

**CHILDREN
& FAMILIES**

Annual Report to Members

2022/23



Working for every child

 **Hackney**

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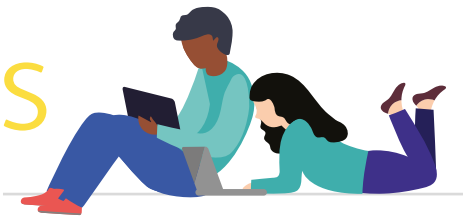
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Foreword

I am pleased to introduce the Children and Families Service annual report for 2022/23.

In October 2023, the Children and Families Service took part in the council-wide month-long Anti-Racist Summit on the theme of 'Building Better Together'. I was proud to see the array of workshops, lectures and events available and enthused and inspired to see that the first day of the conference was sold out, with an additional 2,700 individual viewers joining us online! It is now for all of us, to continue to challenge our own practice and behaviour and strive to build an anti-racist culture, for ourselves and for the children and families of Hackney.

It is over a year since the Child Safeguarding Practice Review for Child Q was published, with the City and Hackney Safeguarding Partnership

publishing a subsequent update report in June 2023. The importance of this Review cannot be overstated and we are seeing the repercussions of this work play out at a national level. In September 2023, the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) released the findings from their investigation into the treatment of Child Q calling for a 'substantial review of policing powers relating to strip searches of children' and confirming that four Metropolitan Police Service officers should face gross misconduct hearings. More than ever, we are certain that our continued focus on Anti-Racist Practice for our children and families is critical.

We are very proud that inspectors were impressed with our strong direct work and impactful practice when they came to jointly inspect

our Youth Justice Services in Hackney at the beginning of this year, and rightly saw how advanced our Anti-Racist Practice is, and how deeply our practitioners care about the children we support. We are excited to work with our partners as we progress on our journey to deliver outstanding services.

The last twelve months have also seen progress in our work to improve the systems and tools available for our workforce. Having re-embedded Mosaic as our primary case recording system, and continuing to mature our data reporting capability to support leaders to oversee and understand practice.

This has also been supported by the embedding of our Improving Outcomes for Children Board, bringing together our data, performance and quality

assurance learning. This means we are in a strong position as we navigate our services through the post-pandemic period. Our service is also working to co-create and roll out a STAR (Systemic, Trauma Informed and Anti-Racist) framework and transform how our internal services are set up for delivery, aligning with Hackney Education over the coming year.

I want to thank the Interim Chief Executive, Dawn Carter-McDonald for her input, and all staff for their hard work, commitment and dedication to the children and families of Hackney. I also want to acknowledge all of Cabinet, in particular Mayor Woodley, Cllr Etti, Cllr Fajana-Thomas and Cllr Williams, Corporate Parenting Board members and Councillors for their input and support over the past year.

Councillor Anntoinette Bramble

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



Priorities for the year ahead

Our **Children's Action Plan** was refreshed in February 2023 and builds on the work outlined in previous plans and is organised around five thematic headings:



1. Proud to be Systemic, Trauma Informed and Anti-Racist so that our practitioners can flourish to achieve the best outcomes for children and families: 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: We will ensure that the voices of children and their loved ones shape both the support plans offered to individual children and families, as well as the strategic development of our services.



3. Proud to work with partner agencies to keep children safe and to help children and families get the right support at the right time: We will ensure there is a culture of collaborative work with partners in Hackney to keep children safe and improve their outcomes. We will listen to and be appreciative of multiple perspectives to consider 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 children during adolescence in all contexts: As they journey towards adulthood, young people in Hackney will experience safety in the context of their families, peer groups, schools and neighbourhoods, as well as online. We will foster person centred support and engagement, through trusted and empowering relationships that are informed by knowledge of adolescent development and contextual safeguarding. Young people will be encouraged to challenge their ideas and test their capabilities; finding out about themselves and others, whilst gaining information and skills to develop their own agency, independence and to support wellbeing.



5. 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.



Key data about the Children and Families Service

*Please note that all data contained in this report is accurate as of the time of reporting but can still be subject to change



4,148 referrals were received in 2022/23 a 16% increase from 3,559 received in the previous year. 1,950 referrals have been received between April and September 2023.



3,998 social work assessments were completed in 2022/23 a 23% increase from the 3,244 completed in the previous year. 1,854 assessments have been completed between April - September 2023.



181 children were supported on Child Protection Plans as at 31st March 2023, a 14% decrease from 211 children at the same time in 2022. 208 children are supported on a Child Protection Plan as at 30th September 2023.



An estimated total of 16,811 young people accessed universal services offered through Young Hackney during 2022/23, based on 154,030 named and anonymous attendances.

This is in line with 16,676 accessing Young Hackney Universal services during 2021/22. Young Hackney delivered targeted support to 1,410 in 2022/23, which is

in line with the previous year with 1,471 young people in 2021/22.



392 children were looked after as at 31st March 2023, a 3% decrease from 405 children at the same time the previous year. 390 children were looked after as at 30 September 2023.



185 children entered care during 2022/23, a 13% increase from 163 children in 2021/22. 73 children entered care between April - September 2023.



50 children aged 16 and 17 entered care in 2022/23, a 24% decrease from the 66 young people from this cohort entering care in 2021/22. This represented 27% of the total number of children who entered care in 2022/23, compared to 40% in 2021/22.



14% of children in care had three or more care arrangements within the last 12 months as at 31st March 2023, equal to 14% at the same time in 2022. 12% of looked after children had three or more care arrangements as at 30 September 2023.



65% of children, under the age of 16, who had been in care for more than 2.5 years were in stable care arrangements of more than 2 years in 2022/23, a decrease from 71% in 2021/22. 69% of children, under the age of 16, were in stable care arrangements at the end of September 2023.



409 care leavers aged between 17 and 21 were being supported by the Leaving Care service at 31 March 2023, a 5% increase from 391 at the same point in 2022. 378 care leavers were supported at the end of September 2023.



There were 291 children and families allocated to the Clinical Service for direct work in 2022/23, a 32% increase from the period 2021/22.



The Experiences and Progress of Children Who Need Help and Protection

We are proud of the assessment of our Youth Justice Services, rated as 'Good' by inspectorates following a joint Youth Justice Service inspection from December - February 2023. Our early help plans are making good progress and we have introduced early help practice standards to embed our approach. We have stabilised staffing in our Assessment Service, improved the timeliness of our assessments and continued to embed our early help pathway.

This means that children are likely to access early help more quickly and will only be supported through statutory plans when necessary. Planning and court work is strong with clear management oversight in place. There is good work taking place across the service and our focus is on ensuring consistency of support to all of our children and families.





Early Help

Early Help and Family Hubs

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 wherever possible, prevent escalation to statutory services.

The Council's Early Help services are part of a wider offer across Hackney; including schools and settings, the health sector and the community and voluntary sector.

Between 2019-2022, Hackney Council undertook a review of its Early Help Model in consultation with parents and young people, schools, partner agencies and staff. The review assessed the effectiveness and accessibility of pathways into targeted early help and how the existing organisation of provision reflected current and projected patterns of need within Hackney. The review included Children's Centres and Children's Centres Multi-Agency Teams (MATs), the Family Support Service and Young Hackney. The review has produced a refreshed vision for Early Help in Hackney and identified a series of operational changes we have been embedding since January 2022. Our vision is that Early Help in Hackney involves connected services working together to ensure that all Hackney's children and young people, and their families, have access to the opportunities, resources and support needed to set them up for whole-life success.

Our review has highlighted that we need:

- Visible, approachable services that are local to children, young people and their families, and that they trust.
- Effectively communicated support, and clarity and consistency about how to access this support.

- Support able to meet the needs of the whole family, especially parenting capacity.
- Services that are built on trusting and consistent relationships with practitioners and services, so that engagement with children, young people and their families is the basis of all support.
- 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 and impact, as well as young people and families being able to provide feedback and shape support.

Our progress to date includes:

- The introduction of a shared set of Early Help Practice Standards.
- One 'Request for support' form which will all be screened by the Early Help Hub.
- A consistent step-up/ step-down protocol between Children's Social Care and targeted Early Help.
- The Hackney Wellbeing Framework will continue to be embedded across Early Help services.
- One case-management system for all Early Help services, with the ability for improved information-sharing with partners, in-line with GDPR and consent.

Our upcoming activity includes:

- Designated Child and Family Hubs will deliver support on a locality basis aligned with Primary Care Network (PCN) Neighbourhoods.
- Building awareness of the Early Help Hub across the partnership and embedding the Early Help Practice Standards across the Council's Early Help services; through a shared quality assurance framework, inclusive of key performance indicators and development of a Qlik Sense dashboard to monitor performance alongside impact evaluation of individual cases.
- Multi-agency Early Help Strategy developed through engagement with partners (including schools, health, police and the Community and Voluntary Sector), led and agreed by an Early Help Partnership Strategic Group - ensuring a shared responsibility for the delivery of Early Help.
- Identify and embed actions for the delivery of Anti-Racist Practice in Hackney Council Early Help services.
- Inclusion of Early Help Services as a specific focus for the Improving Outcomes For Children Board chaired by the Director of Children's Social Care providing high challenge and high support in respect of the quality of practice and performance as indicated through data and quality assurance.
- Undertaking a holistic review of the Young Hackney Service to understand the impact of delivery on outcomes for young people, and to consider the future direction of the service in light of increasing financial pressures on the Council.
- Ongoing co-production of service improvements, working with families to understand how we can continue to shape Early Help services work with families.



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 16,811 young people accessed universal services offered through Young Hackney during 2022/23, based on 154,030 named and anonymous attendances. This is in line with 16,676 accessing Young Hackney Universal services during 2021/22. Young Hackney delivered targeted support to 1,410 in 2022-23, which is in line with the previous year with 1,471 young people in 2021/22.

Evidence of Impact

Early Help Routine Audits

From April - September 2023, the Young Hackney Service undertook 13 full audits looking at practice in the service, with 62% rated as good.

Findings:

- 69% of children were visited in line or partially in line with practice standards within the last 6 months.
- Key documents were on file and of the quality required for 77% of children.
- Key decisions were on file and justified fully for 62% of children and partially for 31% children.
- For 46% of children there was evidence that key meetings/ reviews were undertaken within timescales, and that decisions from these meetings were actively followed up. This was partially the case for 46% of children.

- The quality and progress of the plan was good for 54% of children.
- Practice around the voice of the child was good or outstanding for 69% of children.
- Management oversight was good or outstanding for 54% of children.

Feedback from children and families about Young Hackney support:

- Feedback from parent: *‘Thank you for spending time with [child] over the last few weeks. [Child] has enjoyed talking to you and sharing her thoughts with you. Personally, I want to say thank you for showing up for her and coming when you said you would. It’s the little things that mean a lot to her. Also your insight into how we can better communicate and navigate through our emotions were very helpful’.*

- Feedback from child: *'Our conversations helped me a lot as I was able to understand things in a different perspective. Our little walks around the area were fun, thanks for seeing me for me'.*
- Feedback from a parent: *'I was blown away by the support we received from [Practitioner] from Young Hackney, it was beyond my expectations and I will always be grateful for the guidance my son, and I received. Not only did [Practitioner] create a great space for the family to be open, but he was quick to grasp the intricacies of the post-separation abuse my family*

suffers, without judgement. In addition to doing a cracking job in helping [Child] manage his emotions, ([Child]'s mood visibly improved for days after each meeting, which accumulated as the sessions progressed), he provided solid guidance and support for me when dealing with Hackney Children Services. Furthermore, when [Child]'s frustrations flared up recently, [Practitioner] made an appointment to see [Child] without hesitation! [Child] and I wish to thank [Practitioner] and Young Hackney for helping my family through a tricky time. He is truly a 'man of the people'.

“...Our little walks around the area were fun, thanks for seeing me for me”





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.

	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
No. of first time entrants to Youth Justice system in Hackney	79	67	54

The overall number of young people entering the youth justice system for the first time in Hackney in 2022/23 was 54, a 19% decrease from 67 young people in 2021/22. This remains below national and statistical neighbour averages.

Evidence of Impact

[Link to video of DT](#) talking about his engagement with the Prevention and Diversion Service.

[Link to video of LS](#) talking about the impact of his work with Your Choice Programme and the Youth Justice Service.

91% 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 in the 12 months that followed (the 2022/23 cohort outcomes will be reported by November 2023). 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 some cases faced extremely serious charges against them. It is important to note that these children face challenges in relation to a range of areas of their lives namely adverse childhood experiences, multiple and prolonged services' interventions; parental mental health and/or substance misuse; trauma; school exclusion; unemployment and extra-familial risk. Such complexity of need requires a partnership response across all statutory and voluntary agencies to lead to more impactful results.

Turnaround

The Turnaround Project is a 3 year nationwide project funded by the Ministry of Justice, offered to every Youth Justice Service in the country. The project aims to prevent young people from becoming involved in crime and reducing risks of offending behaviours reoccurring by working in partnership with a range of practitioners across the Children, Families and Education Service, police, health practitioners and Voluntary & Community sector partners and divert them from further contact with the youth justice system. The project has been fully operational for 6 months and the delivery team are currently working with approximately 35 children. The most common referral pathway is children who have been released on police bail. The cohort of children working with the Turnaround Project reflects the demographic seen within Prevention & Diversion and Youth Justice with the majority of children identifying as male and Black and Global Majority. Whilst it is too early to report on any meaningful outputs we feel confident that there are early indicators that the project will meet the intended performance targets for our borough.

Stop & Search Project

In March 2022, in light of the publication of the Child Q report, it became apparent that the Stop & Search page on the Young Hackney website needed to be reviewed. In parallel, our partners in the Met police wanted to develop the use of a QR code that officers can share with young people and adults who care for them in relation to knowing their rights around Stop & Search.

