hackney.

A relational approach will inform the way we think about children and families. This approach will be led by three key methods used by Children and Families, Education and Health to underpin this Relational Approach which are:

1. Systemic Theory (used widely in CSC)
2. Attachment and trauma informed practice (used widely in Education)
3. Anti-racist practice (developed and used across CSC, Education and health)

These 3 approaches are threads that are currently being weaved together under the relational approach and vision for Hackney Children's Services. We aim for our Practice Model to provide clear techniques for practitioners across the service to work with children and families. As of July 2022, a Practice Model Working Group has been established which consists of multi-agency representatives to create a clear articulation of the developing model. This stage involves co-production with reference groups in each service area, ensuring the narrative is co-developed with front line staff, partners and families.

Alongside the development of a clear narrative, Heads of Service and the Systemic Lead are completing a strategy and workforce development plan to ensure the practice model is implemented and embedded clearly and coherently across the Children and Families Service. This includes:

- Training across the workforce to understand and embed the practice model approach .
- Development and implementation of the group supervision model.
- A systemic senior leadership programme to ensure that a clear, robust, consistent practice leadership approach is established and embedded.

A director and project team are in the process of being appointed to lead this work across the group directorate to align SEND, Early Help, CAMHS

and social care. This will enable children to receive more holistic and timely support to meet their needs. It is anticipated this work will take 12 months to bring about the shape of the services we need and the workforce and development to embed and flourish.



Anti-Racism

Our ambition is for leadership and practice with children and families take a pro-active stance to address racism, discrimination and inequality and are in the early stages of the following:

Research through a lens of disproportionality is beginning to allow us to understand and identify common factors and tailor effective interventions earlier. Deep dive and case study analysis has been a useful tool to take a birds eye view across the system and support in the identifying of common patterns and allocation of resources in a cost effective manner. In line with our Anti-racist approach, the first of these took place when designing the Edge of Care service where over 80% of referrals were from children (largely boys) from Black African and Caribbean backgrounds. We will be closely monitoring the impact of this service through 2022 with a view to seeing a reduction in the number of boys from Black African and Caribbean backgrounds becoming and remaining Looked After in late adolescence

We have CFS statutory complaints process to ensure it is restorative and trauma informed in responding to all complaints, including those about racism and discrimination- our most recent responses to complaints about racism now evidence our acknowledgement of the impact of systemic racism upon children and families and the action that we are seeking to address

We have developed and launched our Anti-racist Practice Standards in April 2022 - over the course of the next 6 months we will expect to see practice change to become anti-racist in accordance with our Practice standards- we will then undertake an audit to measure the extent to which this is embedded across the whole of CFS late 2022- early 2023. We have also developed an Anti-racist Corporate Parenting Commitment that will be embedded over the course of the next 6 months and audited in the autumn 2022 to measure impact for our children in care.

We are engaging statutory partners and local areas that use Stratford Youth Court to adopt a deferred prosecution scheme to address the significant disproportionality in the rates of conviction and remand of Black boys- we hope that this will be implemented by June 2022

We are providing constructive feedback to partner agencies where we have concerns about racism or microaggressions on behalf of our children and families- this will be evidenced on children's files and is starting to be captured on an anti-racism log

We will be engaging children, families and communities in co-producing an anti-racist principles, values and our strategy and action plan through 2022 and 2023

Our action plan is in its early stages of implementation so the measurement of impact is limited. Staff have told us in surveys that there is more visibility and openness in discussions about racism which is the first key step. Analysis of the feedback from our Anti-Racist Praxis Conference that took place in May 2022 has shown an increase in understanding across the staff base in knowledge and skills around the topics covered, but the impact for children and families as a result of improved practice will be a longer term outcome to be seen.

Evidence of Impact

Anti-Racist Praxis Conference - May 2022

Across the week of 9-12 May 2022, staff in the Children and Education Directorate were invited to attend an Anti Racist Praxis Conference, focusing on the process of unmasking, repairing and preventing the hidden wounds of racial trauma, in attempts to address racialised trauma experienced within services by our Black and Global Majority children and families. The conference followed a hybrid in-person and virtual framework to deliver a series of keynote speakers and several workshops across the four days, aiming to equip staff with vital knowledge and skills to begin to understand and unpick the trauma of racial oppression. Learning objectives were set for the conference participants were set as follows:

1. Have an increased understanding of the impact of systemic racism and white supremacy in relation to racial trauma - and how our practice and some educational approaches can contribute to this problem.
2. Identify strategies to counter and support racial trauma i.e a trauma-informed approach to improve and enhance practice.
3. To begin to apply our systemic principles in practice in relation to racialised trauma in order to provide maximum care and support for our children and families who are Black or from Global Majority ethnic communities.
4. Developing anti racist practice in schools and by professionals.

