

Children and Education Scrutiny Sub-Committee

Improvements in Children's Social Care –
Post Ofsted 2019



2019 Inspection

- Inspection took place in June 2019 following two years of intensive intervention due to an inadequate rating in 2017.
- Outcome was the services were good in all areas

Judgement	Grade
The impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families	Good
The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection	Good
The experiences and progress of children in care and care leavers	Good
Overall effectiveness	Good



Improvement Infrastructure



- Continuous improvement board (CSCIB) – chaired by the Director of Children and Culture
- Improvement plan developed – monitored via the CSCIB. Ofsted have also had sight and consider it has the right areas of focus.
- Detailed management information report prepared and scrutinised monthly
- Bi-monthly audit cycle to look at the quality of practice. Cases audited and moderated using the Ofsted gradings.
- Regular reports to the Performance Improvement Board and Corporate Safeguarding Board – both chaired by CEX
- Monthly performance surgeries using live, child level data- chaired by the Director of Supporting Families.



Inspection Preparation



- Regular planning meetings, chaired by Director of Supporting Families and attended by Heads of Service.
- Annexe A data lists prepared
- Required documents ready, or in development with a plan and timeline for completion.



Children's Services Inspection



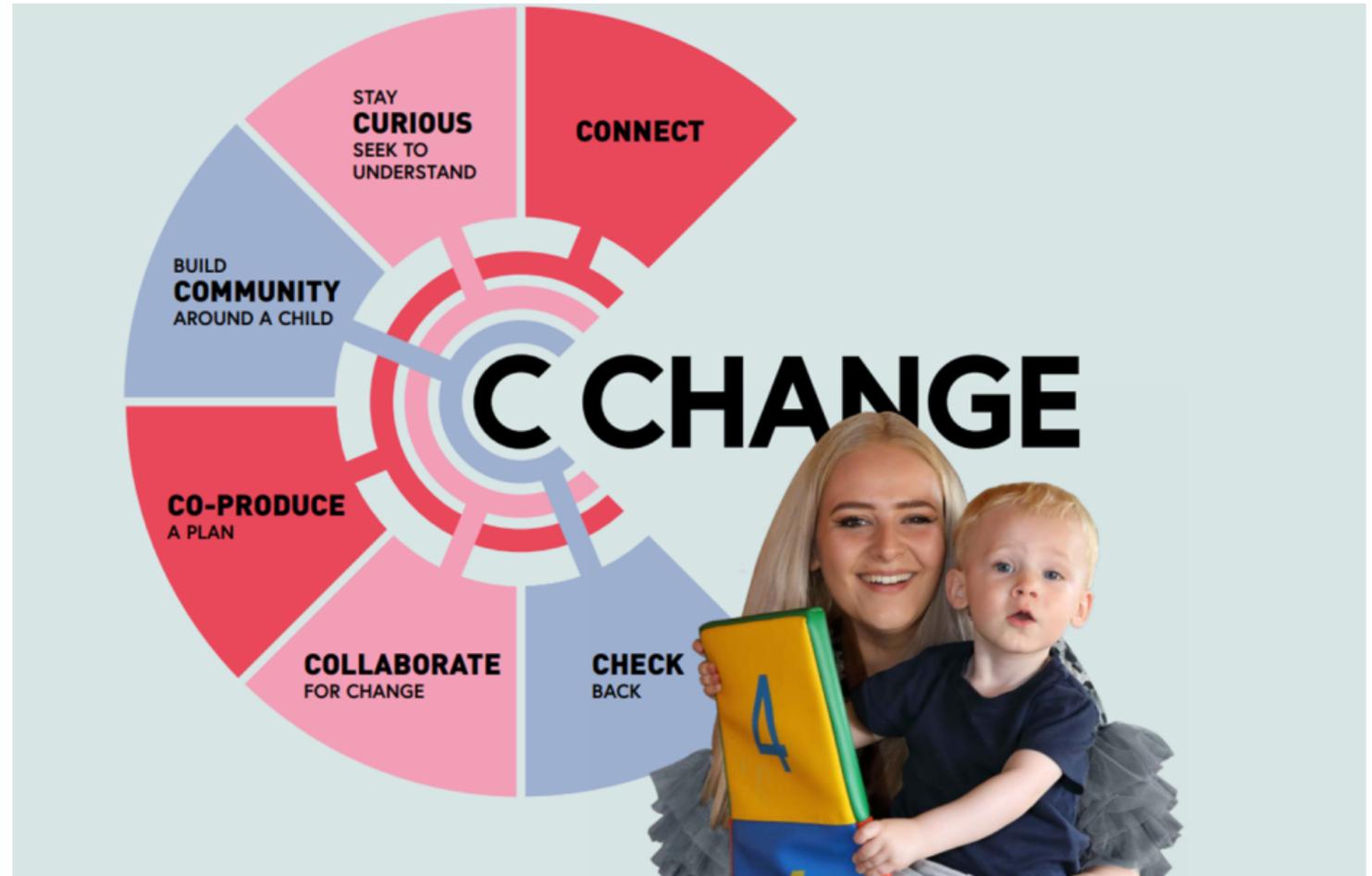
- Inspected by Ofsted – last inspection in 2019 – next expected in the next year.
- Currently rated Good – Second highest rating
- This means our next inspection will be a short inspection – 1 week
- New judgment specifically for care leavers
- Focused visit took place in July 2022 – focus on children we care for and the report was very positive.
- Planning ongoing, regular internal and external reviews of progress.