The aims of this collaborative partnership project were:

- to increase transparency of decision-making by police around their use of stop & search powers; empower young people to seek support and/or make complaints if they have experienced stop & search negatively in Hackney and address the disproportionate impact of stop & search on Black and Global Majority children in Hackney as suggested by data;

- to provide ways for children to express their views and experiences and seek support through a range of organisations;
- to identify sources of support for children who found the experience traumatic.

Recent development of this project will include the production of a video that summarises young people's rights and sources of support; the publication of a guide on stop & search for neurodiverse young people, with input from Speech and Language therapy partners, and information on seized property and long bail terms.

In terms of data usage regarding the Young Hackney Stop & Search webpage, from April 2023 to November 2023 the webpage received 764 visits, 612 of which were unique users. From December 2022 - November 2023, 147 scans of the QR code have taken place.

Evidence of Impact

HMIP Joint Inspection of Hackney Youth Justice Services

Hackney Youth Justice Service has received an overall rating of 'Good' following a joint inspection led by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation, and colleagues from HM Inspectorate of Constabulary, Fire and Rescue, the Care Quality Commission, Ofsted Education and Ofsted Social Care. The inspection took place over December 2022 - February 2023 and the [published report can be viewed here](#)

Inspectors were impressed with Hackney Youth Justice Service's anti-racist position – overseen by the Safer Young Hackney Strategic Board, which underpins our plans for the future. Inspectors found high-quality work is delivered by youth justice workers who mirror our diverse local population.

Inspectors identified that more could be done earlier in the process for children committing less serious offences; better screening and assessment of children, before a decision is made to progress a child to a formal court process, could help divert additional cases into a more appropriate response.

Inspectors asked children and their parents/carers for their thoughts on the service. The response was overwhelmingly positive and reflected inspector findings that the team are genuinely motivated by their work and passionate about the prospects of every child.

The report makes six recommendations to Hackney YJS and an action plan was submitted to HMIP on 26th May 2023 outlining how these recommendations will be addressed.



Domestic Abuse Intervention Service

The Domestic Abuse Intervention Service (DAIS) works with anyone experiencing domestic abuse or harming others through domestic abuse who is living in Hackney and aged 16 or over. 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. DAIS also intervenes with those harming others through domestic abuse to reduce the risk they pose. DAIS leads within the Council and across the partnership on Eliminating Violence Against Women and Girls: strategy, policy, campaigns and practice development.

None of the over 8,000 clients that have been referred to DAIS (operating since 2016) have ever been killed or have killed anyone.

The average weekly number of referrals into DAIS across 2022/23 was 29, 12% higher than the weekly pre-Covid rate of 25 cases per week and from the 2021/22 rate of 23 per week. During 2022/23 and in 2023/24 DAIS has increased its offer of training to the Hackney partnership and it is believed this, along with campaign work, increase in awareness has led to greater confidence in the public and professionals accessing help for domestic abuse. The rate of 'high risk' domestic abuse heard at MARAC in 2022/23 fell which indicates that more domestic abuse is being identified and reported sooner, allowing for an early-intervention approach to be taken.

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. In 2022/23 there were 97 suitability assessments for the programme, 23 participants in the programme, 13 who left the programme during the year and 7 people completed during the year. Alongside the formal programme (offered as a group and also individually) DAIS provides consultation and intervention on those who are harming others who are not suitable for a structured programme of intervention.

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. Between 2019/20 and 2021/22 'high risk' cases heard at MARAC rose from 492 in 2019/20 to 694 in 2021/22 which was a rise of 41%. In 2022/23 there has been no rise in overall numbers; 691 'high risk' domestic abuse cases were heard at Hackney's MARAC. 327 (47%) of MARAC cases had children under 18 within the home. This proportion (around half of all cases having children in the home) has remained constant over the years.

“...more domestic abuse is being identified and reported sooner, allowing for an early-intervention approach to be taken...”



Evidence of Impact

Domestic Abuse Intervention Service Routine Audits: April - September 2023

In 2022/23, management conducted 44 audits of DAIS work. 70% of audits found practice to be good or outstanding.

From April - September 2023, the Domestic Abuse Service undertook 12 full audits of practice, with 75% rated as good.

Findings:

- 83% of referrals were allocated within 48 hours.
- The client's voice had been captured in 75% of audits.
- All of the client's histories and vulnerabilities were taken into account.
- 92% of child/adult safeguarding concerns were properly identified and responded to.
- There was evidence of robust case management and supervision, ensuring effective recording practice and appropriate support from intake to closure for all clients.

- There was a copy or record of the SafeLives Risk Identification Checklist on 67% of files.
- There was evidence of a sensitive response to cultural and diversity needs of 42% of the clients.

In 2022/23, 42 DAIS clients gave feedback via a simple online survey. Key data:

- 98% are happy with the service
- 90% feel safer
- 86% feel their cultural / identity needs were taken into account
- 95% would recommend DAIS to a friend / family member experiencing domestic abuse



Identifying and responding to children's needs and appropriate thresholds

Contacts, referrals and assessments

Contacts

	Outturn 2020/21	Outturn 2021/22	Outturn 2022/23	Apr - Sept 2023
Number of contacts	11,473	12,313	14,248	7,193
% of contacts progressing to a referral	26 %	29 %	29 %	27 %

There has been a 16 % increase in contacts over the past year, however this has not yet reached pre-pandemic levels when contacts were at approximately 16,000 (2019/20). 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. The majority of London authorities have experienced increased demand and the [ADCS Safeguarding Pressures Phase 8 Report](#) details an overall increase in safeguarding activity nationally in the last 2 years.

Purposeful work has been undertaken through the revision of the Hackney Child Wellbeing Framework, the shift to a Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub, an Early Help Hub, changes to the way contacts are recorded and the introduction of a consultation line. The positive impact of the consultation line means that requests for support not meeting statutory intervention are not processed as contacts. However, there is still some 'oversharing' from some agencies, mainly the Police, which is being addressed.

Referrals

	Outturn 2020/21	Outturn 2021/22	Outturn 2022/23	Apr - Sept 2023
Number of Referrals	2,930	3,559	4,148	1,950
Rate of Referrals per 10,000 population	459	639	744	350
Statistical neighbours	497	579	606	n/a
England	494	538	545	n/a

	Outturn 2020/21	Outturn 2021/22	Outturn 2022/23	Apr - Sept 2023
Percentage of cases which were re-referrals which had been open in the past 12 months	18 %	17 %	20 %	20 %
Statistical neighbours	18 %	18 %	18 %	n/a
England	19 %	22 %	20 %	n/a

There has been a 16 % increase in the number of referrals received over the last year, compared to a 21 % increase over the previous year which reflected the post-lockdown period. Re-referrals within 12 months at the end of March 2023 were at 20 %, which is higher than statistical neighbours and on a par with England for the same year. 29 % of contacts proceeded to referrals last year, in line with 29 % for the previous year.

Assessments

	Outturn 2020/21	Outturn 2021/22	Outturn 2022/23	Apr - Sept 2023
Number of social work assessments completed	3,858	3,244	3,998	1,854
Rate of assessments per 10,000 population	604	538	718	333
Statistical neighbours	477	533	589	n/a
England	518	533	557	n/a

	Outturn 2020/21	Outturn 2021/22	Outturn 2022/23	Apr - Sept 2023
% of social work assessments completed within 45 working days	78 %	82 %	69 %	82 %
Statistical neighbours	94 %	90 %	90 %	n/a
England	89 %	84 %	82 %	n/a

The number of completed assessments has increased by 23 % over the last year, compared to a 16 % decrease over the previous year, this is less than the pre-pandemic period in 2019/20 when 4,923 assessments were completed, representing a rate of 771 per 10,000. The percentage of assessments completed within 45 working days was 69 % last year compared with 82 % the previous year; this was due to a combination of staffing and management capacity. Staffing and leadership in the Assessment Service has now stabilised following new recruitment and retention measures. Management oversight and accountability has improved and assessment timeliness has steadily improved: it is currently at 82 % for April to September 2023 .

In 2022/23, 67 % of assessments completed resulted in no further statutory social work action, a slight decrease compared to 70 % in 2021/22. While small, this decrease is a positive development in the context of the introduction of Early Help Assessments within the Family Support Service in April 2022 and how they continue to be embedded within the service. 67 % of assessments completed resulted in no further statutory social work action as at the end of September 2023. This is an area of focus for the service and for particular application of the STAR lens.

“...this is a positive development in the context of the introduction of Early Help Assessments within the Family Support Service in April 2022 and how they continue to be embedded within the service.”

Evidence of Impact

Assessment leading to no further social work or early help action - April 2023

As a result of continuing high numbers of assessments leading to no further social work or early help action, a dip sample of 50 cases was undertaken.

Findings:

- 94% of referrals met the threshold for statutory or early help assessment (Hackney Child Wellbeing Framework)
- In 98% of audits, the outcome of the assessment was in line with thresholds
- In 98% of audits, the auditor did not think that an alternative course of action could have been taken - confirming that pathways are working correctly

- In 42% of audits, there was no clear recording of consent for assessment - this is being analysed further but indicates that our interaction with some families has been incorrectly reported as an assessment with no further action, when they have withdrawn consent for the assessment or moved out of Hackney

Recommendations:

- A Mosaic workstep was introduced that allows for clearer reporting on when families do not give/withdraw consent for assessment or move out of Hackney. Since July 2023, the workstep introduced on Mosaic now means that we are able to accurately report on those families who did not give consent for the assessment to take place or who moved out of the area.

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. Organisations are required to appoint a Designated Safeguarding Lead to whom the allegations are reported. The Designated Safeguarding Lead then reports any allegations to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) who has the responsibility to manage and have oversight of all allegations against people who work with children.

The LADO service received 355 contacts during 2022/23 which is an increase of 44 (12%) on the previous year (311 contacts). It is therefore evident that, other than during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown, there remains a continued trajectory of year-on-year increases in the number of LADO contacts received.

The occupations with the highest number of contacts were school support staff (26%), teachers (26%) and nursery workers (12%). An increase was noted for both school support staff (by 3%) and nursery workers (by 5%) with teachers showing a decrease (by 3%) compared to 2021/22. 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 in schools and day care provisions, compared with health or leisure facilities for example.

Evidence of Impact

Compliment received about the LADO service:

- *'[Professional] at a hospital stated that [Staff member] had been assisting in a hospital matter concerning a staff member and attended as "expert witness", at a hearing earlier this week. They wanted to commend [staff] stating that her knowledge base is clearly very comprehensive, but that she is also incredibly personable and measured in her responses. Her delivery and input into the hearing was succinct, professional, clear and without falter - I have been grateful throughout the process for her counsel, support and expertise.'*

“...Her delivery and input into the hearing was succinct, professional, clear and without falter...”



Making good decisions and providing effective help

Strategy Discussions

The City and Hackney Safeguarding Children Partnership (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 and tracks the progress of multi-agency improvement actions.

1,326 Section 47 investigations began last year, a 61 % increase on 825 the previous year (which was particularly low due to data recording issues as a result of the cyberattack). This represents a rate of 238 Section 47 investigations per 10,000, which is more than statistical neighbours (203 in 2021/22) and the England average (180 in 2021/22). In 2019, our Section 47 data was a count of 942, but this represented 1,572 individual children. In 2019 a decision was made to report on Section 47 episodes but we have now reversed this decision in line with Department of Education requirements to report on individual children. The current Section 47 data therefore represents an overall decrease of 15.6 % in individual children being subject to Section 47 investigations since 2019.

We have also identified through audits that we have a high number of Section 47 investigations where there have been concerns around physical chastisement or domestic abuse and where those concerns are quickly

dissipated with parents expressing remorse and willingness to engage in support and/or a swift safety plan has been put in place. There is an over-representation of Black and Global Majority parents in this cohort and we are reviewing our practice in the light of our STAR principles and application of the principles of the Children Act 1989. We are addressing this operationally by working with Police colleagues to review threshold application in order to reduce the number of unnecessary Section 47 enquiries where a Section 17 assessment would be an appropriate and supportive intervention for the child and family. At a strategic level we are addressing this through the CHSCP to ensure the evidence is clear, the partnership supports and understands the direction and the service is held to account.

23 % of Section 47 investigations progressed to an Initial Child Protection Conference in 2022/23, a decrease from 32 % in 2021/22. This is lower than statistical neighbours (31 % in 2021/22) and the England average (34 % in 2021/22). Following an audit on this in the summer of 2022, we introduced practice guidance on Strategy Discussions, Section 47 Investigations and Convening an Initial Child Protection Conferences in March 2023. 31 % of completed Section 47 investigations progressed to an Initial Child Protection Conference between April and September 2023.

Evidence of Impact

Disproportionality in Section 47 investigations dip sample - September 2023

37 dip samples were undertaken across CFS looking at Section 47 investigations where there were incidents of physical chastisement to consider whether there was disproportionality in decision-making. 29 of these were looking at practice in A&A units, with 4 in Child in Need units and 4 in other units.

Findings:

- In 87% of cases, it was appropriate to escalate to a Section 47.
- In 62% of cases, this was a joint investigation with another partnership agency such as the Police.
- Ethnicity was discussed during the Section 47 process in 14% of dip samples.
- There was evidence of a disproportionate response in correlation with children's ethnicity.

- The threshold seems to be lower for police intervention when it comes to black families.

Recommendations to improve practice included:

- Ensuring that the evidence for threshold is met - where the child has experienced or is at risk of experiencing significant harm
- Police should only become involved in visiting families where the threshold for significant harm has been reached or is very likely to be reached;
- Culture, ethnicity and identity need to be considered more consistently in the strategy discussion and Section 47 process.
- Where children or parents disclose experiences of racism from social workers or partner agencies, the anti-racist practice guidance outlines our duty to support the family to challenge this.