The conference has been evaluated to better understand the learning, impact and outcomes which can be applied to further better practice. So far the conference has been widely viewed as positive, engaging, and a pivotal moment in shaping and giving directive to our CFS anti-racist objectives to make change. 16 Recommendations are given in the briefing paper split into three core themes - 'People and Community', 'Developing the Workforce' and 'Practice and Policies'.

Feedback was collated from attendees across the week, and the evaluation of this feedback shows notable improvements in knowledge of the subject matter - with the average self-assessed ratings of knowledge on a 1-5 scale moving from a 3 (42.2%) at the start of the conference, to 5 (54.7%) at the end. Presentations were also deemed as clear and interesting, as well as meeting the learning objectives set for the conference. Some of the overall evaluation points and ongoing commitments according to attendee feedback are captured below:

There is a need for Hackney Council to better understand, acknowledge, and work against structural and institutional racism, with the Conference acting as a catalyst to understand the consequences of racial trauma and seek accountability, responsibility, ownership and commitment across the system. Going forward, the plan is to utilise the full conference briefing paper as a reference document to support activity to develop and deliver the outputs and actions from this conference and embedding thereof.

Child Q

Child Q was referred to our LADO service in 2020 following the notification by health professionals of her experiencing a strip search in school. LADO enquiries were initiated alongside a Child and Family Assessment, which has led to longer term support through early help and our CAMHS services. The Local Authority notified the City and Hackney Safeguarding Partnership who made a collective agreement to undertake a Child Safeguarding Practice Review with notification to the National Panel.

In March 2022, the Child Safeguarding Practice Review for Child Q was published following consultation and engagement with Child Q and her parents. A multi-agency action plan is in place in response to the findings within the CSPR for Child Q to create change in addressing structural racism and adultification. In June 2021, training for multi-agency staff on Adultification was initiated by the CHSCP. Our staff have a good awareness of the risk of adultification of Black children so are mindful to ensure that they are thinking safeguarding and child first when supporting older Black children and have also escalated concerns about potential adultification by partner agencies to ensure a safeguarding first and child focused approach.



Workforce and caseloads

Staff wellbeing

The Children and Education leadership team continue to hold regular all staff drop ins on issues that affect the entire service. Other spaces to generate staff feedback and act as safe spaces have included peer support sessions, and Brave Space to Talk About Racism - led by the Director of Children and Families for all staff in the service. The senior leadership team recognised that the publication of the CSPR for Child Q was triggering for staff, particularly from Black and Global majority backgrounds in the context of the racialised trauma. In response to this the Children and Education Directorate set up a series of peer support sessions for staff, including some exclusively for Black and Global majority staff to respond to racialised trauma.



A survey in respect of staff experiences of racism was undertaken by our Promoting Racial Equality Leadership Group in May 2021. This survey highlighted the need for support to staff who have experienced and continue to experience racialised trauma within the workplace, within their communities, in the wider context of society and internationally. Peer Support Groups in response to racialised trauma were piloted from October to December 2021 and an evaluation shared with the Chief Executive and senior leadership team in February 2022. Scoping is underway to develop a longer term strategy to support staff who experience racialised trauma.

Staff Reference Group

The Staff Reference Group, is chaired by the Director of Children's Social Care, has continued to meet on a 6 weekly basis. The group is open to all staff members with takeup from four out of five service areas currently represented. The group's role is to act as a critical friend and sounding board, supplying an additional line of communication to and from the director and staff. The staff reference group has met to discuss topics such as Child Q reflections amongst staff, and the service improvement Children's Action Plan.

Reflective practice groups

Group-based reflective practice spaces are offered by the Clinical Service to staff within the Children and Families Service. Debriefing and practice reflection sessions are also offered following adverse incidents.

Workforce data

Children and their families need to get the right help at the right time. We need to ensure work flows effectively through the service and that proportionate responses are offered in accordance with the needs or risk of harm to children - this should appropriately manage demand and create capacity in the service. We need effective challenge and leadership of the Early Help system and implementation of the recommendations from the Early Help review / Early Help implementation board is required- e.g. consistent use of Early Help Assessments and acceptance of delegated authority across targeted early help provision. We have recruited 2 additional Early Help Practitioners which will free up social work capacity in MASH and offer a more tailored approach to families requiring Early Help.

Increasing robustness at the front door - increasing use of Early Help Hub, Consultation Line and 'Senior' social workers to provide capacity and assistance with this.

Transfers and step downs must progress in a timely way if not be expedited to free up capacity - we should have delays for children due to capacity issues once ongoing plans are identified. Managers will regularly meet to ensure this is reviewed and troubleshoot and avoid and plan for potential delays.

