

Children's Services Improvement including Covid 19 update

8th December 2021



Overview;

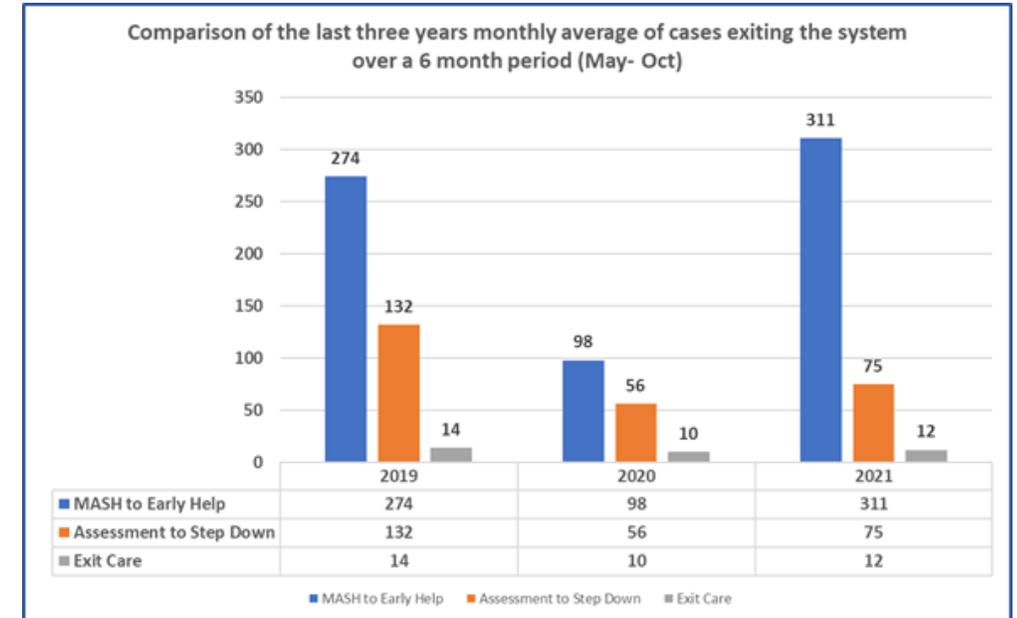


- Re-alignment of Youth Services/Early Help/Youth Justice now complete (with exception of “Detached” and “Arts” commissions.) Linkages between services are developing well and are productive.
- Recent months have seen a rise in demand which is Covid and poverty related (with recent spike in UASC from refugee hotels). We are seeing the impact of Domestic Abuse and emotional well-being on young people.
- Resulting in increase in Child Protection plans (90 plus more children). But no significant rise in court activity or children coming into care
- Social workers in schools project has been successful and well received by those schools involved.
- Youth Justice inspection anticipated for early 2022
- Preparation for OFSTED “Focused visit” (spring/early summer 2022?) and next full IILACS inspection (spring/summer 2023?)



Early Help;

- New structure went live in August 2022. This is working well.
- Social Workers in Schools project has worked well. It has assisted in identifying issues earlier, more speedy responses and may have also contributed to preventing more children coming into care.
- Links with MASH working well; providing assistance in absorbing additional demand.
- Children and Family Centres; in line with government thinking for “family hubs”.
- Independent review of Early Help service to assist review of the partnership Early Help Strategy for 2022 – 25



Edge of Care team

Case study by Charlotte Moodie
EoC Team Manager



Edge of Care Team.



Who are we?

- We are a specialist adolescent service working with young people aged 11-17.
- **Individual and whole family support, we focus on:**
- Prevention work – work to avoid family breakdown and;
- Reunification work - work to return children back home.

During Covid?

- Face to face visits – we are an essential service!
- Staff risk assessments / family risk assessments
- PPE,
- Met outside where we could.
- Online sessions, and meetings.
- Not many young people like talking with professionals online! - they prefer face to face.
- Team support – check-in's.



Point of crisis:

Anonymous case background:

- Hans Larson (48) and Christopher Patel (43) are a same sex couple who have been caring for three children, for almost five years.
- Hans and Christopher Special are Guardianship carers (SGO).
- Hans and Christopher have reached the point of giving up the care of all three of the children and expressed their wish to apply back to the court to discharge the order.
- Impact!

