



Mayor and Cabinet

Report title: CYP Safeguarding Report January 2020 to December 2020

Date: 20th January 2021

Key decision: No.

Class: Part 1

Ward(s) affected: All

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Outline and recommendations

This report provides a summary of safeguarding activity and the quality of services being provided by Children's Services in the time period between January 2020 and December 2020.

1. Summary

This report provides a summary of safeguarding activity and the quality of services being provided by Children's Services in the time period between June 2019 and January 2020.

2. Recommendations

Members are invited to note and comment upon the contents of this report.

3. Policy Context

- 3.1 Children's Social Care (CSC) is governed by statutory legislation, regulation and guidance. The key legislative framework and guidance for this are outlined below via:
- [The Children Acts of 1989 and 2004](#), and subsequent guidance and regulations, impose a statutory duty on local authorities to safeguard children in their area.
 - [The London Child Protection Procedures 2017](#) have been adopted by all London Local Authorities and LSCBs.
 - [Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018](#), HM Government, provides a national framework and the core requirements which agencies and professionals must satisfy in order to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.
- 3.2 Lewisham CSC contributes to the priorities in the Council's Corporate Strategy, in particular "Giving children and young people the best start in life - every child has access to an outstanding and inspiring education and is given the support they need to keep them safe, well and able to achieve their full potential". CSC helps deliver against the following:
- We will improve our children's social care services to provide support for families at the earliest opportunity.
 - We will ensure that the children in our care are safe and supported to achieve the very best in life.
 - We will work tirelessly with our partners to keep Lewisham's children and young people safe from exploitation, violence and serious youth crime.
 - We will monitor the services we provide for children and young people to ensure they deliver the best outcomes and best value.
 - We will ensure that families from our BAME communities have equal access to care and support.
 - We will work with our partners to ensure that young people transitioning into adulthood achieve the best possible outcomes in relation to education, work, healthy lives and strong community connections

4. Background

- 4.1 The last safeguarding report provided to CYP Select Committee covered June 2019 to January 2020. This included reference to the July 2019 Ofsted Inspection which judged at that point, safeguarding services in Lewisham required improvement. The judgement was in line with the council's own self-assessment and a programme of improvement activity had already commenced, which was recognised by Ofsted.

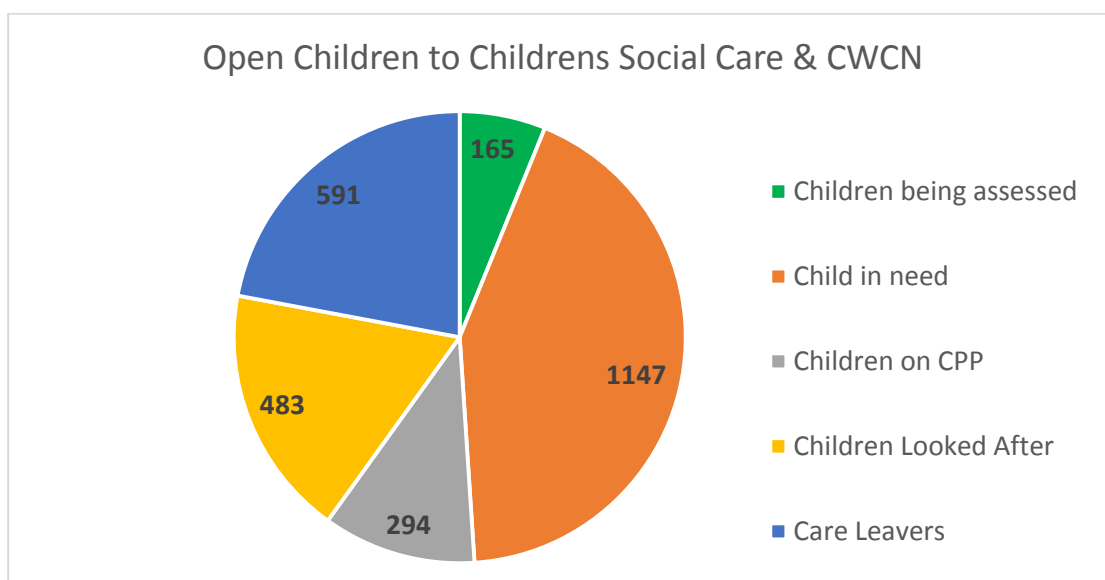
4.2 The impact of Covid on service delivery

Since the previous report, the Covid-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the delivery of safeguarding services to children and families. When lockdown commenced in March 2020, CSC rapidly revised operations in response. 70% of staff were restricted from carrying out face to face work. Approximately 100 staff continued to work from the office and in the community conducting face to face activity.