Children supported on Child in Need Plans

	July 2021	Sep 2021	July 2022	Mar 2023	Aug 2023
Snapshot of children supported on Child in Need Plans	699	619	495	421	465

The number of children supported on Child in Need Plans in September 2023 has decreased in comparison to July 2022, and remains below numbers in 2021. This decrease is linked to increased oversight by managers to ensure that children are on the correct plan according to thresholds. 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 of Child in Need plans at agreed points is occurring and is evidenced on the file and reducing drift.

Evidence of Impact

Sexual Harm Live Learning Audit - June 2023

27 audits were completed and the percentage of audits scoring good or outstanding overall was 67%.

- Strong practice was found around consideration of children's identity, with 21 audits scoring good or outstanding for this aspect of practice (78%).
- Management oversight required improvement, with 14 (52%) of audits graded good for this area of practice.
- There was a correlation between accessing and following advice in child sexual abuse consultations and good practice in response to concerns.

Following this audit, the following actions have taken place or are in progress:

- Practitioners have been reminded about practice guidance on working with families affected by CSA, supported by a '7-minute

guide' on how to respond to a disclosure or concern about sexual abuse.

- Hackney CFS has embedded the CSA consultation process into practice, where discussions about threshold and decision making for children at risk of CSA take place.
- Multi agency practice guidance to support work with the non-abusing parent/partner will be reviewed and re-circulated across the partnership.
- Children who are at risk of CSA need to have clear case notes on file specifically detailing the safety plan including contact arrangements with the alleged perpetrator/person posing the risk of CSA, with 'safety plan' named in the case note title. This expectation will be circulated in a service-wide email bulletin.

Children Supported on Child Protection Plans

The number of children supported on Child Protection Plans decreased by 15% (from 211 to 181) over the course of last year. The rate per 10,000 of children supported on Child Protection Plans has also decreased, from 38 to 33 as at March 2023 which is significantly below statistical neighbours (42) and national average (42) for the previous year. As at 30th September 2023, there were 208 children in Hackney supported on Child Protection Plans. This is a rate of 37 per 10,000, compared to 44 per 10,000 for statistical neighbours in 2022/23.

Our rate per 10,000 last year was also lower than our rate the previous year. This decrease in the rate is despite a 13% increase in Initial Child Protection Conferences, with 301 held in 2022/23 compared to 267 in 2021/22. There was a 5% increase in children ceasing a Child Protection Plan over the last year, from 267 up to 281.

Through the course of the pandemic we saw an increase in some of our longer Child Protection Plans where children were subjects of Care Proceedings and living at home. As these proceedings have come to a conclusion we have seen a decrease in the number of Child Protection Plans. London neighbouring boroughs are reporting a similar reduction in Child Protection numbers, as families are also moving out of London due to cost of housing and cost of living crisis, evidenced through the closure/merging of schools across London due to falling pupil numbers.

85% of Child Protection Plans were reviewed at a Review Child Protection Conference in the required timescales last year, compared to 91% the previous year. This is in part due to staffing challenges and train strikes impacting Conference timescales. In addition, we always aim to be trauma-informed and collaborative in our approach with parents, which may mean some Conferences being held outside of the statutory timescale if this is in the child's best interests. 5 Conferences took place outside of the statutory timescale where this was to support full parental engagement; any conference held outside of timescale is agreed by the Head of Service.

The numbers of children starting and ceasing Child Protection Plans have both increased over the course of last year, with a 7% increase (from 242 to 258) in the number of children becoming the subject of Child Protection Plans and a 5% increase (from 267 to 281) in the number of children ceasing to be subject to Child Protection Plans. Of the 181 Child Protection Plans open the end of March 2023: 70 (39%) had been open for under 3 months; 45 (25%) had been open for 3-6 months; 52 (29%) had been open for 6-12 months; 14 (8%) had been open for 1-2 years; and none had been open for more than 2 years.

Number of children supported on Child Protection Plans

March 2021	March 2022	March 2023	Sept 2023
237	211	181	208

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

	March 2021	March 2022	March 2023	Sept 2023
Hackney	37	38	33	37
Statistical Neighbour	39	42	44	n/a
England	41	42	43	n/a

Duration of closed Child Protection Plan (percentage)

	March 2021	March 2022	March 2023	April to Sept 2023
Under 3 months	34 %	19 %	17 %	25 %
3 - 6 months	31 %	12 %	9 %	13 %
6 - 12 months	32 %	38 %	42 %	47 %
1 - 2 years	20 %	30 %	29 %	14 %
2+ years	3 %	1 %	4 %	1 %

Between April 2022 and March 2023, 44 children were supported on a Child Protection Plan for a second or subsequent time (17 %). This is higher than 10 % in 2021/22, but lower than statistical neighbours (19 %) and the England average (23 %) in 2021/22. There was a 7 % increase in children becoming subject to a Child Protection Plan over the last year from 242 children up to 258 children.

Evidence of Impact

Live Learning Audit on Domestic Abuse - December 2022

31 audits completed looking at the support provided to families where domestic abuse was present. The percentage of audits scoring good overall was 55%.

- Strong practice was seen where the Safe and Together approach and multi-agency work was used.
- Auditors noted appropriate escalation to the Public Law Outline (PLO) process and Court where there was lack of progression working in partnership with families on Child in Need or Child Protection Plans to protect child(ren).
- There was a lack of safety planning seen on files.
- There was a theme noted of children who have experienced trauma receiving autism diagnoses.

- There were difficulties in finding housing for non-abusive parents, reflecting the housing crisis in London and nationally.
- Inconsistencies in the recording of ethnicities on the system was highlighted.
- Where abusers were not engaging, emphasis to keep the children safe was put on the non-abusive parent.

A number of recommendations were made following this audit, supported by an action plan which is tracked by the Improving Outcomes for Children Board and the monthly Service Manager Audit Meeting:

- All children who are experiencing domestic abuse need to have safety planning on their file. Work to develop our reporting capability around this is underway, and practice guidance has been refreshed and shared with staff in the spring of 2023.

- Practitioners should be curious about autism diagnoses in children who have experienced trauma and ensure that children are also supported appropriately to access trauma support. Trauma-informed training will be developed as we progress our STAR (Systemic, Trauma Informed and Anti-Racist) practice model.
- The approach to working with domestic abuse in Hackney CFS must be in line with Safe and Together and DAIS practice. The

DAIS team will be visiting each service area to reinforce the Safe and Together model and understanding of the work DAIS undertakes with families.

- Managers need to ensure there is support for staff working with those experiencing abuse, promoting emotional support and highlighting the availability of training around this. This will also be developed as we progress our STAR practice model.

Child Protection Plans - visits

As at 14 September 2023, 75% of children supported through Child Protection Plans had visits undertaken and recorded within 10 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 and a monthly performance monitoring meeting if there are regular or persistent issues with recording. There are also a small number of families (20 families) supported through Child Protection and Child in Need 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 at monthly Frustrated Access meetings.





Public Law Outline (PLO) - Pre-proceedings and Care proceedings

On 31 March 2023, there were 29 children in pre-proceedings compared to 12 children in pre-proceedings in September 2022. As at the end of October 2023, there were 32 children in pre-proceedings.

	2019-21	2020-22	2022-23
Hackney number of care applications	78	51	87
Hackney care applications per 10,000 child population	11.8	7.6	15.6
England care applications per 10,000 child population	10.5	9.6	N/a

On 31 March 2023, there were a total of 139 children in care proceedings. We issued care proceedings for 129 children (a total of 87 care applications) from 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023. The overall increase in number is as a result of covid delays and the increasing length of Care Proceedings, meaning children are subject to care proceedings for longer. We have had an increase in the number of Supervision Orders, Special Guardianship Orders and Child Arrangement Orders. As at the end of October 2023, there were 139 children (94 Care Applications) subject to care proceedings.

The time taken to complete care and supervision proceedings was an average of 58 weeks in Hackney in 2022/23, compared to the London average of 52 weeks in the same period, and the national average of 47 weeks for 2021/22. This is an increase for Hackney from 47 weeks in 2021/22, reflecting the national picture 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. As at the end of October 2023, the average for Hackney has reduced to 55 weeks.

In December 2022, Her Honour Judge Roberts and Family Justice Board agreed to implement the President’s campaign to get back to implementing the pre-proceedings process and to complete public law cases within 26 weeks, the plan is called “Making Cases Smaller.” Key aspects of that plan are: no more than three Hearings for any care proceedings case (currently on average there are 6) and an expectation that experts are commissioned only where absolutely necessary.



Clinical Support

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 virtue of their experiences prior to coming into care. 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 available for all families and individuals open to the Children and Families Service. The main part of this offer is consultation offering advice and guidance to support the lead practitioners own practice, through consideration of the type of support that may best meet a child's needs, what sort of assessment might be required and whether the inhouse Clinical Service or another specialist service is most suitable to offer support.

- 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 children supported on a Child in Need plan, a Child Protection Plan or Children in Care. This includes Talking Together appointments and a range of short and medium clinical interventions.

As at 31 March 2023, the Clinical Service had received 263 referrals (within the quarter), this included 135 consultations, 40 Talk Together Appointments, 3 requests for Court work, 59 requests for direct allocation, 11 referrals for residential review, 10 referrals into the Edge of Care Team and 5 referrals into SURGE. Overall in the period 2022/23 there were 291 children allocated for direct work, a 32% increase from the period 2021/22 (220 children). The interventions being delivered for these children included (but are not limited to) assessments within PLO/ Care Proceedings and specialist assessments, cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT), child psychotherapy, family therapy, art therapy, individual therapy with the child and/or a parent (or a combination of both), couples therapy, eye movement desensitisation and reprocessing (EMDR) therapy, and other systemic interventions.

● ● ● 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. ● ● ●



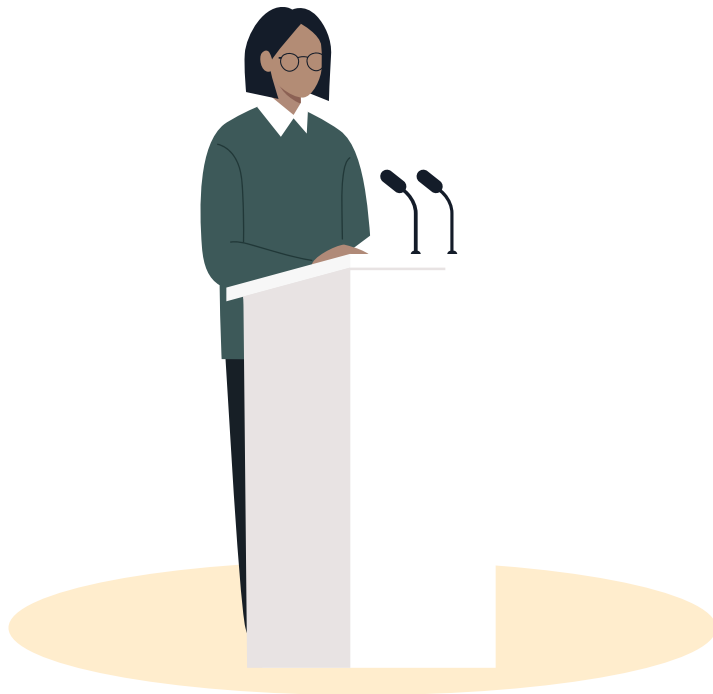


Participation and direct work with children and families

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 twenty-four elected members of the Youth Parliament including six elected leaders and three deputies for 2023 – 2025.



Children's Rights Service

Hackney's Children's Rights Service provides a range of support to children and young people who are, 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 peoples' voices be 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.

In 2022/23, 513 children were offered support by the service. 386 of these young people were referred during the calendar year, the remaining 127 children were open to the service prior to 01/04/2022. 56 % of children offered support from a Children's Rights Officer accepted the service. Of the 45 % of children (169) who declined the service, the vast majority of these were children 53 % (90) were automatically offered advocacy following an Initial Child Protection Conference.

During 2022/23, 1,302 missing episodes were recorded, in relation to 265 children. Due to the ongoing impact of the cyber attack, full data in relation to Return Home Interviews is not available. However, of the data available (865 missing episodes), Return Home Interviews were offered in relation to 81 % of episodes, and accepted in 32 % of cases. There is a practice expectation that Return Home Interviews should take place within 72 hours of a child returning, this was met for 66 % of Return Home Interviews.



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

Safeguarding children during adolescence

In March 2023, in response to a locally commissioned report on serious youth violence, 'Living in Fear', we introduced the process of convening Initial Child Protection Conferences where the risk of significant harm is identified as being solely outside of the family home. Previously these children would be supported primarily through a Child in Need Plan and Initial Child Protection Conferences were held where the risk was identified inside of the family home, or both inside and outside of the family home. These Child Protection Plans are monitored by the Head of Service and we will be reviewing and monitoring the impact of these plans on children's outcomes.

Neglect

Following the feedback from Ofsted during our ILACS inspection in 2019 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 the NSPCC to introduce the Graded Care Profile II (GCP2) 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. After significant effort in developing an implementation plan and identifying over 20 practitioners as trainers in line with the licence expectations of the NSPCC, the actual tool itself was released to local partners for consideration. This was some months after the CHSCP's initial agreement to implement the tool. On analysis, a number of safeguarding professionals raised significant concerns regarding the GCP2 materials and assessment scorecard, these concerns included that the toolkit used a Eurocentric approach that was not relatable to the majority of families supported in Hackney; the scoring was seen as inconsistent in line with local safeguarding frameworks and appeared to lean heavily towards statutory intervention/ Child Protection Plans. Overall, professionals reviewing the tool were concerned about the impact and potential unintended consequences of implementation, especially considering the licence does not allow for any alteration of the material to adapt it to current practice or location. Given the assessment by partners, it was agreed that the CHSCP would disengage with the GPC2. Given the licences were purchased, the City of London Corporation decided to test the GCP2 within its context (noting that this is significantly different to Hackney's). This is ongoing and the City of London will report back to the CHSCP in due course.