What we did:

- **A crisis visit:** 3 hours in the family visit quite late that evening, after work hours.
- Edge of Care **worked together** and **listened** and validated the families voices, and used **professional curiosity** to **promote thinking and reflection**, and offered information and advice.
- Edge of Care Team gave the family time and helped to slow things down.



What did Edge of Care Team do:

- A very emotional visit.
- Agreed a short term plan of respite to stay with a family friend for the weekend while Hans and Christopher took time away to think about the decision they made.
- Hans and Christopher contacted the team having reconsidered their position. To keep the children in their care and work to improve communication.
- **Family goal:** To strengthen relationships and prevent the teenagers from entering care.
- The Family Therapist role. Peer consultation, family consultation.
- Explored the families strengths and challenges and shared ideas how to support the relationships with the aim of finding a way forward as a family.
- Emense was able to liaise with young people's CAMHS service who identified support for the family.



Impact of our work:

- High level of support and time to help the family feel listened to.
- The placement hasn't broken down, and family crisis was prevented.
- Work is ongoing –we remain hopeful we can continue to be the support the family needs to remain together.

Family feedback:

- *Hans and Christopher said ‘they now realise how much it helps to talk to professionals and to share their feelings in times of crisis without feeling that they were being judged negatively.*
- *They really welcomed the support of the edge of care team;. They told the workers Emense and Henriette ‘that the EoC support is helpful’.*



Youth Justice and Young People;

- New Head of Service (Kelly Duggan) starting in December.
- Still work to do to ensure that the new service begins to function as one service
- Youth Justice Inspection due in early 2022. Preparation underway and good partnership engagement.
- Good improvements in performance for reducing First-time entrants and Re-offending.
- Youth Service Commissioning; Outstanding legal challenge in relation to the “Detached” youth work contract and the “Arts” contract. These challenges mean that we currently cannot provide these services to young people.



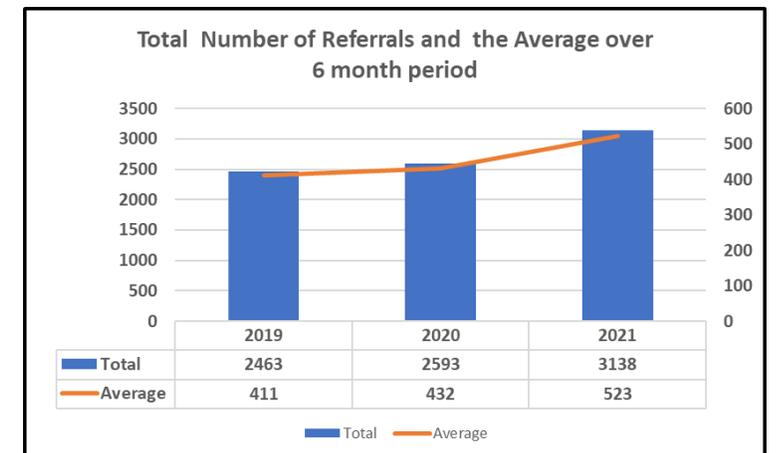
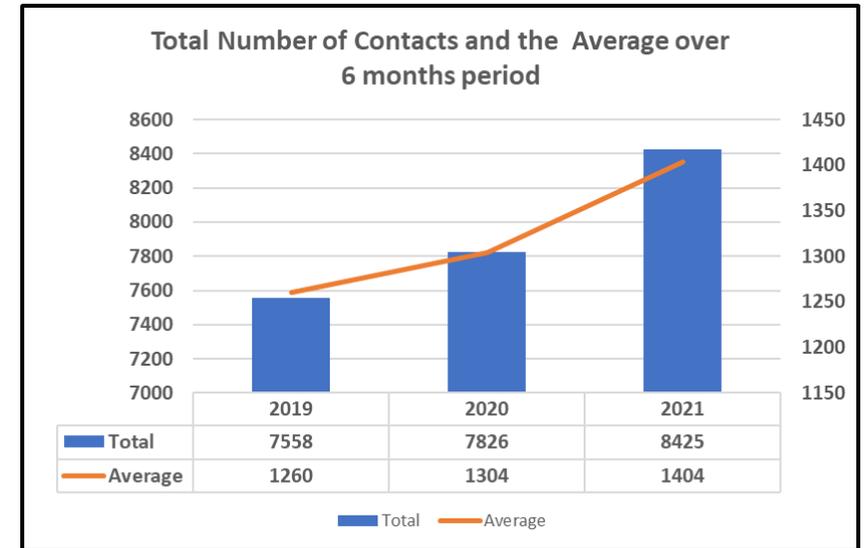
Exploitation;