- 4.3 The Department of Education made temporary changes to secondary legislation providing Local Authorities some flexibilities to operate through lockdown. Through March to June, CSC converted direct work, meetings, visits, supervised contact and parenting assessments to virtual activity, except for those at most risk, identified through a risk assessment. Of 2500 open cases, between 100 and 150 children and young people continued to be visited face to face by social workers in the temporarily established Critical Safety and Care Team. These were mostly children on child protection plans.

- 4.4 As lockdown restrictions began to lift, CSC adapted to more staff being able to re-start face to face activity in the community. By December 2020, 80% of visits to children on a child protection plan or a child in need plan were conducted face to face and 20% virtually. Child Protection Conferences and other multi-agency meetings continued to take place virtually with some exceptions or some using a 'hybrid model' which incorporated both remote participants and participants meeting in person. More specific details about the impact of covid on each service area is noted throughout the report.

5. Children who require Safeguarding in Lewisham



- 5.1 As at the end of December 2020, CSC was working with a total of 2512 children and young people (Including Care Leavers up to 25). Children with Complex Needs Service (CWCN) was working with 326 of these children, of which 4 were subject to a child protection plan.
- 5.2 **What do we know about the quality and impact of our services.**
- Information about quality and impact is drawn from weekly and monthly performance data, audits, file checks, observations, supervision, various scrutiny panels, feedback from children/young people and families and feedback from staff. In addition, bi-annual 'Listening & Learning' (L&L) weeks are held, these are concentrated periods of activity focussing on examining the quality and impact of service delivery.
- 5.3 The covid pandemic, limited our capacity to undertake the usual programme of quality assurance. However a scaled down L&L event did go ahead in July with a specific focus on thresholds through the pandemic, the rise in children's child protection plans and the effectiveness and purposefulness of our virtual visits. There was also some focus on the effectiveness of CSC response and risk management where domestic abuse was a concern, given the isolation and vulnerability of these families during the pandemic. A full L&L week is scheduled for February 2021 which will inform the annual 2020 self assessment. The key learning points from quality assurance activity through the last 6 months can be summarised as follows:

What's going well	Areas for improvement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Families report the relationships with their social workers and interventions as supportive and meaningful. Continuous development and application of SoS practice framework Increase in wider family involvement in managing risk and developing safety plans for children Some good examples of purposeful visiting using technology for virtual contact. Care leavers have welcomed the contact over lockdown. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Case mapping and increased critical analysis Purposeful planning and meaningful visiting/activity (virtual or otherwise) Strengthening of supervision and management oversight Identifying and engaging wider family networks to support children Professional curiosity, tenacity and assertive practice Timeliness of pre-meeting reports to and preparation for Child Protection Conferences and CLA Reviews