Percentage of agency social workers

	2019	2020	2021	2022
Hackney	28.1 %	32 %	22 %	27.4 % *
Statistical Neighbour	23.1 %	22 %	21 %	n/a
England	15.8 %	15.4 %	15.5 %	n/a

*Draft figure which may be subject to change

Vacancy rate for permanent social workers

	2019	2020	2021	2022
Hackney	24 %	23 %	23 %	28.8 % *
Statistical Neighbour	22 %	21 %	22 %	n/a
England	16 %	16 %	17 %	n/a

*Draft figure which may be subject to change

Percentage rate of social worker turnover

	2019	2020	2021	2022
Hackney	8.3 %	15.9 %	11.7 %	19.2 % *
Statistical Neighbour	16.8 %	16 %	19 %	n/a
England	15.1 %	13.5 %	15 %	n/a

*Draft figure which may be subject to change

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

	2019	2020	2021	2022
Hackney	18	16.4	14	14.3*
Statistical Neighbour	15	14.0	15	n/a
England	17	16.3	16	n/a

*Figure for quarter 1 2022. Annual figure for not yet available

Recruitment and Retention

There has been an increase in staff turnover over the past year, and challenges in recruiting and retaining social workers. This is reflective of a national issue and we know from speaking to other local authorities that they are experiencing the same issue. Where we have recruited staff, they may be less experienced, and require increased support from managers to ensure high-quality practice.

As at 31 March 2022:

- There were 171.5 FTE permanent social workers
- There were 63 agency social workers, representing 27 % of our social work (increase from 22 % in 2021)

In December 2021 we reviewed our approach to recruitment and retention and identified short term actions that could be taken to recruit and retain permanent staff. This paper included an analysis of exit interviews for permanent staff including their reasons for leaving. Further to this, a business case for a market supplement is in development and the potential to offer agency workers longer term or permanent roles has been confirmed. We have focused on rolling recruitment of permanent social workers as well as filling vacancies with agency workers - there has been a drive to ensure we have a balance of experience in our staff group. We have adjusted our pay rates accordingly.

From 1 June 2022 until 31st May 2024, the London Pledge has been introduced across all London Councils. This is a pan-London commitment by Children's Services system leaders to work cooperatively and transparently to manage the agency market, improve the quality of agency staff and regulate pay rates within Children's Social Work. This London Pledge is designed to address challenges related to the workforce of Children's Social Work Professionals with focus on the supply and quality of agency workers through evidenced protocols and a commitment to transparent and co-operative working. The Boroughs agree that they will:

- Pay agency social worker staff at set rates
- Work proactively to convert agency workers to permanent roles within 6 months.
- Adopt a common referencing standard
- Not employ any qualified social worker leaving a permanent contract to take up an agency contract with another authority within London for a minimum of 6 months after leaving the permanent post
- Commit to a 3-week notice period both in candidates joining and leaving placements, committing to adopting a reciprocal offer between agency workers and councils to minimise immediate or quick departures and the associated impact on children and the permanent workforce.



Learning culture

Continuing to strengthen our approach to Quality Assurance

The Hackney Children and Families Services Quality Assurance Framework provides insight into the quality of practice 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. Following the restructure of the Safeguarding and Learning Team to the Quality Assurance and Improvement Team last year, work has been underway to convert our Quality Assurance Framework into a Learning Framework and this should be ready for September 2022. Work will then continue into 2023 to fully embed this. This will ensure that the focus of our quality assurance activity across all of the Children and Families Service is on learning - about the quality of our practice with children, and about what is effective in improving this. Services will routinely implement dedicated learning slots at service and team meetings in order to reflect on learning from Quality Assurance.

In audit activity - we have refocused our efforts to embed moderation of all full Live Learning audits, using a moderation tool to capture moderators findings. This model is being extended across all routine service area audits. We have improved audit follow up - with full audits that have scored 'inadequate' or 'requires improvement' followed up after 3 months to ensure that practice has improved for those children. The most recent follow up in March 2022 found that practice had improved in 64 % of cases. The next follow up is taking place in June-July 2022. Quarterly audit reporting across the whole of the Children and Families Service has been re-introduced

and these reports are shared with the Group Director as well as the whole service.

Independent Chairs

We have introduced a mid-point monitoring between Looked After Reviews and Child Protection Conferences and engaged Independent Chairs in our audit programme. The consistency of the Midway's being completed was impacted due to the move back into the Mosaic system but this is now a workflow within the system and monitoring of the completion of these will be reintroduced. When Midway Oversight were last audited in August 2021 in 74 % of audits they demonstrated good monitoring of the plan and action being taken where any drift or delay was identified. This will be further supported by the creation of an escalation workflow in Mosaic to better track escalations, responses, and how this resolves the issue identified.

Learning from Independent Chairs is shared at the Children and Families Service regular quality assurance forum DQIP (further information about this meeting is below). This includes information about the volume of Child Protection Conferences and Looked After Child Reviews that have been held, and whether reporting timescales are being met by professionals.