Ref	Performance Measure	Historic Performance				Num	Denom	Current
		2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	Previous Report			
Section 7 - CSE								
7.1	Number of Exploitation Risk Assessments completed		155	230	118	n/a	n/a	130
7.1a	Exploitation Risk Assessments completed - Risk Assessed as Low (RAG rating, score 10-20)		27.7%	20.0%	23.7%	33	130	25.4%
7.1b	Exploitation Risk Assessments completed - Risk Assessed as Medium (RAG rating, score 21 - 40)		58.1%	65.2%	59.3%	78	130	60.0%
7.1c	Exploitation Risk Assessments completed - Risk Assessed as High (RAG rating, score Over 41)		11.6%	14.3%	16.9%	19	130	14.6%

- Good working relationship with Police colleagues although we continue to challenge them on providing a greater level of “disruption” activity.
- Continued training and emphasis on use of “Risk Assessment” tool for Social Workers.
- Implementation of the VVE Strategy continues to be monitored by the Safeguarding Children Partnership. Action plan reviewed at sub-group meetings.
- IICSA report on the sexual exploitation “limb” expected soon this is likely to be critical of historical practice in all 6 LA’s involved.

Assessment and Intervention/MASH;

- Continued high demand linked to Covid and poverty (inc NRPF) (impact of witnessing Domestic Abuse and emotional well-being concerns)
- More recent pressures from refugee hotels; Requests to be “accommodated” for young people where age-assessments are required.
- Staff group continue to be more stable with reduced turn over and agency numbers (although still more work to do)
- Developing stronger and more integrated links with Early Help service to ensure wider spread of support options to families and reducing number of cases moving directly to Family Support and Protection service.



Challenges faced in my social work practice during the Covid-19 lockdown

By Johanna Burke-Richards
Assessment and Intervention Team
Children & Families Social Worker



Agenda



- **Case example relating to neglect and parental mental health**
- **Challenges faced**
- **Family Intervention / Direct work**
- **Outcome / Case overview**



Case Example



- This case is in relation to four siblings (child A, male age 7), (child B, male age 4), (child C, male age 2) and (child D, male age 10 months) living with their mother and father.
- This referral was received from the police in April 2020 informing that a welfare check had been undertaken at the family home as requested by school. The school were concerned about the children's welfare as child A and child B have not attended school since mid March 2020 and school have not had contact with the parents.
- Police attended the property address and raised concerns about the cleanliness of the home environment which was described as 'messy'. The police were also concerned about fathers' mental health, describing him to be 'animated'. No immediate concerns were reported for the welfare of the children.



Challenges faced



- Increased referrals / staff pressure
- Family anxiety / refusal of home visits
- Adapting to change re intervention methods / working creatively with children and families
- Virtual visits / doorstep visits / impact on families
- Practitioners own anxiety / impact on my practice



Family Intervention / Direct Work



- Initial contact with parents to discuss referral concerns
- Assess families' current circumstances and identify support needs:
 - a) Child neglect assessment tool kit
 - b) DASH (domestic abuse, stalking & harassment) assessment tool

- Direct work with children to obtain their views, feelings and wishes:
 - a) Three Houses Assessment Tool
 - b) Verbal and nonverbal communication from child
 - c) Child observations

- Discuss with parent's relevant referrals to help support families presenting needs



Outcome / Case Overview



Below interventions discussed with parents to promote the safety and welfare of the children.