Evidence of Impact

Learning Conversation on Neglect - August 2023

31 learning conversations were completed for children experiencing neglect and the percentage of audits scoring good overall was 41%.

Findings:

- Good practice included strong understanding of children's lived experiences, good management oversight under legal frameworks including PLO and care proceedings, and good multi-agency work to support children's plans.
- Areas of improvement include management oversight when children are not supported by legal frameworks, including timely decision making around the threshold for escalation of support. Some children needed a higher level of support earlier than they received it.
- No single tool/intervention will 'solve' the myriad complex issues facing families. Rather, this takes a multi-pronged approach with a combination of activities to enhance our practice around neglect.

Recommendations include:

- Initiate the use of multi agency chronologies, to inform threshold decisions for families who have multiple contacts with CFS/partner agencies over neglect concerns.
- Neglect practice guidance to be refreshed.
- Legal training for social workers to be delivered around gathering and presenting evidence in respect of neglect in legal proceedings, to ensure that children's circumstances are fully understood in decision making around their plan.
- Research in Practice training 'neglect and working with children in poverty' will be provided to a cohort of at least 25 social workers, with the view to extending this to further practitioners if this is impactful.
- Joint visits will take place for children experiencing neglect, at 3 month intervals, with an experienced social worker.



Disabled Children's Service (DCS)

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.

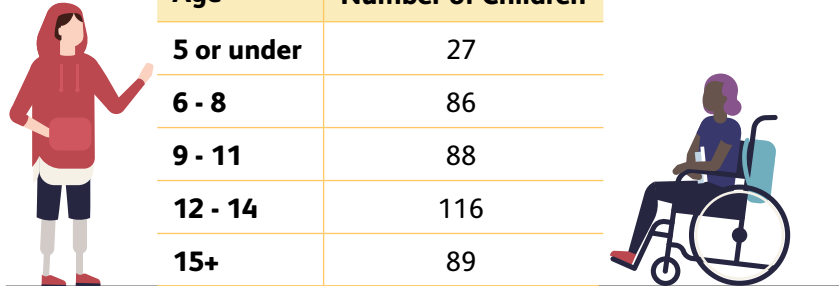
As at the 31 of March 2023, the service was working with 416 children and young people. Of these 143 were female and 273 were male. This is a 5% increase compared to 2021/22, when the service was working with 395 children and young people.

As of the 31 of October 2023, the service was working with 406 children and young people. Of these 123 were female and 283 were male. This is on par compared to 2022/23, when the service was working with 410 children and young people.

There was a reduction in the DCS support due to 32 young people who turned 18 and moved to the adult service and 15 children and young people have moved out of Hackney or decided that they no longer wish to receive support from the DCS. However, between the period 1 April and 31 October 2023, support has been allocated to 54 new children and young people.

Age breakdown of children open to Disabled Children's Service

Age	Number of Children
5 or under	27
6 - 8	86
9 - 11	88
12 - 14	116
15+	89
Total	406



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 2023, there were 1,917 children accessing short breaks provision, 350 of whom also accessed a care package. This is a reduction of 5% of children accessing short breaks since March 2023. This reduction is due to the fact that 149 young people have turned 18 since 1 April 2023 and are no longer eligible to access the Short Breaks service. However, there are approximately 125 applications to be processed, pending provision of proof that the child has a diagnosed disability (a DLA letter).

	March 2021	March 2022	March 2023	Sept 2023
Number of young people accessing short breaks	1,388	1,542	2,042	1917

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 provides greater consistency and ensures that processes are clearer for families. As at the end of March 2023, there were 14 children on Child in Need Plans, 4 children on Child Protection Plans and 4 looked after children 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.

Currently the Disabled Children's Service support is delivered by 32 commissioned providers and 2 spot-purchased providers with plans to develop the overnight provision available to the DCS service by commissioning specific overnight services.

Evidence of Impact

Disabled Children's Service audits over 2022-23

Over 2022-23, there were 11 audits of the Disabled Children's Service looking at children's assessments and plans, with 64% rated as good or outstanding.

Audit findings included:

- Children's voices were promoted.
- Plans were progressing and of good quality.
- Children's fathers and extended families could be involved further as part of the assessment.
- There was more work to do to explore children's identities.

Management oversight has been strengthened in the service, with a Practice Development Manager joining the service at the end of April 2023.

Corporate Parenting audit on working with care experienced children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) - June 2023

For our looked after children in Hackney: more than a third have an Education and Health Care Plan; 7% have a formally recognised disability; 44% of those with a disability have an ASD diagnosis. In June 2023, the Corporate Parenting Service undertook an audit on 5 looked after children and 3 care leavers with ASD. 75% of audits were graded as good or outstanding:

- The work with all 5 looked after children and 1 care leaver was graded as good, 1 other care leaver as requires improvement,

and the other care leaver as inadequate. The audit rated inadequate was followed up by managers using our Inadequate audit follow-up process .

- Regular visits are taking place to looked after children, sometimes more frequently than practice standards. Observations and non verbal methods of communication were evidenced to support communication with and understanding of four children.
- Generally, records offer a good sense of who the children and young people are and their views on the world.
- Four looked after children were observed to present as settled and happy, in what is planned to be their long-term homes, with carers who know them well and are able to respond to their needs. One care leaver was also accessing a specialist educational provision, which he had attended for many years.
- Whilst delays in accessing services e.g. education or therapeutic support, were noted for some children, due to waiting lists or an apparent lack of proactivity about others in the professional network, auditors also commented positively on practitioners persistence in advocating for these.
- Care experienced children and young people with ASD, as well as their carers, may benefit from more opportunities to explore their understanding of their diagnosis and what it might mean for them, now and in the future.

- Practitioners may benefit from greater exploration about what ASD looks like, specific to the child and young person they are working with.

To further strengthen practice, the following actions are underway:

- Corporate Parenting will work closely with the newly appointed Designated Social Care Officer role to ensure specific needs of those with care experience are considered.

- To ensure greater knowledge and expertise of ASD within CFS, the Corporate Parenting Head of Service will work with their counterpart in the Disabled Children's Service, the Workforce Development Team and other senior leaders to scope training and identify support required for the CFS workforce.



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. At the end of October 2023, 9 private fostering arrangements were open to Hackney.



Evidence of Impact

Private Fostering Audits

In September 2023, 6 of the privately fostered children's files open to Hackney CFS were audited.

Findings:

- All audits were rated as good, with 1 rated as outstanding.
- All but one audit had up to date DBS checks for all adults - management oversight was clear for this child and this is being prioritised.
- All arrangements had been reviewed annually and presented to the Care Planning Panel.
- In all cases, parents had not been involved in the most recent assessment of the arrangement.
- 2 Special Guardianship Orders were recently granted for privately fostered children, resulting in a stable home for these children with excellent feedback from the courts.

Recommendations:

- 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. To date, we have completed briefings to Social Workers and students across FISS and MAT.
- Twice a week a social worker from the NRPF/Private Fostering Team sits with the MASH to assist with screening queries when new referrals are received and to ensure the Private Fostering Protocol is followed.
- A private fostering screening tool has been updated and shared with MASH to ensure more effective screening at the front door.

Children missing education

As of September 2023, there were 356 children electively home educated (EHE) by their parents. Whilst numbers started to fall back towards the second half of 2022, we have seen a recent increase in the number of families wishing to educate their children at home.

New referrals receive a suitability assessment within 12 weeks of referral and an annual assessment. 84% of our current cohort were seen within 12 weeks.

Locally, the majority of children missing education (CME) are from the Charedi community. These children attend unregistered education settings (UES) on a full time basis, where we are unable to assess the suitability of their education.

As of September 2023, there are 1,173 registered children missing education, with 1,051 from the Charedi community. Processes are in place

for tracking CME in and out of the borough and steps are taken to visit the known Charedi 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 our Charedi children attend. Some enhancements were included in the proposed Schools Bill which was withdrawn in December 2022.

Locally, our 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 unregistered educational settings and the children who attend them remains a focus for our work.





The Experiences and Progress of Children in Care

In February 2023, we launched our Corporate Parenting and Sufficiency Strategy for 2023-25, setting out our improvement priorities for the next 3 years. We continue to focus on the experiences of our Black and Global Majority care experienced children and young people, who are disproportionately represented, endeavouring to embed our commitment to delivering anti-racist parenting. We have had some success at moving children closer to home and this continues to be a priority area, alongside a

'foster first' approach. We know there is more work to do to secure stability for some of our children, particularly those with the most complex needs. We have strengthened our work for our adolescents on the edge of care, through a new multi-agency Edge of Care Service, reducing the number of 16 and 17 year olds coming into care. We have work to do to improve the timeliness of health checks, with success in improving our dental checks for our children in care that we hope to build on in the coming year.





Making good decisions for children

Information about our looked after children

As of 30 September 2023, there were 390 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 Covid-19 lockdowns, 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

	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	End of Sept 2023
Number of children in care at snapshot date (31 March)	431	405	392	390
Children entering care	185	163	185	73 (April-Sept)
Children leaving care	186	187	204	77 (April-Sept)

Rate of children in care

	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	End of Sept 2023
Rate of children in care per 10,000	68	73	70	70
Statistical neighbours	63	70	65	n/a
England	67	70	71	n/a

The rate of looked after children per 10,000 in Hackney last year is equal to both our statistical neighbours and England for the previous year. Of the 390 children looked after at the end of September 2023, 23 (6%) were unaccompanied minors, with the number of unaccompanied minors remaining below pre-pandemic levels.

Age breakdown of looked after children at 31 March

Age	2021		2022		2023	
	Eng	Hackney	Eng	Hackney	Eng	Hackney
Under 1	5 %	18 (4 %)	5 %	15 (4 %)	5 %	15 (4 %)
1 - 4	14 %	47 (11 %)	14 %	49 (12 %)	13 %	45 (12 %)
5 - 9	18 %	57 (13 %)	18 %	49 (12 %)	18 %	58 (15 %)
10 - 15	39 %	157 (37 %)	39 %	155 (38 %)	38 %	158 (40 %)
16+	24 %	147 (34 %)	25 %	137 (34 %)	26 %	116 (30 %)

Age of children entering care

Age	2021		2022		2023	
	Eng	Hackney	Eng	Hackney	Eng	Hackney
Under 1	20 %	22 (12 %)	17 %	23 (14 %)	17 %	28 (15 %)
1 - 4	18 %	19 (10 %)	15 %	15 (9 %)	15 %	26 (14 %)
5 - 9	17 %	21 (11 %)	15 %	19 (12 %)	14 %	27 (15 %)
10 - 15	26 %	50 (27 %)	27 %	40 (25 %)	27 %	54 (29 %)
16+	20 %	73 (39 %)	25 %	66 (40 %)	27 %	50 (27 %)
Total		185	N/A	163	N/A	185

30 % of our looked after children are aged 16 and 17 and we continue to have a high proportion of adolescents coming into care compared to recent national averages. 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 STAR approach and 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 the end of March 2023, which is in line with 75 % at the end of March 2022. 28 children (7 %) were living in residential homes as at the end of March 2023, a significant decrease from 34 (17 %) at the end of March 2022 and down from a high point of 40 children at the end of March 2020.

The percentage of children entering care by virtue of remand has halved from 9 % in 2021/22 to 4.9 % in 2022/23. New practice guidance on reducing criminalisation of looked after children has been developed.

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 entering care.

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 subject to Care Orders (208 children or 53 %); this has slightly decreased from 54 % for the previous reporting period (2021/22). 74 % of our looked after children are in foster placements, a slight decrease from 75 % during the previous year.

The destinations for children leaving care in 2022/23 were as follows:

Returned home	60	Custody	2
Special Guardianship Order	22	Other (usually children turning 18)	108
Adoption	12		

Evidence of Impact

Life story audit - November 2022

10 audits were undertaken looking at life story work on looked after children and care leaver's files.

- 67% of these audits rated good or better for overall practice.
- 100% of audits on looked after children's files were rated as good or better.
- 50% of audits on care leaver's files were rated good or better.
- 0% of audits on foster carer's files were rated good or better (100% were rated as requires improvement).
- Strengths included quality of reports written to children and families, strong focus on promoting familial relationships, strong direct work, and consideration of children's history by foster carers.
- Areas for improvement included lack of chronologies and other key documents on files including later life letters and life story

work, a lack of reflection of children's histories on their files, and a need for practitioners to be more consistent and persistent in their efforts to maintain contact between children and families. None of the fostering audits highlighted specific discussions / exploration about foster carers contribution to life story work.

A number of recommendations were made following this audit, supported by an action plan which is tracked by the Improving Outcomes for Children Board and the monthly Service Manager Audit Meeting:

- Copies of all life story work undertaken by carers / care providers to be taken as part of Looked After Child Review processes, to be saved on children's files.
- The Fostering Independent Chair will also request to see life story work as part of foster carers Fostering Annual Reviews.
- We will continue to roll out and embed use of the 'Preparation for LAC Review' tool for foster carers, which captures feedback on life story work undertaken by carers.

Looked after children and care leavers in custody - August 2023

In August 2023 a total of 10 audits were undertaken within the Looked After Children and Leaving Care Service by the Practice Development Managers, Service Manager and Head of Service. Four of these young people were open to the Looked After Children Service, although one had recently turned 18. The rest were open to the Leaving Care Service and range in age from 18 to 21.