Practice Framework – Better Together

Behaviours we've committed to:

- Be open and honest – do what we say we'll do and explain what happens next
- Listen to understand – be curious, not judgmental
- Value families' experience – work *with* families, don't 'do to' or 'do for' them
- Work to prevent harm and repair damage – to people and relationships
- Empower people – giving high support and having high expectations



Key numbers (March 2023)



- Number of allocated children – 2503
- CP Plans – 214
 - Rate per 10,000 33.3 (lower than national and regional)
- Children in our care – 301
 - Rate per 10,000 46.8 (lower than national and regional)
- Children in need – 738



Key Performance Indicators



- Contains 17 key metrics – intended to give a snapshot indication of performance.
- 3 are numbers of children. In the latest report, of the other 14, 6 are RAG rated green (above target), 4 are amber (between minimum and maximum target) with 4 red (below target)
- Of the 4 reds, 3 are below target by less than 1%. All will be addressed and monitored at the next meeting of CSCIB.



Children's Social Care Highlight Indicators

Mar-23

This report provides summary overview of KPIs linked to child-centred performance management data being used in support of performance improvement across CSC

Performance measure title and reference			Performance from previous financial year	Performance for current period (either snapshot, YTD or rolling year depending on measure) - plus last six monthly performance outturns (where available)									Agreed targets (using corporate minimum/upper model)	Trend line for last 6 months performance	
Ref	Performance Measure	2021/22	Current Performance										Target		Trend
			Num	Denom	Current	Period	Six Month Trend						Min	Upper	
							Oct 22	Nov 22	Dec 22	Jan 23	Feb 23	Mar 23			
Management Oversight															
1.1	% cases with Management Oversight recorded in past 8 weeks	96%	2,056	2,297	89.5%	Snapshot	89.5%	92.6%	87.9%	88.1%	91.9%	89.5%	90%	95%	
Cohorts															
1.2	Number of CIN (exc. LAC, CP, Care Leavers)	810	n/a	n/a	738	Snapshot	759	797	728	728	749	738			
1.3	Number of children subject to CPP	328	n/a	n/a	214	Snapshot	235	220	226	237	240	214			
1.4	Number of LAC	335	n/a	n/a	301	Snapshot	304	298	297	285	291	301			
Front door / assessment															
2.1	% of contacts completed within 1 day	93.6%	15,595	15,860	98.3%	YTD	98.7%	98.7%	98.5%	96.9%	97.4%	97.3%	90%	95%	
2.10a	% of single assessments completed within 45 working days	83.4%	3,489	3,888	89.7%	YTD	90.9%	91.7%	89.7%	89.5%	89.1%	89.6%	90%	95%	
Plans															
3.1	% of children in need with CIN Plan completed	88.9%	637	738	86.3%	Snapshot	88.5%	89.3%	88.2%	90.7%	87.6%	86.3%	85%	90%	
Visits															
3.3	% of CIN children visited within the past four weeks	84.7%	620	738	84.0%	Snapshot	86.0%	84.1%	72.0%	87.5%	88.5%	84.0%	85%	90%	
4.7.2	% of children on a child protection plan receiving a visit within 10 working days	93.9%	204	214	95.3%	Snapshot	94.5%	97.7%	95.1%	93.7%	92.1%	95.3%	92%	95%	
5.10	% of CLA Single Assessments not yet completed or outside the one year timescale	8.4%	89	301	29.6%	Snapshot	13.4%	13.8%	14.0%	19.9%	28.4%	29.6%	10%	5%	
5.11	% of CLA with visits in last 6 weeks	90.4%	277	301	92.0%	Snapshot	91.8%	87.2%	89.0%	86.4%	89.7%	92.0%	90%	95%	
Reviews															
3.2	% of children with CIN Plan with reviews within last 3 months	92.2%	559	637	87.8%	Snapshot	88.2%	86.4%	87.7%	83.6%	83.4%	87.8%	85%	90%	
4.8	% of CP reviews carried out within statutory timescales	98.7%	140	145	96.6%	Snapshot	98.3%	98.3%	97.6%	97.1%	97.0%	96.6%	96.5%	98.5%	
5.18	CLA cases which were reviewed within required timescales	100.0%	346	346	100.0%	Rolling Year	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	95%	100%	
Care Leavers															
6.1	% care leavers "in touch" (17,18,19,20,21 yr. olds with activity updated within last year)	88.9%	264	269	98.1%	Snapshot	96.4%	98.1%	98.1%	98.5%	98.1%	98.1%	90%	95%	
6.2	% care leavers EET	64.3%	208	269	77.3%	Snapshot	70.9%	73.7%	74.1%	74.9%	75.8%	77.3%	65%	75%	
6.3	% care leavers in suitable accommodation	83.6%	254	269	94.4%	Snapshot	93.1%	95.9%	95.4%	95.2%	94.8%	94.4%	85%	90%	