- a) **Home conditions:** Parents to take immediate action and de-clutter their home environment to prevent a hazardous situation and ensure the children are appropriately safeguarded.
- b) **Education:** School to provide parents provisions to facilitate remote working while children remain at home during the lockdown period as parents refuse for the children to attend school due to fears around Covid-19.
- c) **Referral to Talking Therapies:** Therapeutic intervention for mother to help reduce her feelings of stress as she balances her role as mother, fulltime carer for husband and studying.
- d) **Father to engage with GP services:** Father to take required medication to promote his mental health and emotional wellbeing.
- e) **Referral to Children Centre:** To request the allocation of a family support worker to offer the children and parents practical support/signpost to relevant services.

Parents agreed to the above recommended referrals. No further safeguarding concerns for the children, case subsequently closed to children services.

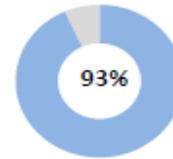


Family Support and Protection Service;

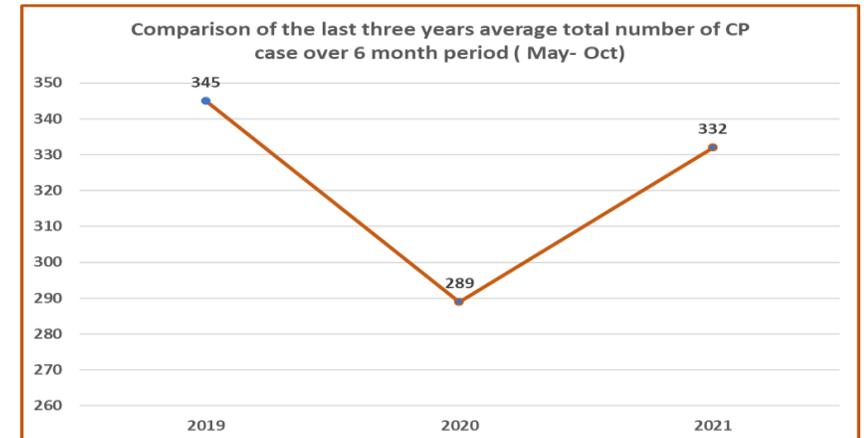
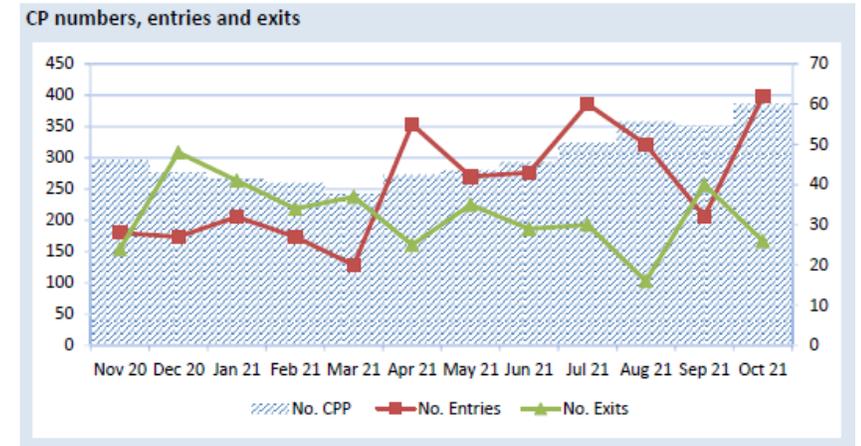
Current CP

386

Mgmt oversight



- Rise in numbers of Child Protection plans; increase of 90 plans since April (when schools returned to full curriculum offer)
- Two additional posts agreed to ensure that caseloads remained manageable and to acknowledge increased demand.
- Staff group remains stable and with good morale.
- Strengthen links with LEAP (Pupil referral unit), dedicated SW post into LEAP will strengthen links in relation to criminal exploitation and serious youth violence.