Findings:

- The practice within 70% of the audits were graded good or outstanding overall.
- For 80% of children and young people, the frequency of visits was in line or partially with practice standards.
- The practice standards for supervision was an area for improvement, with 40% rated as good and 60% rated as required improvement.
- Overall, visits were rated as high quality, with meaningful, appropriate conversations about a wide range of issues and planning for release taking place.
- In 60% of audits, strong communication between the young people's professional and family network was observed.
- In 70% of audits, there was evidence of strong pathway planning.

Edge of Care

Following the decision made in 2022 to bring to a close the Family Learning Intervention Project (FLIP) and reinvest resources into Hackney-based services, with the sale of the FLIP house in Oxfordshire, a new permanent Edge of Care Service is in place. This 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 service provides intensive, relational 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. Most of the children referred to the service are from Black or Global Majority backgrounds, have additional needs, have family histories of trauma and are struggling in education. The multi-agency team is drawn from clinical and social care backgrounds and includes an educational psychologist, seconded from Hackney Education, in order to try and intervene across multiple contexts in order to improve outcomes for the children with whom it works.

In the past year, the service has worked with 32 children and successfully supported 81 % to remain at home. For those who have come into care, the service has supported the network to make timely decisions about their long-term care planning, stabilise them in care and to rebuild and repair family relationships.

Children in care - visits

As at 30 September 2023, 72 % of looked after children were visited within 30 working days (6 weeks). Looked after children who are in settled care arrangements will usually have agreements that have been made with their Independent Chairs that they need to be seen at a minimum of 12 weekly.



Fostering and Permanency Service

As of 31 March 2023, Hackney Fostering Service had supported 165 fostering and supported lodging households: 54 % of carers live in Hackney, with an additional 11 % of carers living in neighbouring boroughs. 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. As at the end of September 2023, there were 166 fostering and supported lodgings households.

There are three established Hackney Village constellations (formally Mockingbird constellations). Work is underway to create similar constellation networks so all foster carers are able to benefit from this model of support.

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, acknowledged by the Department for Education, who plan a national fostering campaign as part of their reform of children's social care. We remain ambitious for the year ahead, with a target of recruiting 15 new fostering households. Our enquiries have dropped this year, and our data around this suggests that our web presence needs to be strengthened - we are exploring creative solutions such as chat bots with ICT colleagues to increase enquiries.

Form F	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Enquiries	272	222	138
Approvals	15	14	12

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, we have secured Council tax exemption for Hackney carers from April 2023 and continue to make progress with 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. Foster carers are able to attend a therapeutic peer support group; male carers have access to a male carers support group; buddy support is offered to new carers from our most experienced foster carers; and matching and stability support is offered via our Matching Consultant. Carers are offered a wide range of training, including anti-racist parenting training delivered by our fostering staff and a Nurturing Attachments group programme delivered by our clinical service. We are in the process of scoping trauma-informed care training for carers, in line with our emerging practice model.

We are committed to learning from our foster carers about what we are doing well and what we could do better. 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 2022/23, there were 14 resignations, compared to 17 in the year 2021/22.

Evidence of Impact

Our fostering audit activity over the last 6 months shows clear improvement in recording and practice. There were 9 audits of foster carer's files in this period and 50% of these were rated as good, with practice from March - May 2023 rated as 80% good. Auditors found evidence of good practice supporting the child's plan and progressing outcomes for the child, good management oversight, and strong work to support children's identities and understand their cultures.

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 2023, Hackney had 1 young person living in supported lodgings arrangements. As at the end of September 2023, there are no young people in supported lodgings arrangements. We are working hard to strengthen our planning and support for Special Guardians, in acknowledgement of the critical role they play in children's lives. Senior leaders met with them at a celebration event in March 2023 and a focus group in May 2023 to hear their feedback on their experiences, in order to inform our improvement plans in this area.



Participation and direct work with children in care

Hackney of Tomorrow (HoT) - Children in Care Council

Over the past year, Hackney of Tomorrow (HoT) has delivered a series of successful participation projects, which have enabled children in care to shape and influence multiple aspects of Hackney's Corporate Parenting service, including:

- **Skills for Fostering Training Programme:** HoT has continued to deliver training for prospective foster carers as part of Hackney's Skills for Fostering programme. This hour-long training delivered by HoT members takes place quarterly and aims to provide an introduction to key issues significant to the lives of looked after children. The HoT members are given the opportunity to plan and develop their own training sessions, including exercises, activities and speaking from their own experiences of being in foster care.
- **Young Person Recruitment Panels:** HoT members have continued to participate in Young Person Panels within the recruitment process within Hackney's Corporate Parenting Service, enabling them to formulate their own interview questions, chair interview panels and provide scores and feedback that contribute to the overall recruitment scores for individual candidates. Engaging HoT members in this important decision-making progress ensures that their views and judgements are shaping our service. Throughout 2022/23, HoT members have contributed to the appointment of several different roles, including Social Workers, Youth Workers, Clinical Practitioners, Children's Rights Officers and Participation Officers.
- **Representation at Hackney's Corporate Parenting Board:** HoT members have continued one of their primary functions of the Care Council in representing the views of children in care and care leavers

at Hackney's Corporate Parenting Board, where they have continued to be allocated a 30-minute agenda item every quarter to showcase their work. This regular contact time with Service Leads and elected Councillor allows HoT members to highlight issues central to their lives, as well as views of other children and young people gathered through research projects delivered by HoT.

- **An Open Letter to Hackney Council:** In October 2022, Hackney of Tomorrow (HoT) members wrote an open letter to Hackney's Corporate Parenting Service outlining their view of what it is to be a Corporate Parent and how Hackney Council can best live up to this role. The letter was sent to Service Managers within Hackney's Corporate Parenting Service, as well as Local Councillors and was discussed at Hackney's Corporate Parenting Board and incorporated into the Council's 2023/25 Corporate Parenting Strategy. This autumn, we recruited to two new Care Leavers Ambassador posts, to support the work of HoT and to become full-time members of the Corporate Parenting Board, to represent the voice of care leavers.
- **Epic Awards:** In February 2023, HoT members supported the planning and delivery of the Epic Awards at Hackney Town Hall, which included presenting multiple awards to exceptional Looked After Children and Care Leavers.



Helping and protecting looked after children

Independent Chairs and Looked After Child Reviews

505 looked after children received a review between in 2022/23, and 978 Looked After Reviews took place during that period. This is a decrease compared to last year when 518 children received a review and 1,068 Reviews took place, reflecting the decrease in the number of looked after children in that period. In 2022/23, 91 % of Reviews took place within timescale, compared to 90 % last year. 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, need to be agreed by the respective Head of Service. Depending on the needs of the child the Chair may meet or speak with the child in the interim.

During 2022/23, 91 % of looked after children 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 9 % of children did not attend or convey their views to the Review, this is a slight increase of 1 % from previous years. However, the data continues to show that participation in Reviews is good.

Following Covid-19 lockdown restrictions all meetings have moved back to in-person meetings unless there is a specific request from a child to hold it virtually, or from a carer due to illness etc. Sometimes due to issues of safety or to avoid overwhelming the child, Reviews may be held in multiple parts, parts of these may be virtual. Where Reviews are held in multiple parts, the meeting with the child will be in person.

The role of the Independent Chair is to quality assure and provide effective challenge as a critical friend and therefore they will also, where required, challenge any delay and escalate any concerns in respect of planning or practice. They maintain regular contact with social work units to provide opportunities for consultation and support to achieve the best outcomes for children. The team seeks to recognise and commend good practice and to ensure that learning opportunities based upon best practice are shared.

Data reporting from individual Review meetings is being developed but information available to date shows that:

- 78 % of Reviews - No escalation required
- 16 % of Reviews - Escalation required
- 6 % of Reviews - Data not available

In 2022/23 there were 62 escalations made by Independent Chairs, it is not possible to break this data down into those escalations made in relation to looked after children, and those made in relation to children supported by Children Protection Plans.

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

At present the data is not able to identify the thematic issues which are being raised through these escalations due to outstanding reporting developments following the cyberattack. However, year on year the general themes tend to be delays in implementing actions from the Care Plan.

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

Preparation for Looked After Child Reviews 2022/23- updates and questions from children and carer feedback

These are some of the questions children had for their Reviews, and achievements that they wanted to share:

I want to know why did my mum not go to court and try and get me back?

Since my last review I have been spending quality time with my mum and brother, becoming familiar with my foster carer and her family, enaging in lots of activties that are heping me to develop!

Since my last review I have saved up for a new phone, got over my sore knee, am half way through saving to buy a PS5, and I got a bike for my birthday!

Who is going to be my forever carer, and what are the options if my mum can't be my forever carer? Will my forever carer be able to meet all my needs, and look after me in the light of the additional needs that were highlighted in my psychological assesment?

All reports for the meeting and minutes from the meeting continue written to the child in an age appropriate way. These contribute to their life story work and provide a record of achievement for each child.

Evidence of Impact

Carers also have a feedback form that they are asked to complete prior to Reviews so that they can share children's achievements and future goals. Below is some of the feedback shared:

You are doing so great in school, really proud of you as I know school is not always easy for you. Your behaviour at home is second to none, absolutely amazing and such a pleasure to be your carer!

My best memories are the first time you rode a bike without stabilisers, how surprised you were that you could do it, watching you swim on your own and when you shared your schoolbooks with me and your teachers at parents' evening. You were so happy and proud. I remember the first time you wrote your name out without any help, and how proud you were.

You have been doing some amazing learning like reading, phonics, maths, swimming. You have been keeping active and you enjoyed being outside and you are good at getting involved in group play situations. You have enjoyed getting to know other looked after children in Mockingbird - this extended family has been really beneficial to you. You have been happy when you're watching the football on your tablet, or reading a new book - when you achieve tricky words, you are so proud.



Health of looked after children

Physical health of looked after children

Further work is required to improve looked after children health indicators, particular immunisation levels, Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire compliance and dental checks. A new workstep was developed and is now live in Mosaic, to be used 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

	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Hackney	91 %	95 %	92 %
England	91 %	89 %	89 %

The number of children with an up-to-date health assessment is above the England average for 2022/23.

Percentage of looked after children whose immunisations are up to date

	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Hackney	59 %	56 %	84 %
England	86 %	85 %	82 %

Following work with the Council's Public Health Service to understand and address the issue, the percentage of looked after children with up-to-date immunisations last year was significantly improved compared to the previous two years. The performance for 2022/23 is now above the England average.

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

	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Hackney	64 %	71 %	90 %
England	40 %	70 %	76 %

The percentage of children with up-to-date dental checks has improved significantly compared to 2021/22, and is now well above the England average for 2022/23.



Mental health of looked after children

The mental health of looked after children is at greater risk compared to other children due to their experiences before and during care. Every year, our looked after children will complete a strengths and difficulties questionnaire (SDQ) as part of their health check, and we will provide ongoing support to our children with their health needs, including their mental health. There has been an increased proportion of children with a 'cause for concern' score as part of their SDQ, which reflects what is happening nationally post-pandemic. Our focus for our looked after children is always to find the right home that will meet their needs, no matter how complex these may be - this is increasingly challenging.

Strengths and difficulties questionnaire	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	England 2021-22	SN 2021-22
Children looked after for at least 12 months aged 4 to 16 with an SDQ score	73 %	84 %	94 %	77 %	83 %
Average score per child	11.8	14.6	14.9	14	13

An SDQ score over the evidence based threshold - where therapeutic support is not already in place - 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.

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





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 2022

The published data this year shows a poor set of matches and out of 54 students published data was only available for 16 children. These results show that for those students achieving a good pass in English and Maths Hackney achieved better results than national and the DfE region. The attainment 8 score was also higher but the Progress 8 score was not.

The raw data shows that 25 % of the students achieved a standard pass. Considering that this was a very complex group of pupils where 21 of them had become looked after during the year and 23 did not take any GCSEs this is a satisfactory result. This is down somewhat from the previous comparable year of 2019 where children scored 31 % in English and maths. Of significant

interest is that of those children who passed their GCSEs a significant majority were Global majority pupils.

Percentage of children achieving Grade 4 at Key Stage 4

	Grade 4 and above
English level 4+	25 %
Maths level 4+	25 %
English level 5+	20 %
Maths level 5+	9 %



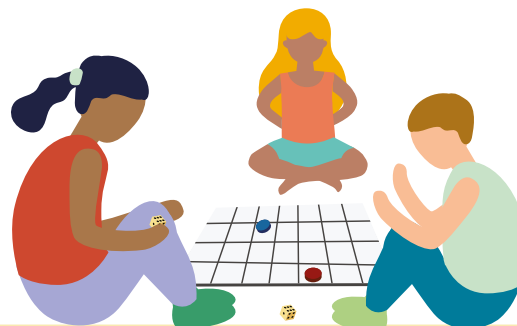
Key Stage 2

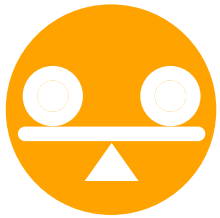
Pupils in year 6 are closely monitored and additional support is provided if it is necessary. All pupils are offered support for the transition to secondary school, and links are made with designated teachers before children transition to their new school.

There was a cohort of 13 children for whom published data for 2022 was available. This data shows the children did well in Reading, almost reaching the Hackney average but less well in Writing and Maths.

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

	Working at the required standard
Reading	78%
Writing	44%
Maths	50%





Stability and permanence

Care arrangement stability

The Ofsted 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 Public Law Outline (PLO) pre-proceedings process questioned whether this was being used enough to support timely decision making for children and for parallel planning. Since then, we have introduced systems to ensure senior management oversight at key points for children supported on 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 16 children at the end of March 2022, to 29 children at the end of March 2023.