What our data tells us



- The number of families requiring support is increasing
- Contacts to our front door are responded to in a timely manner.
- Cases are signposted to Early Help when appropriate
- Children are seen regularly by their social workers
- When required, child protection conferences are convened quickly and reviewed regularly
- Most of the children in our care have had annual health and dental checks
- We are in touch with most of care leavers and most are in Education, Employment or Training
- Most children who go missing are offered a return home interview within 3 days of their return.



Areas of focus



- Re-referrals – these range from between 19% and 25%, we are working hard to keep this figure as low as possible as we don't want families to keep coming back to our notice.
- Initial Health Assessments for children we care for – All children who come into our care should have a health assessment within 20 working days. Due to capacity issues within the health system, this can be challenging.
- Placement stability – we are working hard to prevent placements from being disrupted and that we minimise the amount of times that children in our care have to move.
- Care and Pre-Proceedings timescales are longer than we would like. Some of this is out of our control due to court delays.



Internal and external assurance

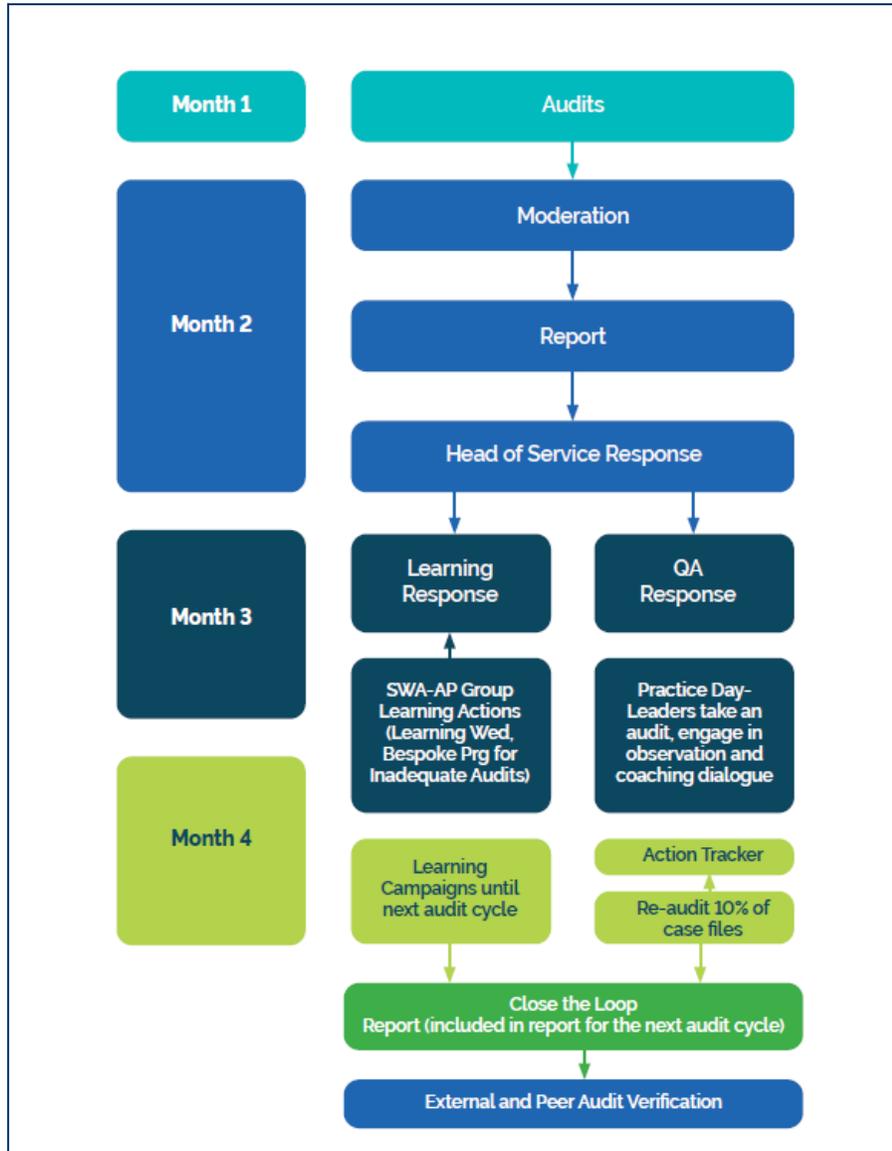


- We have a well developed and robust process of internal quality assurance using a variety of methods including audits, dip samples and thematic reviews.
- These are carefully moderated to ensure consistency and that auditors are correctly assessing the quality of practice.
- We have commissioned external reviews by highly qualified and experienced practitioners to provide further assurance as the quality of our practice.