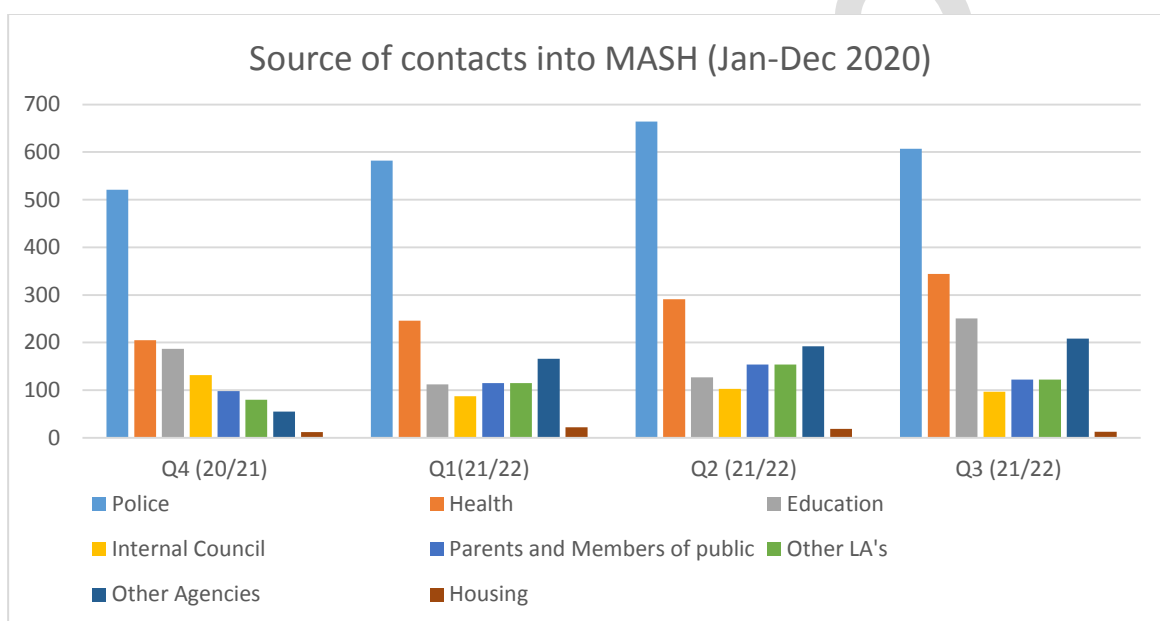
6. The MASH and Out of Hours Emergency Service

- 6.1. The MASH (Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub) is the contact point for families who require statutory children's services, or targeted early help services. The MASH is hosted by Lewisham Council and is located at Laurence House. The following agencies are co-located; CSC, Police, Health and Education and virtual links exist with other key agencies including Probation, Drugs Misuse services, Housing and Youth Offending Service.
- 6.2. The MASH receives all incoming contacts from members of the public and professionals where there may be concerns about the wellbeing of a child, during office hours. The Emergency Duty Service is available between 5pm & 9am weekdays and over weekends. Advanced Social Work Practitioners review all new contacts received, within one day of receipt, to decide the most appropriate service for the child and family. Where additional information is required to make this decision, enhanced information sharing takes place between MASH partners. The table below shows a summary of key performance data.

Indicator	Q4 19/20	Q1 20/21	Q2 20/21	Q3 20/21	Average pcm	Target
No. of Contacts received	3869	4274	4984	5212	1528	N/A
No. of Children <i>(Some events lead to more than one contact per child)</i>	541	601	826	779	229	N/A
% Contacts progressing to a CSC referral for social work assessment	18%	13%	17%	18%	18%	15-20%
No. of Contacts progressing to a CSC referral for a CSC assessment	703	561	849	874	275	N/A
MASH decision made in 24 hours	91%	96%	95%	91%	93%	90%

- 6.3. 18,339 contacts (15,957 children) were processed by MASH in 2020 (calendar year). For approximately 43%, MASH were contacted more than once over a 12 month period. Through 2020 there was a 15% increase in children who have come to our attention in the MASH. In Quarter 3 we have seen a significantly higher number compared to this time last year. This trend is reflected in most MASH's across London.

- 6.4. The increased contacts is understood to be the impact of Covid, with pre-existing tensions and risk factors exacerbated by lockdown. Contacts relate to variety of issues, anecdotally we have seen more complex cases involving mental health, substance misuse and suspected non-accidental injuries. National trends indicate an increase in the use of domestic abuse helplines, however this has not translated to increase in domestic abuse related contacts, which remain similar to 2019.
- 6.5. The MASH aim to make decisions on contacts with 24 hours. In 2019 the MASH made significant improvements in the timeliness of decision making and this performance has been maintained throughout 2020, despite a 15% increase in demand. The MASH has embedded the Signs of Safety practice framework, leading to an improvement in the quality of decision making. As result the service are making more use of enhanced MASH enquiries to inform decision and referring families to Early Help services when appropriate. A repeat audit of the quality of MASH decisions is scheduled for Quarter 4 (2020/21).