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

	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	Sept 2023
Hackney	10%	14%	15%	12%
Statistical neighbours	9%	10%	9%	n/a
England	9%	10%	10%	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

	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	Sept 2023
Hackney	77%	71%	64%	69%
Statistical neighbours	70%	74%	71%	n/a
England	71%	71%	69%	n/a

The number of children experiencing three or more care arrangements over the course of a year for 2022/23 was 14% which is higher than the statistical neighbour and national averages in 2022/23 of 9% and 10% respectively. As at 30 September 2023, 12% of looked after children had experienced three or more care arrangements in one year.

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 was 64% in 2022/23 compared to 71% in 2021/22. As at 30 September 2023, 69% of looked after children aged under 16 who had been looked after for more than 2.5 years had lived in the same home for over 2 years.

2020/21 stability figures were particularly good, believed to be influenced by the context of lockdown in the pandemic. However, further analysis has taken place 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 strengthen placements; we are working to strengthen our oversight of Independent Fostering Agencies support and training for their carers, we reviewed all connected care arrangements in July 2023 to consider opportunities to strengthen them.

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, we 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 2023

Care arrangement type	Number of looked after children
Foster care arrangements	222 (57 %)
Connected carer arrangements	67 (17 %)
Placed for adoption	0 (0 %)
Care arrangements with parents	31 (8 %)
Secure Units/Youth Offending	6 (2 %)
Children's Homes	28 (7 %)
Semi-Independent Living Accommodation	46 (0 %)
Total	392

Care arrangements for looked after children by location at 31 March 2023

Care arrangements location	Number of children
Hackney	110 (30 %)
Under 20 miles from Hackney	209 (57 %)
Over 20 miles from Hackney	46 (13 %)

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

The percentage of children looked after in Hackney has increased each year for the last three years, with 23 % of children accommodated in Hackney in 2019/20, increasing to 30 % of children in 2022/23. We know that it is important that children are kept close to their support networks when they come into care, and that particularly for children who are from Black and Global Majority backgrounds, being placed at a distance may mean that they are living in communities that do not reflect their culture or identity, which can place them at risk of experiencing racism and feeling isolated.

Adoption

12 children were adopted in 2022/23, and although this is a significant increase on the 3 children adopted in 2021/22, this previously low number was due primarily to court delays related to the pandemic (a trend seen across the Adopt London North consortium). This number is in line with both 2018/19 (12 children adopted) and 2019/20 figures (11 children adopted). 2 children were adopted between April - September 2023.

22 Special Guardianship Orders (SGOs) were granted in 2022/23, a significant increase on the 16 granted in 2021/22. Greater attention has been placed over the past year on the prospect of progressing alternative routes to permanency through adoption or SGOs for children in long-term care, with a small but significant number of positive outcomes to this approach. 10 SGOs were granted between April - September 2023.

Updated Sufficiency Strategy

Our Corporate Parenting Strategy and Children's Social Care Sufficiency Strategy 2023-25, published in February 2023, commits to the following priority areas in relation to our placement sufficiency over the next three years:

1) Promotion of a fostering first approach

Going forward, we would like to see more of our looked after children and young living in family settings in and around Hackney, with carers who have been recruited, trained and retained by us.

We would like the diversity of our carers backgrounds and life experiences to be more reflective of the diversity of our care experienced population. We would like to hear that all our carers feel ready and able to meet the complexity of the presenting need, because they feel well supported by our staff, as well as each other.

In order to achieve this, we know that we need to prioritise the ongoing development of our fostering recruitment and retention offer. We have a comprehensive Fostering Recruitment and Retention Strategy for 2022–23 and will review this each year, in order to ensure that we are doing everything we can to recruit and retain foster carers, connected carers and supported lodgings hosts.

2) Improved quality assurance

Where our children and young people do need to live for a period outside of a family setting, we are aware of the need to deliver improved quality assurance systems to help ensure that the standards of care they receive are always in line with our best hopes for them. We understand that the further away from Hackney a child is living, the more stringent our quality assurance systems need to be. We want to see that all our care providers are sufficiently sensitive to children and young people's cultural needs, in line with our anti-racist corporate parenting position. We appreciate that the more joined up we are with our health and education partners in our commissioning arrangements, the more likely we are to achieve the best possible services and outcomes for our children and young people. We have updated our Quality Assurance Framework for Externally Commissioned Care arrangements in November 2022, which will support more robust and formal monitoring activities and ultimately we hope this will improve stability and greater oversight of the quality of our commissioned services.

3) Regional collaboration

We believe that regional collaboration is key in our response to the significant challenges facing the current market in care provision.

We are committed to continuing to develop and build upon our existing partnerships with our neighbouring boroughs through the NEL and look forward to and exploring new opportunities to work together over the next few years, in the best interests of all our children. As outlined above, the Pan-London Commissioning Placements Panel has identified seven key project areas that are being developed on a regional level and Hackney is committed to contributing to these solutions alongside our London neighbours.

4) Developing our supported accommodation pathway

We will continue to grow and develop the Young People's Supported Accommodation Pathway and seek to formalise commissioning arrangements with other local providers. We will continue to work with our providers and registered social housing landlords to anticipate future needs and increase the capacity of the Pathway accordingly. We know that an increasing number of our care-experienced young people are in employment and that we therefore need to source more affordable supported accommodation, wherever possible. We will also look to develop a framework for other spot-purchase providers that will formulate commissioning arrangements as well as raising quality through setting standards and establishing monitoring processes.

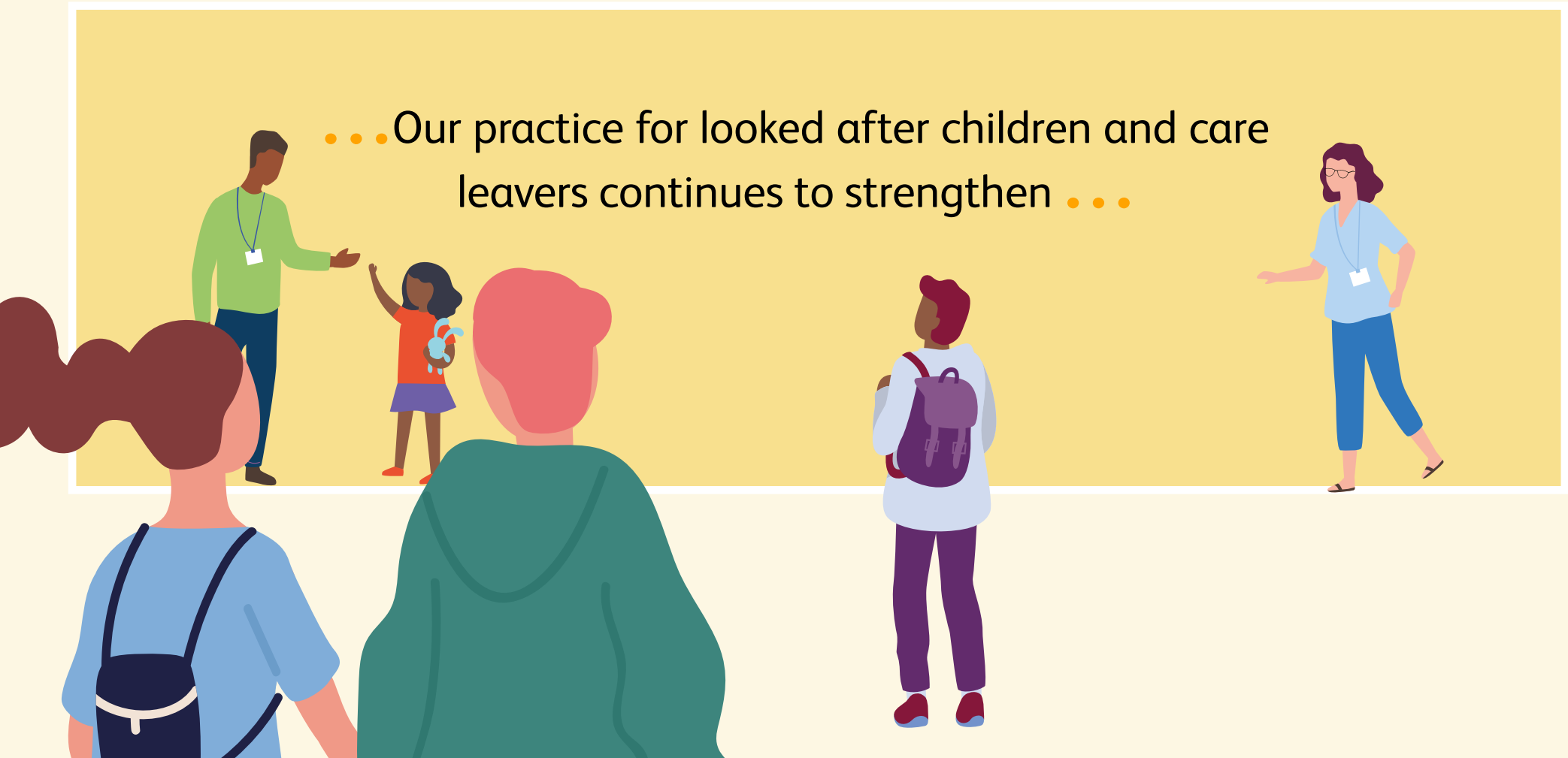


The Experiences and Progress of Care Leavers

Our practice for care leavers continues to strengthen, with an updated local offer now in place. We have work to do to ensure we provide good transitions for our care leavers, and improvement in post-18 pathway plan completion rates is a key area of focus. We are working closely with housing

colleagues to try and improve the housing offer to care leavers, both before and after they turn 21. There is good work taking place across the service but our focus is on ensuring consistently high standards of practice for all of our care leavers.

... Our practice for looked after children and care leavers continues to strengthen ...



Care leavers and participation

Hackney of Tomorrow (HoT) - Children in Care Council

Over the past year, Hackney of Tomorrow (HoT) has delivered a series of successful participation projects, which have enabled care leavers to shape and influence multiple aspects of Hackney's Corporate Parenting service, including:

- **Panel Event with Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Young People:** In August 2022, we supported four unaccompanied asylum seeking young people to deliver a panel event at the Hackney Museum titled, 'This is my life: young people's experience seeking safety in Hackney'. Hosted by the young people and chaired by professionals from Safe Passage, a charity that works for young people seeking asylum in the UK, the event enabled the young people to share their experiences of migrating to the UK. Members of the public in attendance were able to ask questions and learn from the young people's experiences. The aim of the event was to engage the general public in Hackney and present a more positive view of refugees and asylum seekers in the community.
- **Reviewing Hackney's Local Offer for Care Leavers:** Following a visit to Hackney from the National Implementation Adviser for Care Leavers, in June 2022 HoT members were invited to help review and improve Hackney's Local Offer for Care Leavers. This process took shape through a series of consultations with Heads of Service, during which HoT members were able to put forward recommendations that were then considered by key decision makers within Hackney's Corporate Parenting Service. Following these initial consultations, HoT members were invited to present their recommendations to Local Councillors and the Deputy Mayor for their consideration at a Cabinet meeting. At the end of this process, several of the young people's recommendations were taken up and included in Hackney's reviewed Local Offer. Once the new commitments within the offer had been formalised, HoT members took part in co-production of a **new webpage to present the refreshed Local Offer.**
- **UASC Football Sessions:** From July to September 2022, we provided two hour football sessions for unaccompanied asylum seeking young people at the Eastway Youth Centre in Hackney Wick, providing good opportunities for young people to meet and make connections while also learning and developing new skills.
- **Care Leaver Cooking Workshops:** From July to September 2022, Hackney's Participation Officer worked alongside the Hackney School for Food to deliver a series of cooking workshops for care leavers, designed to equip them with basic cooking skills as well as important tips on how to cook nutritious food on a tight budget.
- **Housing Advisors for Care Leavers:** Following the visit from the National Implementation Adviser for Care Leavers, in June 2022 Service Managers were able to create two new Care Leaver Housing Advisor roles in the Housing Team. Through the creation of these two roles, Hackney's Corporate Parenting Service is able to provide a dedicated service for care leavers in need of housing advice and support. By working closely with colleagues in the Housing Team, HoT members were able to shape the job description and provide an induction to the successful candidates appointed to the roles.
- **National Local Government Take Over Week:** As part of the National Local Government Take Over Week in November 2022, HoT members were given the opportunity to chair Hackney's Corporate Parenting Board, enabling care leavers to fully participate in the meeting by reading the papers and reports presented to the Board and putting questions to Officers after hearing their presentations. It also required one HoT member to chair the entirety of the meeting.
- **Scrutiny Commission and Young Parents:** In March 2023, HoT members facilitated consultation sessions with young parents. These consultations fed into a report from the Scrutiny Commission, which was then presented to Local Councillors at a subsequent Cabinet meeting. The focus of these consultations was on the provision of support to young parents who are also care leavers, as well as the universal support open to all.

Local offer for care leavers



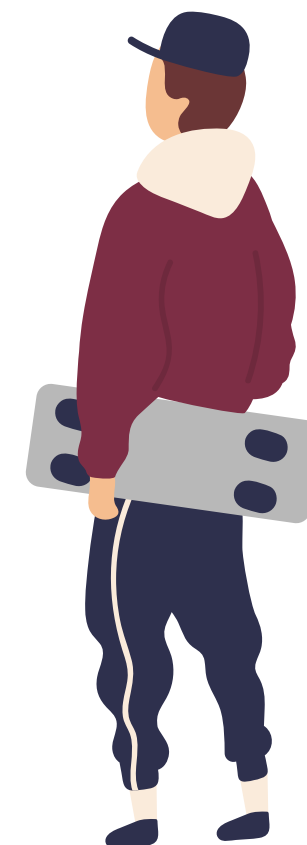
Updated care leaver local offer

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.