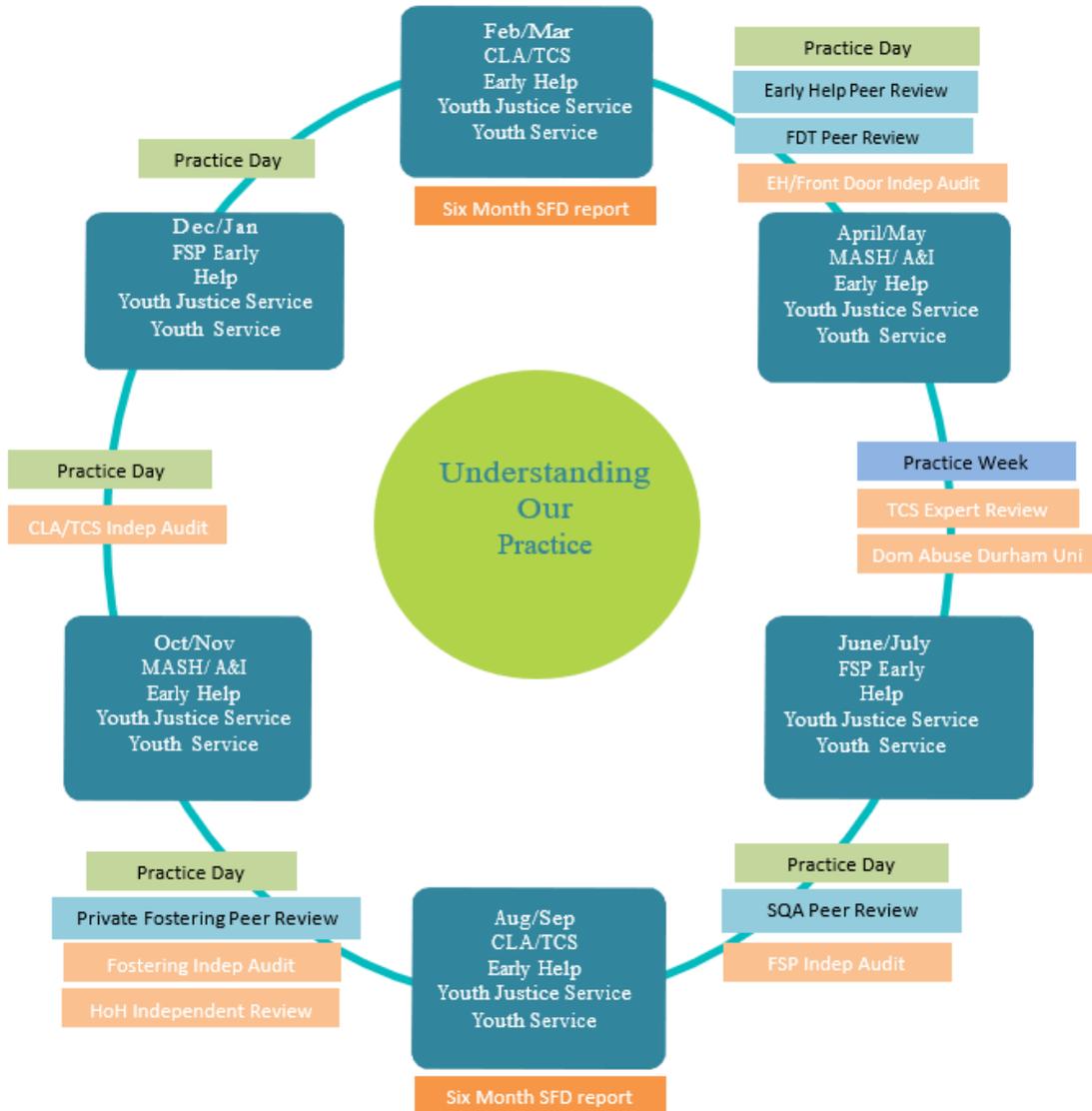


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The Audit Cycle 2023



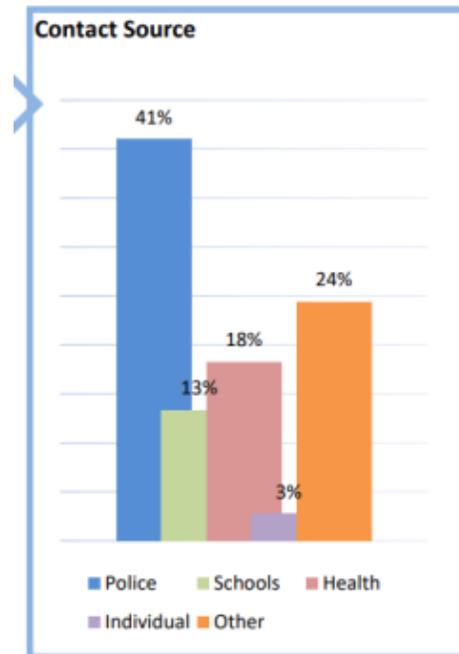
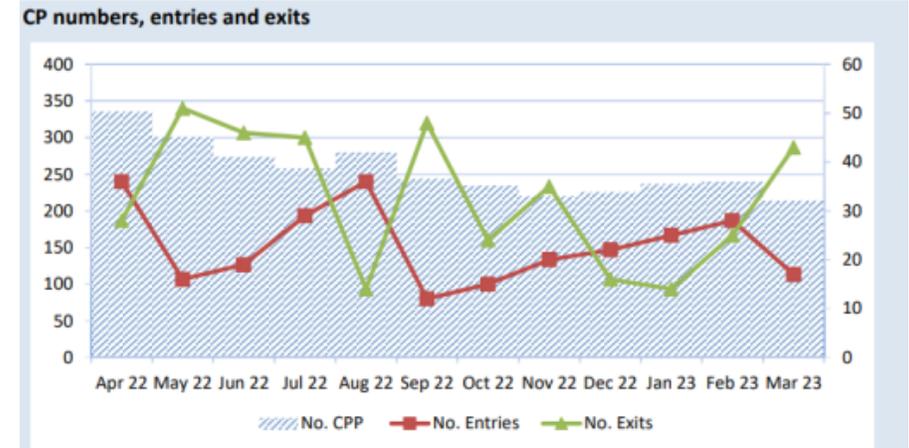
- Quality Assure case work of up to 200 children every two months
- Robust system to ensure improvement actions are undertaken
- A sample of the same cases are re-audited to check if improvement actions were completed
- External auditors and Peer Reviewers check audits every 6 months to verify if our audits are reliable