- 6.6. The proportion of contacts from each agency is largely in line with last year. The Police are always the highest contributor, Health and Education are the next highest. However the proportion of contacts from schools that go on for a social work assessment is 25%, significantly higher than that from Health (14%) and Police (13%). This is because Police and Health routinely report when any safeguarding concerns come to their attention in course of their interaction with families. Schools know their children well and have regular, continuous engagement with families. Contacts from schools tend to relate to clearly identified needs or a specific safeguarding incidents. With less children attending school during the first lockdown in 2020, we did see a reduction in contacts from schools.
- 6.7. Not all contacts received by the MASH result in family being referred for a CSC service, the MASH also direct referrals for Early Help services. Other contacts are requests for information and a large proportion of professionals and/or families will be provided with advice and signposted to a resource in the community. Ordinarily the percentage of contacts resulting in a CSC referral for a statutory assessment by a social worker, ranges between 15–20%, in line with what one would expect from a high functioning MASH. In Quarter 1 (2020/21) the percentage of referrals to CSC fell to 13%, reflecting a temporary adjustment in thresholds as part of our initial response to the pandemic. Due to the reduced capacity to safely visit families, CSC prioritised working with the most vulnerable children in need and where there were child protection concerns. A higher proportion of families were redirected to Early Help services. The Children's Directorate established a new interim targeted Early Help service (FISS) to support these additional families. The service included who provided help to families, this included the co-ordination and delivery of food parcels. During Quarter 2, MASH have gradually revised thresholds and returned to normal practice.

7. Assessments, Strategy Meetings and Section 47 Enquiries

- 7.1 CSC has a duty to assess any child that may be in need or at risk of harm. The length of the assessment should be proportionate to the presenting need but should not take longer than 45 working days (*DfE: Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018*).
- 7.2 Through 2020, CSC assessed a total of 3334 children compared to 3833 in 2019. An average of 277 assessment were started every month, a decrease from an average of 320 in 2019. The lowest number of assessments were undertaken in Quarter 1 (2020/21) this corresponds with the initial response to the pandemic and a temporary change in thresholds applied in the MASH. Excluding Quarter 1 (2020/21) the assessment rate in 2020 followed the same seasonal trends as 2019.
- 7.3 Historically Lewisham's rate of assessment has been high in comparison with other London Boroughs, suggesting that thresholds in the MASH had been too low and more families should have been redirected to targeted Early Help services. We have continued to monitor referrals closely and the assessment rate for 2020 is now closer to our neighbours and in line with our expected range of 520-560. The changes to MASH thresholds during covid and the emergence of stronger Early Help services in the future, presents an opportunity to better align our practice to other London Boroughs.

Assessment rate per 10,000 ppn.	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Lewisham	539	559	553
London	512	525	Not yet available
Inner London	522	549	Not yet available

- 7.4 The timeliness of core activity has been a service priority and whilst we haven't yet achieved all our targets, there has been an upward trajectory of sustained improvement. We aim to see children as quickly as possible upon receipt of a referral and no longer than 10 working days. In Quarter 3, 73% of children seen within 10 days. Assessments should be completed within 45 days and in 2020 this performance indicator shows 87% have done so. An improvement on 2019/20 (80%) and above London and National average last year. The service is now focusing on the quality of assessments where audits have identified variability in practice.
- 7.5 Whenever there is reasonable cause to suspect a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer significant harm, a strategy meeting/discussion is held. The Local Authority has a statutory duty to lead Section 47 enquiries (Children Act 2019), police, health professionals, teachers and other relevant professionals support the enquiries. (*LSCB London Child Protection Procedures 2017*)
- 7.6 Through 2020, 1050 Section 47 Enquiries have been commenced, a small increase on the previous year. Approximately one in every three assessments involves a child protection investigation, sometimes jointly with the Police. Whilst the assessment rate has dropped through the pandemic, no significant change in the rate of Section 47 enquiries (which is in line with other London Boroughs) suggests a consistent application of child protection thresholds throughout the pandemic.
- 7.7 The co-location of CAIT Police referral officers within the MASH and the introduction of a pilot with local Child Protection Medical Service, led by the Community Predication and the Head of Assessment Service, has improved the capacity to hold timely multi agency strategy meetings. Attendance of partner agencies at strategy meeting has benefited from the use of video conferencing.