Our **Corporate Parenting Strategy and Children’s Social Care Sufficiency Strategy 2023-25**, published in February 2023, commits to the following priority areas in relation to care leavers over the next three years:

Priority areas for the next three years	Why?
Enable care leavers to feel more ready for adulthood through the roll out of a Preparation for Adulthood skills audit and corresponding training programme.	This was identified as a priority from a Preparation for Adulthood audit in June 2022 and also highlighted in the annual survey of looked after children and care leavers in September 2022.
Strengthen the whole-Council, whole-partnership local offer to care leavers.	This was a recommendation from the visit by Mark Riddell, National Implementation Advisor for Care Leavers, in May 2022 and also highlighted in feedback to senior leads on the local offer by Hackney of Tomorrow in July 2022.
Provide more spaces, both online and in-person, for care leavers to come together to access support from each other and professionals.	This was also a recommendation from the visit by Mark Riddell in May 2022.
Improve transition planning for looked after children with disabilities.	This was identified as a priority from audits focused on transitions for looked after children with disabilities in October 2021.

A **new website** was launched in February 2023 to explain our updated local offer to care leavers in an engaging and accessible way.





Care Leavers and transitions

Education, employment and training of care leavers

409 care leavers aged between 17 and 21 years were being supported by the Leaving Care service at 31 March 2023, an increase of 20 (5%) from 391 at the same point in 2022. As at 30th September 2023, 378 care leavers aged 17-21 were being supported. There were 296 care leavers aged 22 and older being supported as at 31st March 2023. This has decreased to 102 being supported as at 30th September 2023.

% of care leavers aged 19-21	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	SN 2021-22	England 2021-22
In education, employment or training	56%	69%	63%	60%	55%
In suitable accommodation	87%	88%	88%	86%	88%
In higher education	11%	17%	9%	8%	7%

63% of Hackney care leavers aged 19 to 21 were in education, employment or training in 2022/23. This is higher than statistical neighbours and the national average for last year (60% and 55% respectively) but lower than last year's performance in Hackney (69%).

The percentage of care leavers aged 19-21 who were in suitable accommodation in 2022/23 was 88%, in line with 88% 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 use of Staying Put arrangements, with 10% of care leavers in these settings at the end of March 2023, a slight decrease from 13% of care leavers in Staying Put arrangements last year.

9% of our care leavers were in higher education in 2022/23, which is higher than the most recent statistical neighbours and national average.

Pathway plans

Pathway Plans are recorded for those under 18 and identified as care leavers or still in care and meeting eligibility criteria. We are rapidly improving our performance and are aiming to have 90% of Pathway Plans reviewed by the end of the year. As at the end of September 2023, of all 16 and 17 year olds, 85% had their Pathway Plan reviewed in timescale (104/123). This includes the eligible children (i.e. still in care) and for those, 86% had their Pathway Plan reviewed in timescale (99/115). This is an improvement compared to early June, when 64% of all under 18s had their Pathway Plan reviewed in timescale. The Service Manager attends a weekly panel with the Leaving Care Practice Development Manager and reports this data to the Head of Service each week. The Pathway Plan Panel chaired by the Practice Development Manager has addressed the most overdue Pathway Plans by setting deadlines and providing oversight and the length of time between Pathway Plan reviews has reduced significantly.

Evidence of Impact

Live Learning Audit on Care Leaver Parents - October 2022

25 audits were undertaken to better understand how well care leavers are supported both in their adult lives since leaving care, and to parent their children where needed; 40% were rated as good, 52% rated as requires improvement, and 8% rated as inadequate.

- There were positive working relationships between care leavers and their social workers - this was noted in 21 audits.
- Practice around identity was strong in this audit, with 13 audits rated as good and 1 outstanding for this area.
- There were widespread issues across the audits in meeting practice standards for timescales of completion of pathway plans and reasons for this were noted to be staffing changes and care leavers cancelling meetings to complete pathway plans.
- Only 4 of the 25 files audited demonstrated supervision which was held in timescales. Where supervision was not held within timescales, rationales for this were lacking.

A number of recommendations were made following this audit, supported by an action plan which is tracked by the Improving Outcomes for Children Board and the monthly Service Manager Audit Meeting:

- Review Pathway Plans for care leavers need to be up to date and led by care leavers and their children's needs, including plans around visiting/contact frequency, as well as stating who they have consented to contribute to the review. The practice

standards for care leavers are being reviewed in June 2023 to address this.

- Promote anti-racist practice further in this service area; social workers to explore and understand the identity of the care leavers they are working with, and accurately record this discussion on file. Our anti-racist practice work continues with roadshows and training across all service areas.
- The service continues to strive for care leavers and their children to be living in suitable, permanent accommodation. The housing information for care leavers has been updated as part of the local offer and a new leaflet about housing pathways was published in spring 2023 to support care leavers understand what they can access.
- Missing historical data for care leavers to be transferred to Mosaic. This work continues as we recover from the cyber attack in 2020.
- Safety planning for young parents experiencing domestic abuse to be paramount when supporting care leavers with children. Safety planning guidance has been refreshed and circulated to staff, and the DAIS are meeting with every service area to support practitioner understanding about domestic abuse interventions and planning.

All files found to be inadequate have been brought to the attention of the relevant Head of Service and Service Managers to ensure senior management oversight in practice improvement. Those to be inadequate or requires improvement will be re-audited in 3 months to ensure improvement actions identified as a result of this audit have resulted in improved practice for the child.



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

Leaders in Hackney Children and Families Service continue to strive to improve services for our children and families, with a clear focus on Anti-Racist Practice, which has received increased investment over the past year and is being recognised nationally for leading the way in this area. The monthly Improving Outcomes for Children Board is maturing and clearly evidencing the quality of practice and is supporting managers to identify

where to focus improvement activity. The transformation team within the Outcomes, Business Intelligence and Strategy Service (OBIS) team are working to roll out the STAR (Systemic, Trauma Informed and Anti-Racist) approach and transform how our internal services are set up for delivery, aligning with Hackney Education.

...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

Driving improvement

Supervision

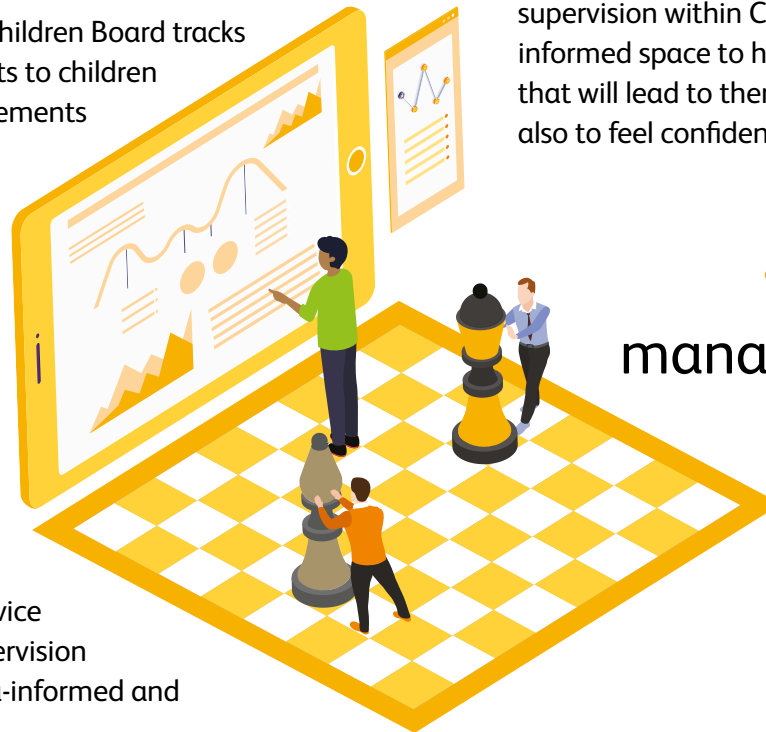
Children are allocated to individual social workers and individual Reflective Case Supervision is in place. There is a focus on management oversight to ensure that supervision is consistent with practice standards. Following the re-introduction of Mosaic, we are now able to track supervision timeliness 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 Improving Outcomes for Children Board tracks performance including in respect of visits to children and supervision to drive forward improvements in practice. Staffing and performance issues are being addressed where supervision is not completed and uploaded to Mosaic in-line with our Supervision Policy timescales. A new supervision template was trialled in the Child in Need Service to streamline the process and this was launched across the whole of CFS in Mosaic in April 2023.

In line with the development of Hackney's practice model, Heads of Service have developed the Hackney group supervision model which draws on Systemic, trauma-informed and

anti-racist practices, allowing us to embed and uphold the techniques that sit within these methods. Consultation was undertaken with Practice Development Managers when refreshing the group supervision approach, and the Director held a 'show and tell' session to launch this model on 1st June 2023. This is in addition to individual supervision and it is to enhance worker development.

Aligned with the Anti-Racist Action Plan, there is a Task and Finish group developing a new approach to personal (currently termed Management) supervision. By the end of 2023/24, there will be a new approach to supervision within CFS that will offer staff an anti-racist, systemic and trauma informed space to have open and reflective conversations with their manager that will lead to them feeling more confident in the work they undertake, but also to feel confident about career opportunities available to them.



... There is a focus on management oversight to ensure that supervision is consistent with practice standards...

Improving Outcomes for Children Board

The Service introduced the new monthly Improving Outcomes for Children Board in October 2022. The Board is the central Children and Families Service meeting to reflect on performance data and the quality of practice in the service. The forum forms a key part of the Children and Families Service Quality Assurance Framework. Chaired by the Director of Children's Social Care, the Board has a critical role in the oversight of the Children and Families Service. The Board scrutinises 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. The aim of the Board is to increase 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. The Board focuses 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 are 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, children assessed for Private Fostering and families with no recourse for public funds, and supported by Family Support Service
- B)** Children in Need of Help and Protection - the quality of intervention and support for children on Child in Need, Child Protection Plans, pre-proceedings and Disabled Children, children whose parents are supported by DAIS and the Clinical Service
- 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 and Foster Carers, and looked after children who are on remand

- D)** Children who are at risk of Extra Familial Harm - including those who are missing, who are at risk of exploitation, who are on a Child Protection Plan due to Extra Familial Harm, and children who are supported through pre-and post-Court youth justice disposals. Also - all children who are supported by the Clinical Service.

Children's Leadership and Development Board (CLDB)

Co-chaired by the Chief Executive and Group Director for Children and Education, with membership from across corporate teams and an independent critical friend, CLDB is held every 2 months to support and challenge children's social care on its improvement journey and to achieve the best outcomes for children through the oversight and scrutiny of developments with the Children's Action Plan which is underpinned by 5 'Proud to be' priorities.

Children's Member Oversight Board (CMOB)

The Children's Member Oversight Board was established at the same time as the CLDB and is Co-Chaired by the Mayor and Deputy Mayor of Hackney. CMOB provides oversight and accountability on the progression of the Action Plan from an Elected Members' perspective. Meetings are held bi-monthly in accordance with the CLDB meetings cycle - with the agenda replicating that of the preceding CLDB meeting.

City and Hackney Safeguarding Children Partnership (CHSCP)

Keeping children safe in Hackney rises and falls on the strength of partnership working. CHSCP is a well established Board with long-service leadership overseeing arrangements and outcomes for safeguarding children in Hackney. The CHSCP Child Safeguarding Practice Review Child Q and subsequent action plan holds the partnership to account to maintain a child and safeguarding first approach, and is one example of the support and challenge CHSCP provides.

Safer Young Hackney Board (SYHB)

The impact of the SYHB was recently assessed in a joint agency inspection. Chaired by the Group Director for Children and Education, the SYHB aligns the work of the youth justice service with key strategic work, including the Hackney Safeguarding Children Partnership and Community Safety Partnership. The board is well-attended and provides an appropriate balance of support and challenge to the work of the youth justice service. Through comprehensive performance information risks to the service are systematically and extensively identified, adverse consequences are recognised, and mitigating actions are in place.

Children and Young People Scrutiny Commission

The Children and Young People Scrutiny Commission meets 6 times a year. The commission selects areas for reporting as well as routine challenge of data and performance. In the past year it has reported on the experiences of foster carers, care leavers, children excluded from school to name but few. Each of these commissions has gone direct to the subjects of inquiry to contrast their experience against the views and ambition of the service and lays down a suite of recommendations which mandate a response. This vehicle provides additional member and senior leadership oversight of the services we provide.

Changes to the Hackney model of social work - STAR

As services integrate under one Hackney Children and Education Directorate, we are developing a practice model that underpins our approach in children's social care, education and health. The principles of this whole-system approach will be clearly embedded in the way all professionals in Children and Education work with Hackney children and families. 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 informs the way we think about children and families.

This approach is 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. Our Practice Model will provide clear techniques for practitioners across the service to work with children and families. In the Spring of 2023, the Outcomes, Business Intelligence and Strategy Service (OBIS) director and project team were appointed to lead this work across the group directorate to align SEND, Early Help, Integrated Commissioning for Children, Young People, Maternity and Families 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 to develop a detailed workforce development strategy to embed our Systemic, Trauma-Informed and Anti-Racist approaches. OBIS have held workshops with colleagues in Early Help, Youth Justice, Clinical Services, Quality Assurance & Improvement, Safeguarding, Early Years, Early Help and Wellbeing Services, School Performance and Improvement to gather insights about what STAR means within these services as part of its discovery phase.

In October 2023 the STAR joint approach for Children and Education was launched. The approach has been co-created with colleagues across the directorate and is a non-pathologising way to understand each other and our residents. The STAR approach champions and encourages all staff, regardless of our role, to be reflective, collaborative and to act in the best interests of the children, families and colleagues we work with. Work will now be undertaken to build on this universal approach to turn this into a practice model for all practitioners across the Children and Education directorate.