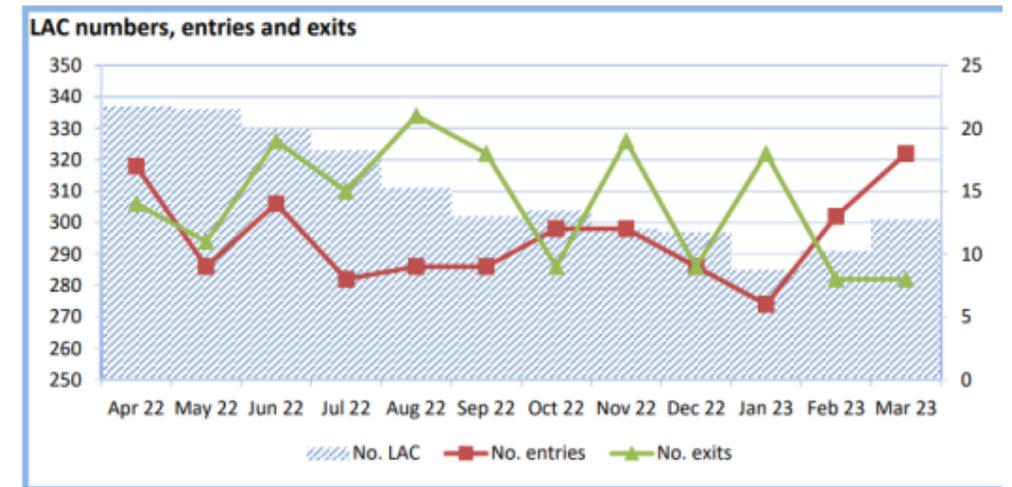
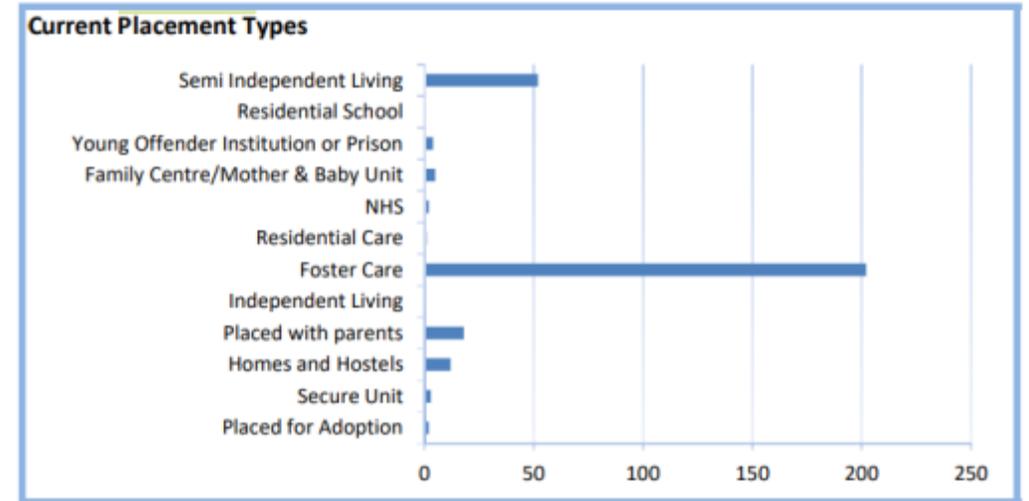
Internal Assurance

Key Findings

- Child protection risks are recognised and responded to in a timely manner; referrers consistently get feedback from MASH
- Good partnership working with police, probation, Early Help, Harm outside the Home lead; need to strengthen health representation
- Assessments are of a good quality; they integrate the views and wishes of children, and review the child's needs holistically. The challenge is consistently ensure comprehensive analysis.



- The Relational approach is well embedded; growing evidence of use of direct work with children. Clear focus on domestic abuse, neglect and exploitation as priority areas.
- All avenues of familial and community placements are explored effectively before children are placed in Care. Social Workers consistently spend time with children in care to understand their needs and respond to them appropriately.
- Children are placed with carers who reflect or understand their identity, cultural and religious needs; practitioners are being challenged to strengthen life story work for all children in care



External Assurance

Ofsted Focused visit – July 2022



- Visit by two Ofsted inspectors as part of our regular inspection cycle.
- Focus was on our support for the children we care for.
- Took place over two days and involved examination of documents and data as well as case tracking both alongside workers and on our computer systems.



External Assurance

Ofsted Focused visit – July 2022



- **Headline findings included**
 - The vast majority of children in care in Tower Hamlets are living in placements that are meeting their individual needs well and helping to improve their experiences and progress.
 - Leaders know their services well and have a clear vision and appropriate priorities which they are pursuing through a comprehensive improvement plan.
 - Children in care in Tower Hamlets benefit from committed social workers who build positive relationships with them and understand their needs and wishes well
 - Children do not come into care unnecessarily, and every effort is made to support children to remain with their families and kinship networks, including internationally if in the child's best interests.
 - Children are matched in placements on the basis of religious, cultural or language needs as far as possible.