8. Criminal and sexual exploitation and missing.

8.1 The CSC dedicated vulnerable adolescent team 'Safe Space' became operational in August 2019 and is closely aligned to the Concern Hub. Safe Space has 2 teams of Social Workers, Family Support/Youth Workers and Missing Coordinators. On average the service works with 100 young people (11-18 yrs) at any one time, under 4 categories:

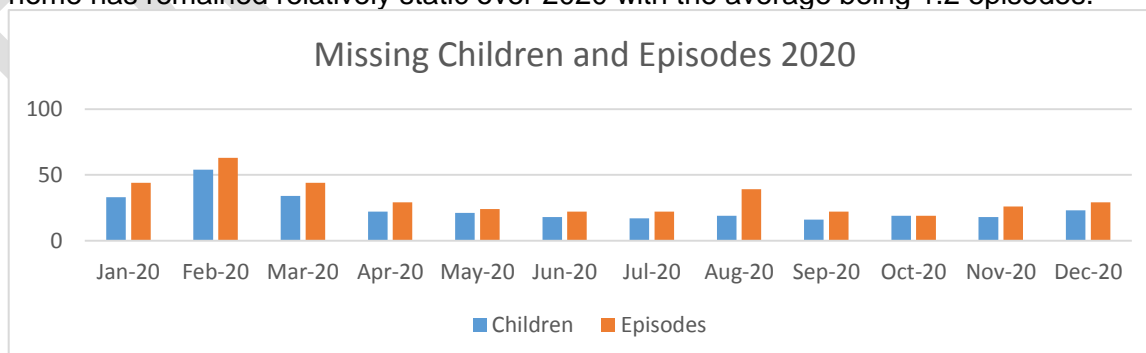
- On the edge of coming into care, usually due to relationship breakdown with parents.
- At risk of youth violence, child criminal exploitation or child sexual exploitation.
- 16 or 17 year old who present to the council as homeless.
- Children and young people reported missing from home or care.

8.2 The Concern Hub provides multi agency oversight and safety planning for children and young people (Up to 25 years) at risk of youth violence, criminal and sexual exploitation. In the 2019 (calendar year) the Concern Hub received 174 referrals, compared to 95 in 2020. While there has been decrease in referrals, the number of high risk cases referred in 2020 is unchanged. Initial analysis attributes these factors to explain this drop:

- The Concern Hub was new in 2019 and establishing the referral criteria. Throughout 2020 there has been a focus on working with partners to better understand exploitation and when referrals should be made.
- Lockdown have resulted in fewer younger people being out in the community, being exposed to situations where they are likely to be at risk of exploitation.
- Young people of BAME heritage are over-represented accounting for 67% of referrals, compared to 46% of the Lewisham population. This disproportionality has been identified as a key theme in the LSCP Exploitation Strategy.

8.3 Through 2019/20 LSCP has been driving the local multi-agency approach to improving how we collectively plan for and respond to, the exploitation of young people in Lewisham. The LSCP strategic Concern Hub group has updated the Exploitation Strategy, which brings together all the respective services and sets the direction and actions using a "Prevent, Protect, Restore, Pursue" framework.

8.4 There has been a significant decrease in the number of children and young people reported missing since June 2020. Again the impact of lockdown has resulted in fewer missing episodes. The average number of times a child has been reported missing from home has remained relatively static over 2020 with the average being 1.2 episodes.



8.5 Safe Space aims to offer all children and young people residing in Lewisham a return interview (RHI) within 72 hours of returning home from a missing episode. Data currently suggests the number of missing episodes with a completed RHI ranges from 42% - 19%. We know from examination there are still some recording/reporting anomalies to be addressed to improve the accuracy of this data and we also have more work to do to improve our practice to reach our target of 60%.