Background



- Extensive Children's Social Care history of Domestic Violence between parents perpetrated from Father to Mother
- Children previously on Child Protection plans for a year, Child In Need plans for a further year.
- Father went to Bangladesh for 18 months and returned 2 months into the pandemic – re-referral
- Three children (aged 16,12 and 8), an adult in the home clinically vulnerable and shielding
- Overcrowding at home, small 2-bedroom flat with no outdoor space
- **Challenges:**
 - Seeing parents for 1:1 work
 - Use of interpreters, concerns raised in the past that father may have underlying learning needs
 - Safety Planning – with parents and whole family



Case Work



- Use of nearby school playground to meet with parents 1:1 with interpreter - risk assessment using RIC-DASH template
- School remained open for younger child, offer for older children to use facilities for studying as way to get some time-out at home
- Safety planning
 - ‘Cool down’ spaces in the home each parent agreed to not enter
 - Exploration of family networks – Family Group Conferences able to be offered fully online
 - Reminder of services still operating (e.g. calling 999 and pressing 55 to alert police to a Domestic Violence call)
 - Use of safe word / safe emoji



Direct Work

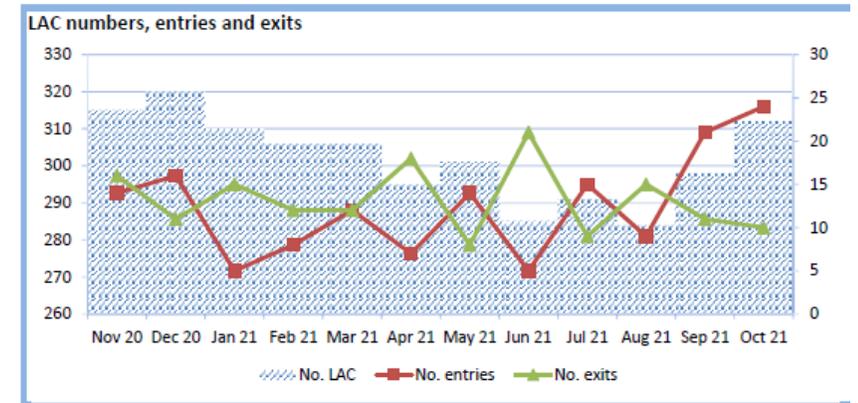


- Trying to see children outside of the home, e.g. playgrounds, walk round the block
- Low challenge on video calls – allows for containment
- ‘Show-me’ activities via WhatsApp call with a focus on feelings
- Recognising and giving voice to fears around Covid as well as feeling around Dad’s return

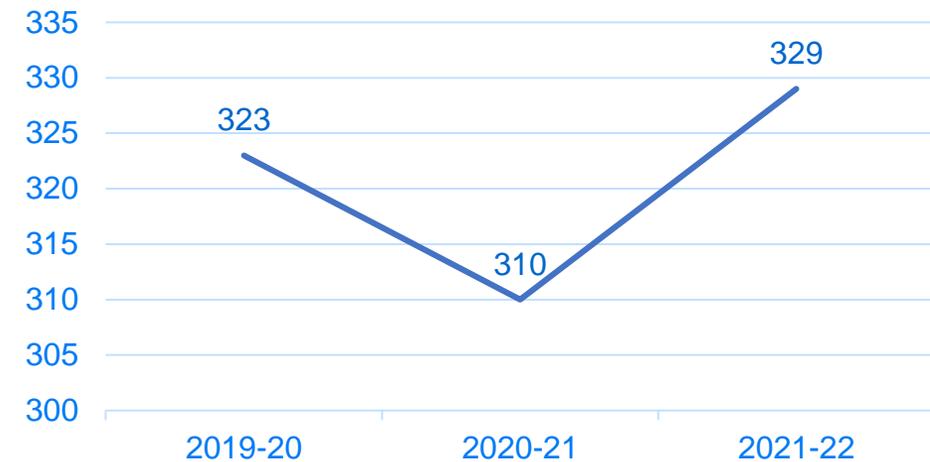


Children In Care/Care Leavers;