External Assurance Ofsted Focused visit – July 2022



- Two recommendations
 - Governance arrangements in overseeing children missing from care and at risk of exploitation.
 - The refocusing of family group conferences to reduce potential delays in care proceedings.
- Both have been acknowledged and plans are in place to address them



External Assurance – Ofsted Annual Engagement Meeting



- Took place in January 2023 and attended by Senior HMI from Ofsted.
- We presented our Self-Evaluation which Ofsted felt was an accurate representation of our current position.
- They did not highlight any significant concerns and informed us that our next inspection activity would be a Short ILACS inspection.
- No timeframe was given for this, but we are planning for this to take place any time in the second half of 2023.



External Assurance Early Help Peer Review - March 2023



- Conducted by three experienced Early Help leaders and Department of Education lead, including from highly rated local authorities over three days.
- Met with staff and visited our children's centres.
- Undertook case audits and discussions with practitioners.
- Met with key partners to get full sense of our Early Help offer



External Assurance Early Help Review - March 2023



Key findings

- Leaders, managers and staff talked passionately about this new direction and the benefits for families. This is well articulated in the new ambitious Early Help Strategy - 'Leaving no families behind – supporting access for all'
- The locality model of delivery is well embedded and supports bespoke early support to each of these 4 communities.
- The visible diversity of the workforce is commendable, particularly in terms of ethnicity, culture, age and gender. There is a real sense that staff can be their authentic selves at work
- The 12 children and family centres are an excellent resource for families in Tower Hamlets and demonstrate an integration with health that other Local Authorities could learn from.
- There has been considerable investment in upskilling the internal early help teams, as part of a wider children's services investment. This is impressive and, as mentioned above, staff referenced their restorative approach in many conversations as well as examples of how it is impacting on outcomes for children and families.
- The review team made some recommendations which are currently being considered and implemented.



External Assurance Help and Protection Review – March 2023



- Conducted over five days by 3 external consultants with extensive experience including with Ofsted.
- Focused on MASH, Assessment, Family Support and Exploitation.
- Involved a number of interviews with managers and practitioners including focus groups, case audits and meetings.
- Tracked a number of cases both alongside workers and on our computer system.



External Assurance Help and Protection Review – March 2023



- **Headline findings included**
 - Tower Hamlets is on a strong, improving trajectory, building on the strengths of the last inspection. Senior managers have set out a clear vision and it is understood by frontline staff. Leaders have provided a clear practice framework, a good working environment and a good set of tools for social work practice to thrive, but they now need to focus on improving the application of these to become really effective.
 - Staff at all levels of the service feel well supported and valued by their managers and enjoy working for Tower Hamlets.
 - Caseloads are manageable, which enables workers to focus on doing good quality work, and staff have access to a range of good professional development opportunities.
- The reviewers identified a number of strengths and some areas for development in each of the areas that they focused on. These are being considered and addressed.



Key strengths



- Our staff group remain strong, committed and there are many examples of high-quality work.
- Caseloads are generally manageable in most areas which ensures the best opportunity to affect meaningful change with families
- Senior leadership team is stable and functioning well.
- The quality of our relationship-based practice
- The support for the children that we care for
- A strong learning and development offer including for newly qualified staff and those undertaking their ASYE.
- The approach we take to keep children within their family networks is effective.



Risks and challenges



- We are seeing increased staff turnover in some areas of the service. This is in line with other LA's but this continues to cause some pressure
- Consistency of practice remains a focus. There are examples of excellent high quality practice that needs to be replicated across the board.
- Placement stability – both long and short term. An action plan has been developed and is being monitored monthly by the improvement board
- Early Help continue to embed. In line with our approach that families should be provided with the best support at the lowest level of intervention, we need to ensure that these services are resourced to manage demand
- Exploitation and serious youth violence remains a live issue, in line with many other LA's.
- In line with the new Ofsted judgement in respect to Care Leavers, there will be an increased focus on our support for our care experienced young people. Support is now provided until a younger person turns 25 increasing the numbers who need to be supported.



Divisional Priorities



- Domestic Abuse
- Neglect
- Harm outside the home
- Embedding and championing the practice framework