Anti-Racism

Our ambition is for leadership and practice with children and families to take a proactive 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. In line with our Anti-racist approach, the first of these tailored interventions 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 2023 into 2024 to hopefully see a reduction in the number of boys from Black African and Caribbean backgrounds becoming and remaining Looked After in late adolescence.

The Anti-Racist Practice Staff Reference Group, made up of colleagues from across the Children and Education directorate (including Integrated Health Commissioning) and colleagues from the wider Council, met in January 2023 for the first time in its new format. The Group comes together every six weeks and acts as a sounding board for the development of anti-racist activities in the directorate, providing transparency, accountability and opportunities for co-production, involving a range of colleagues from across the organisation.

Three appointments have been made to further the development of our anti-racist priorities; Head of Service for Race Equality and Inclusion, Race Equality and Inclusion Programme Manager and Senior Policy and Project Officer - all roles will sit across CFS and Education to ensure a single approach to our anti-racism work across the whole directorate. In addition, there is an Anti-Racist Practitioner for Children and Families who will support the rollout and embedding of the CFS Anti-Racist Practice Standards across the service, as well as working closely with service

managers and their teams, offering consultations to social workers, delivering anti-racist practice training and working with our partner agencies. The Anti-Racist Practice Standards have been rolled out with roadshows across the whole of CFS over the last 6 months, this has been a significant undertaking.

CFS staff from Black and Global Majority background have been encouraged to sign up for a seven-week course being run by Consultant Rowan Carr that examines and provides practical tools and approaches to antidote the effects that racial trauma has on the body.

As part of Black History Season in November and December 2022, CFS worked together with Adult Services to deliver four online lunchtime seminars for staff exploring how we can practically 'do' anti-racism in our day-to-day work, covering the following topics:

- What Doing Anti-Racism means for our Social Care Practitioners;
- Anti-Racism - A Focus on Intersectionality in Assessment and Care Planning;
- Anti-Racist Relationship Based Practice; and
- Supervision and Critical Reflection with an Anti-Racist Lens.

In partnership with the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP), CFS staff have worked to create a series of anti-racist podcasts, each of which is powerful and full of experience, questions and challenges that everyone can learn from.

In November 2022, Hackney CFS won the Workforce Development Award at the Children and Young People Now Awards - regarded as the 'gold standard for everyone working with children, young people and families'. The judging panel commended Hackney's inspirational work and highlighted how Hackney's Anti-Racist Praxis Conference in 2022 started a ripple effect of conversations and a wider commitment to anti-racist action in the sector. Nationally, Hackney CFS is now recognised as a leader in anti-racist practice.

A joint Children and Education Anti-Racist Action Plan is in place and aligns activities to reduce disproportionality across Children's Social Care, Hackney Education and Health. The Joint Action Plan also incorporates the recommendations put forward in the Anti Racist Praxis post-conference report, setting out how the Council will respond to these. The joint plan is based around four priority areas, as follows:

- Reducing Black Global Majority Rates of School Exclusions.
- Reducing Black Global Majority Rates of Entrants to Care.
- Improved Sign-Posting of Black Global Majority Families.
- Changing the way we Think, Talk and Act in relation to Anti-Racism.

In addition the plan incorporates key health priorities in relation to young black male mental health and disproportionate outcomes in relation to maternity services.

In October 2023, Hackney ran a month-long council-wide Anti-Racist Summit. The theme of this year's summit was 'Building Better Together'. The Children and Education element of the summit consisted of four dedicated days focusing on anti-racist culture, practice and behaviour as a Directorate and at an individual level. This consisted of an array of workshops, lectures, films and events to challenge and stretch our teams, while supporting staff to reflect on how they can move forward on our anti-racist journey. A 'day four' Hackney Council Anti-Racist Partnerships Day took place on 21 November 2023, where a wide range of partners including community partners were invited to:

- share feedback on the Council's anti-racism action plan commitments
- secure commitments from partners to work together to develop an anti-racist system, based on a shared understanding of racism and anti-racism and one shared approach.

Key initial Summit evaluation findings:

- The launch event on day one at St. John at Hackney Church was fully sold out - 550 places
- Over 2,700 individual viewers of the launch day live-stream, the biggest online attendance for a single event in Hackney Council's history.
- 2,221 unique bookings across 29 events
- Events had an overall average rating of 4.5 out of 5
- 92% of events had a reported average increase in knowledge and skills for those who attended
- For all questions asked on Qcast (interactive audience feedback platform), 72% of 683 responses were analysed to be positive

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 (CHSCP) 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. The Children's Commissioner, Dame Rachel De Souza, subsequently **reported about the strip-searching of children by police officers** across the country, prompted by the CHSCP review, and she found that Child Q's ordeal was far from an isolated case.

Hackney Council has made some significant changes in the past year: from launching a restorative justice pilot scheme to enable young people to share negative experiences of 'stop and search' with the Council and police officers; to work with MOPAC, the local police and the community to build

London's first representative 'Community Scrutiny Group'; to ongoing work to develop an innovative police and partnership training proposal - focused on anti-racism, adultification, cultural awareness, trauma awareness and unconscious bias - in order to learn from successes elsewhere.

In the local education system, Hackney Council have ensured schools created a new, more robust framework for searches conducted in schools; supported spaces on talking to and listening to children and staff affected by racism; expanded and rolled out adultification training and made it available to all schools; and are now in the process of creating an 'Inclusion Charter' to centre conversations and actions around disproportionality; and Hackney are continuing our work to diversify governing boards and expand

the young governor initiative, focusing on Black and Global Majority recruits.

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. The **Child Q Update Report – Why was it me?** was released on 20 June 2023. On the 14 September the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) released the findings from their investigation into the treatment of Child Q. The IOPC found that four Metropolitan Police Service officers should face gross misconduct hearings and called for a 'substantial review of policing powers relating to strip searches of children'.

... Our ambition is for leadership and practice with children and families to take a proactive stance to address racism, discrimination and inequality...





Workforce and caseloads

Staff wellbeing

The Children and Education leadership team continue to hold regular all staff drop-in sessions on issues that affect the entire service. There has been significant efforts from the Group Director and Director for CFS to increase communication with staff across CFS following feedback in the council wide staff survey in 2021. The Director for CFS sends out a weekly newsletter which has a 60% rate of review (outside of school holidays), suggesting over half the CFS workforce is reading this for updates about the service which includes training opportunities, good news stories, and vital information about practice, guidance and policy.

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.

In 2023, Hackney Council developed an offer of Racialised Trauma Counselling and CFS offered staff racialised trauma training which has received positive participant feedback. We run a weekly Racial Trauma Peer Support Group which is open to all Council staff. This group looks at improving staff wellbeing, especially those that have experienced other types of minoritised stress, exposed to difficult situations or vicarious trauma. Work continues on developing the support available for Black and Global majority staff and strengthening the Racial Trauma Therapeutic offer, and exploration is underway of how to provide staff in CFS with peer support groups and safe spaces.

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.

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.

Percentage of agency social workers (FTE) as at 30 September

	2020	2021	2022	2023
Hackney	32 %	22 %	28.5 %	29 %
Statistical Neighbour	22 %	21 %	23.7 %	n/a
England	15.4 %	15.5 %	18 %	n/a

Percentage rate of social worker turnover as at 30 September

	2020	2021	2022	2023
Hackney	15.9 %	11.7 %	21.6 %	14 %
Statistical Neighbour	16 %	19 %	19 %	n/a
England	13.5 %	15 %	17 %	n/a

As at 30 September 2023, our social worker turnover rate for the year was 14 %, lower than our statutory return information as at 30th September 2022, which was 21.6 %. Turnover for Quarter 1 and 2 2023/24 was 7.3 %, compared with 13.1 % for Quarter 1 and 2 2022/23.

Cases (children) per social worker (based on FTE equivalents) as at 30 September - (this is updated annually)

	2020	2021	2022	2023
Hackney	16.4	14	15.4	14.7
Statistical Neighbour	14.0	15	15	n/a
England	16.3	16	17	n/a

Hackney's average social worker caseload, as calculated using the Department for Education methodology, has decreased over the past year as the number of children and the number of social workers have reduced in the service. However this measure does not reflect an accurate picture of caseloads for our social workers as it divides the number of children we are supporting equally across all case holding social workers, including our Consultant Social Workers and ASYE social workers who hold smaller caseloads. The reality for some social workers will be higher than this average caseload figure. As a result of individual casework allocation we are now more effectively able to monitor caseloads for individual practitioners and this enables us to be more agile in allocating resources according to need and there is a strong line of sight from the Director to the frontline practitioner which means that this is under constant review.

Recruitment and Retention

As a Local Authority we have prioritised the need to stabilise and value our workforce and the Director led a task and finish group during the autumn of 2022 which focused on improving staff retention and recruitment. As a result we have implemented a number of incentives:

- Retention bonus of £1500 every 6 months for social workers within Access and Assessment and Children in Need service areas.
- Establishing a Senior Social Worker role to support our practitioner career development pathways, this rolled out at the end of 2022.
- A streamlined process for agency social workers to progress into permanent roles without needing to go through the social work recruitment process, which was introduced in the Autumn 2022.
- Development of a Refer a Friend scheme which launched in the autumn 2022 and offered a £500 payment to anyone who referred a social worker to come to Hackney to work, paid to the referrer on successful appointment into role.
- Launch of an induction timetable in May 2023 for managers to ensure a planned and informative induction period for new starters.
- Parking Permits for social workers to use on an adhoc basis when needing to use a car for work purposes.
- Improved support and oversight of students and ASYEs with the introduction of the Senior Social Worker in Workforce Development Hub who joined in July 2022.
- A Social Work Apprenticeship has been offered to one internal employee who commenced in September 2023. This supports our ethos to promote career development from within the organisation.
- In person event to celebrate World Social Work day on 21 March 2023 hosted in the Town Hall and attended by the Chief Executive and the Deputy Mayor .

There remain 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.

As at 30 September 2023:

- There were 176.5 FTE permanent social workers
- There were 72.45 FTE agency social workers, representing 29.1 % of our social work

From 1 June 2022 until 31 May 2024, the pan-London Pledge is a 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 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.

The pledge has had varying degrees of impact, with some agency workers choosing to go outside of London to councils where the pledge does not apply, and some local authorities not applying pay rates consistently as agreed. Hackney is resolutely faithful to the principles of the pledge.



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. Work has been underway to convert our Quality Assurance Framework into a Learning Framework and this was finalised in August 2023. Work will then continue into 2023 to fully embed this framework. 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.

From November 2022 - April 2023, the Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Service have met with colleagues in Newham to learn about their approach to quality assurance and improvement work, in particular around auditing activity. This covered: structures and governance around auditing and quality assurance; audit training; follow-up and impact of auditing and quality assurance activity. Following this, the Quality Assurance and Improvement Team, working with the Mosaic Development Team worked to introduce an audit workflow onto Mosaic, directly linking audit actions into supervision - this went live in August 2023 and work to embed this and develop reports from Mosaic will continue into the autumn of 2023. A session has been planned for Newham colleagues to observe our Improving Outcomes for Children Board in November 2023 to gather insights about the impact this is having.



We have improved audit impact monitoring: three months after an audit has been completed that was scored 'Requires Improvement' or 'Inadequate', a review of the work completed by the auditor is undertaken by PDMs across CFS and the findings from this audit are shared with leaders. Headlines from the two most recent reports show that:

- Of 17 dip samples completed in June 2023, practice improved in 65 % of files, with practice rated as good in 59 % of files.
- This is an improvement compared to the 31 dip samples completed in April 2023, where 59 % of files improved in rating, with 49 % now rated as good.

Audit overview reports usually contain recommendations and/or actions to improve practice in the Children and Families Service. These actions are tracked at the Monthly Service Manager Audit Meeting which is

attended by Heads of Service and Service Managers, and chaired by the Head of Safeguarding Quality Assurance. These actions are also tracked at the monthly Improving Outcomes for Children Board, chaired by the Director of Children's Services, which considers key data and quality assurance information about each aspect of a child's journey across the Children and Families Service in depth. Each service area reports on the improvement work being undertaken in response to the actions arising from the audit programme. Our Live Learning Audits have shown that practice in the Children and Families Service over the last year has generally been improving - with audits rated as:

- Care leaver parents - June 2022, where 40 % of audits were rated as good and 52 % rated as requires improvement.
- Domestic abuse - December 2022, where 55 % of audits were rated as good and 39 % rated as requires improvement.
- Sexual harm - March 2023, where 67 % of audits were rated as good or outstanding and 26 % rated as requires improvement..
- Neglect - July 2023, where 41 % of audits were rated as good, and 56 % rated as requires improvement.



Financial Update

The outturn for 2022/23 for the Children and Families Service on a net budget of £64.9m was an overspend of £4.7m after use of grants and reserves of £12.4m including a drawdown on the commissioning reserve of £3.1m and £8.5m of Social Care Grant funding. 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 2023/24 is a net budget of £65.3m for the Children and Families Service, and the service is forecasting to overspend by £3.1m (as at September 2023) after use of reserves and drawdown of grants totalling £16.9m (including full use of the commissioning activity reserve of £2.7m and £13.0m 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 ten years the service has delivered £12.5m savings with a further £1.4m targeted to be delivered in 2023/24. 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 and the Council has incentivised this by providing Council Tax discounts to foster carers in the borough and a weekly allowance to those who live outside Hackney.

Hackney has also seen an increase in residential placements since 2015 adding considerable budget pressures with an average annual unit cost of circa £300k. 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 £13.4m in total included in the budget across a number of financial years.