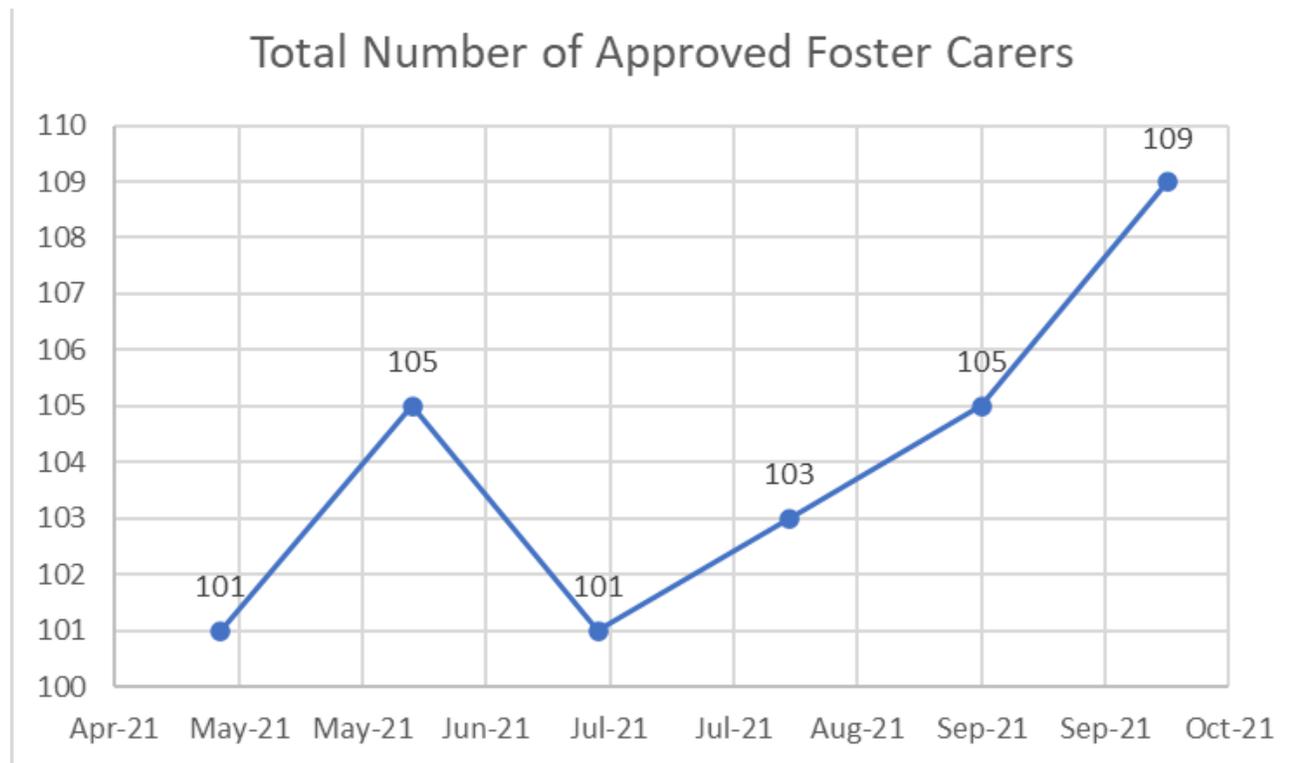
- Corresponding increase in number of children in Care; significant impact of UASC.
- Children Living In Care Council (CLICC) has been strengthened by widening the involvement of young people other care-leavers (but still work to do)
- We have made some progress with apprenticeships for care-leavers, but still restricted by a need to promote apprenticeships across the council.



CLA (May-Dec) 3 year Comparitor



Foster Carers



- Foster carers have continued to manage the demands of Covid for our young people with resilience and ingenuity.
- “Mocking Bird” project continued to provide a robust level of peer support to carers.
- Recruiting carers is becoming increasingly difficult. Needing to strengthen social media presence for recruitment.
- One option currently being developed is the possible offer of tax exemption for foster carers.