Improving Outcomes for Children Forum

The Service has recently reviewed our current arrangements for the scrutiny of practice and performance which is currently held across two separate systems and meetings - a monthly CFS Performance Board and bi-monthly Driving Quality, Improvement and Performance (DQIP) forum. A revised 'Improving Outcomes for Children' forum is to replace the current approach. This new forum will be a central Children and Families Service meeting to

reflect on the quality of practice in the service. The forum will form a key part of the Children and Families Service Quality Assurance Framework. Chaired by the Director of Children’s Social Care, this will have a critical role in the oversight of the Children and Families Service. The Board will scrutinise practice against the Practice Standards that have been set across CFS providing high challenge and high support in respect of the quality of practice and performance indicated through data and learning from quality assurance. Increasing transparency and accountability within the system, ensuring that managers at all levels provide practice leadership and take responsibility for improving outcomes for children. The board ensures that we really know ourselves as an organisation, as well as providing evidence of the impact of quality assurance in driving improvement in practice. This new forum will focus on each cohort of children according to their status and journey through the system, scrutinising practice and highlighting strengths that can be built upon, agreeing purposeful actions to support continuous practice improvement. Cohorts will be as follows:

- A) Children with a potential need for support- Decision making in MASH and the Early Help Hub and Children open for an early help or statutory assessment
- B) Children in Need of Help and Protection - the quality of intervention and support for children through Family Support, Child in Need, Child Protection Plans, pre-proceedings and Disabled Children, children whose parents are supported by DAIS
- C) The Experiences of Children who are in Care, including those are open to Care Proceedings, children who are placed for adoption, Children who have left Care, children who are placed for Adoption and Foster Carers
- D) Children who are supported through pre and post Court youth justice disposals

The forum will take place every month. Each cohort of children will be scrutinised on a quarterly basis for a minimum of 2-3 hours, depending upon the size of the cohort and complexity of issues arising.

Evidence of Impact

Impact of audit activity

To better monitor and evidence the impact of audits on practice and outcomes for children, CFS are undertaking review audits for each child who has had an audit undertaken on a quarterly basis. Practice Development Managers were provided with training and guidance on how to best undertake these dip samples in March 2022 and in June 2022. For June 2022, 35 dip samples were completed of files graded inadequate or requires improvement between April 2021-May 2022.

Areas of good practice

- A third of files improved to be rated ‘good’.

- Actions from the previous audit had been addressed in 80% of files - 29% fully and 51% partially.
- Auditors felt practice had improved in 89% of files - 40% fully, 49% partially.
- The child’s voice was evident in all but 2 files.
- The plan was progressing for children in 88% of files - 55% fully, 33% partially.

Areas for improvement

- 63% of files were graded requiring improvement, and 1 file was

graded inadequate, demonstrating less improvement in practice than the previous round of dip sampling.

- Concerns in these files mirrored that of the findings in the previous round of dip samples, including lack of recording which made it difficult for auditors to evidence progression of plans and risk management for children.

'Inadequate audits' have been highlighted by the auditor to the relevant Head of Service and Service Manager. All audits still rated as 'requires improvement' or 'inadequate' will be escalated to the relevant Service Manager and Head of Service for management oversight to be added to the child's file.



Financial Update

The outturn for 2021/22 for the Children and Families Service on a net budget of £61.6m was an overspend of £2.4m after use of grants and reserves of £11.8m including a drawdown on the commissioning reserve of £3.97m and £6.3m of Social Care Grant funding. The overspend of £2.4m includes £1.2m of Covid-19 related expenditure incurred by the service. There has been a requirement to draw down from the commissioning reserve since 2012/13 due to the increase in complexity and the number of children in care.

The financial position for 2022/23 is a net budget of £64.2m for the Children and Families Service, and the service is forecasting to overspend by £1.6m (as at October 2022) after use of reserves and drawdown of grants totalling £13.1m (including full use of the commissioning activity reserve of £4.6m and £8.5m of Social Care Grant funding). Within the current forecast, cost reduction proposals have been agreed by the service to reduce the overspend within the year, and these are tracked on a monthly basis.

The Children and Families Service has continued to make contributions to the efficiency agenda of the Council. Over the previous nine years the service has delivered £11.9m savings with a further £650k targeted to be delivered in 2022/23. The increase in commissioning costs has been driven by an increase in complexity and the number of looked after children since 2011/12. 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. The service continues to be proactive in recruiting in-house foster carers to meet demands across the service.

Hackney has also seen an increase in residential placements since 2015 adding considerable budget pressures with an average annual unit cost of £263k. There have been some improvements more recently in the number of residential placements, and the service is working proactively to reduce the level of placements. 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 £11.2m in total included in the budget across a number of financial years.



Front cover photograph by Sean Pollock