Tower Hamlets Mockingbird Family Model Project





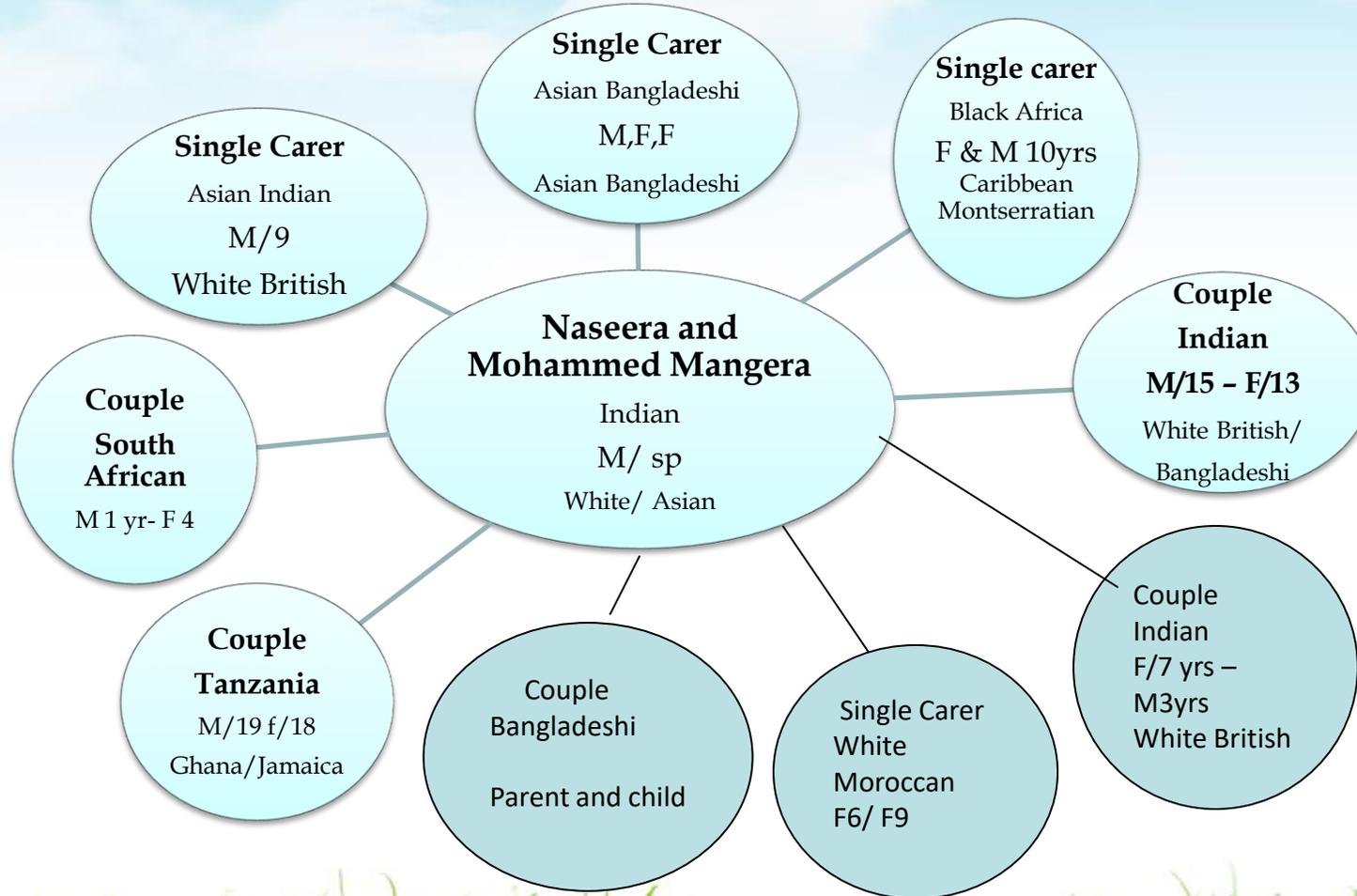
What we are sharing today

- What is the Mockingbird project
- What the constellations look like
- Benefits of MFM and what has worked well for the service
- Challenges and Plans for the future

What is the Mockingbird project

- MFM is a Model for delivering “Foster Care” that was developed in Seattle Washington State, USA
- LBTH was one of 8 pilot Local Authorities
- An alternative method for delivering foster care with the potential to improve Safety, Stability and Permanency for children and young people in local authority care
- Evidence based – model that has been formally evaluated and shows significant improved outcomes for children and young people, foster carers and the teams that work with the child

Constellation – Naseera and Mohammed



Constellation – Gertrude



Benefits of the Mockingbird project

- Creating communities, where the children have a safe and stable environment to grow and learn.
- Increased stability & retention of placements
- Carers receive a natural break (not burnt out)
- Positive relationship for the children we care for.
- Social Workers being able to do hands on social work

Some of our activities out

- Celebrating birthdays together
- Out playing crazy golf , Kayaking
- Bowling, fruit picking, winter wonderland
- Nadhim Zahawi children's minster visited
Activity wkend away with Fostering network



Holidays they have been on

Bournemouth; One hub constellation visit Bournemouth for their annual holiday yearly since 2016 -2017-2018-2019

Spain ; Hub visited Spain in the Easter holidays in 2017

Turkey; Hub visited with their children, birth children and grandchildren in 2019

Benefits of trips

Allow single carers to have company, security and additional support

Children to have additional friendships, are able to travel abroad, security of additional adults

Social Distancing Joint Hub Picnic Aug 21



Days out / meals out



Virtual activities



Virtual on line feedback

We enjoyed taking on new challenges, puzzle building, drawing competitions

We get active and supporting each other

We meet different groups from different Constellations from all over the country.

We had the opportunity to make new friends.

Carers were able to attend training facilitated from the USA and were able to build extended networks

Challenges & Plans for the future

1. To form more constellations in local areas
2. Housing
 - i. Carers need larger houses within the borough as two spare bedrooms are required to be a hub home
 - ii. Due to Covid children having sleep overs have been limited due to cross infections; Available only for children to prevent placement breakdown
3. Co-ordination and partnerships of the Hubs with
 - virtual school.
 - CAMHS therapist
 - CSE, Police
 - Missing person team
4. Fun Fun Fun

Any questions

Claudette, Iris , Gertrude and Mohammed and Naseera



Social Care Academy/Workforce;

Total SW Vacancy	104	83	77	50	40	Tbc Informed by SFD vacancies for 2022
Total SW Vacancy in % (as per Estb)	39.5%	31.6%	29%	15.2%	12.5% * Current CSC staffing numbers of 319 (260 SW posts+ 51 TMs+8 SMs)	10%

RECRUITMENT ACTIVITY

Three-Pronged Recruitment Approach April -March (Revised May 2021)										
	Year 0 Actuals	Year 1 2018-19		Year 2 2019-20		Year 3 2020-21		Year 4 2021-22		Year 5 2022-23
	Actual	Actual	Target	Actual	Target	Actual	Target	Actual	Target	Planned Targets
Recruitment of ASYE target	0	34	35	20	20	19	20	18 (Further 1 in progress)	20	20
Conversion of Agency to Perm (SWs & TMs)	0	6	11	9	8	20	5	4 (further 5 in progress)	5	5
Direct Recruitment of Experienced SWs	5	2	16	11	30	25	20	15 (further 5 in progress)	15	15
Direct Recruitment of HOS/GMs/TMs								8 (further 5 in progress)	10	5
Total Recruitment Target	5	42	62	40	58	64	45	45 @ 12.11.21	50	38-tbc Informed by SFD vacancies for 2022
Staff Turnover Numbers	59	21		34		37		28		tbc Informed by SF staff estb for 2022

- We have continued to maintain good level of staff stability (10% turn-over).
- We have continued to recruit permanent staff and continue to reduce numbers of agency staff (currently below 20%, with the majority in Assessment and Intervention teams.)
- The training provided by the Academy continues to reflect the broader range of skills now within the Division (ie; not just SW focused).
- Continued development of Restorative approach, links to “Trauma Informed” approaches
- Now have specialist recruitment “micro-site” embedded within the council site, and have completed and shared two recruitment video’s.

Assurance



- Improvement Board
- Performance Surgeries
- Audit Schedule (including service user feed-back)
- Practice Weeks
- Ofsted; Focused Visit
- Peer Review; (LADO review by Islington for June) we wish to expand this focus to other areas
- Audit Peer Review
- LGC Peer review in 2022



Future Challenges;



- Induction and hand-over to new Director (Susannah Beasley-Murray; 1st Feb 2022)
- Youth Justice Inspection; Early 2022
- Ofsted “Focused Visit” ; likely spring/early summer 2022
- Commissioning of LGA Peer Review (possibly summer 2022) as part of Ofsted preparation.
- Continued budget pressures linked to staffing costs
- Continued demand pressures linked to Covid 19
- Continued development of the Restorative approach, and maintaining engagement with staff (linked to staff retention)