9. Children in Need (including Children with Complex Needs)

- 9.1 Where it is assessed that a child requires ongoing services to safeguard and promote their welfare, the family is transferred to one of the 7 teams in the Family Support and Safeguarding service (FSS). Each child will have a multi-agency Child in Need (CIN) plan which sets out the services and support to be delivered. The Social Worker is the lead professional and should ensure the CIN plan is reviewed with the family and the multi-agency network at least every 3 months.
- 9.2 The rate of CIN in Q3 of 2020 was 275, lower than in December 2019 (300), our statistical neighbours (312) and Inner London (325). We are continuing to explore whether this is because of a difference in categorisation of CIN in Lewisham. The fall in CIN rate through 2020, reflects the decrease in number of CSC assessments at the start of lockdown. It also reflects the decision to step down the least vulnerable CIN where it was safe to do so, in order to manage the demands resulting from the reduced workforce and the increased complexity covid brought about for higher risk families.

Indicator	Lewisham				
	Total 19/20	Q4 19/20	Q1 2020	Q2 2020	Q3 2020
% CiN in FSS service only with an up-to-date plan	81.2%	85.9%	83.6%	81.3%	87.2%
% of CIN in FSS service only visited within 20 days	73.0%	52.2%	70.2%	80.7%	86.8%

- 9.3 In Lewisham, the expectation is that all CIN are seen at least every 20 working days by a social worker. The table above shows the impact of initial lockdown on performance in Quarter 4. At that point 70% of the workforce were unable to undertake face to face visits and new systems for managing the change in working arrangements needed to be implemented. One these new systems were established performance improved and to a rate higher than that of the previous year.
- 9.4 CIN plans should be reviewed at least every 12 weeks. This is an area of performance that has slightly improved since last year but needs further attention. The quality of plans and effectiveness of our review meetings are a significant area of focus for 2021. The themes in the most recent quality assurance activity highlights that families report relationships with their social workers and interventions are supportive and meaningful, that there is an increase in engaging the wider family to manage risk and develop plans with them and there are good examples of purposeful virtual visiting.

9.5 Children with Complex Needs

CWCN is a multi-disciplinary service providing support to children aged 0-18 who have a diagnosis which meets threshold for a specialist service. The assessed impact of the child or young person's disability determines the level and nature of the support provided. The CWCN Teams are part of the Education Service in the Children's Directorate (rather than CSC), linked closely to the SEN service. CWCN has two statutory social work teams, a care package team which reviews established care packages and a short breaks team who oversee all targeted short breaks and support in procuring specialist services. CWCN work in partnership with Health-Continuing Care, SEN, Occupational Health, and CAMHS. CWCN's main office is located at the Kaleidoscope building, integrated with Health colleagues.

- 9.6 The service for CWCN threshold is defined in the Equality Act 2010; a disabled person is someone who has a physical or mental impairment, and that impairment has a long term adverse effect on the person's ability to carry out normal day to day activities.

Examples are physical or mental impairments which might (depending on the individual's circumstances) fulfil the criteria for the children with disabilities social work team:	The following conditions would not normally lead to a child being considered as disabled, but as having additional needs:
<p>Multiple and complex health needs;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A significant learning disability • Autistic Spectrum Disorder and Communication Disorders with significant impairment of communication or intellectual functioning; • Child would usually meet the eligibility threshold for a Targeted Short Break if DLA is at a higher rate • Sensory impairment: hearing loss, visual impairment, deaf-blind • A chronic physical illness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dyslexia • Dyspraxia • Speech and Language difficulties. • Emotional and behavioural difficulties that are not due to one of the areas listed above (this includes ADHD) • Mental Health Needs

- 9.7 At the end December 2020, the service were working with 333 children across the 3 teams. Of these cases, 45 were children looked after and 4 were Child Protection. The expectation for CWCN receiving a service is that they are visited every 20 working days. During the pandemic most of the visits were converted to virtual contact. Initially performance dropped when lockdown commenced, but has since improved at 66% in Quarter 3. Further focus is needed to improve performance in this area.

9.9 Young Carers

Young Carers are children under 18 who provide regular practical, personal care and, or emotional support to a family member who has a physical, learning or mental disability, or who misuses substances, or where there is domestic violence. The term young carer does not apply to the everyday and occasional help around the home, a young carer becomes vulnerable when the level of care-giving becomes excessive or inappropriate. Local authorities have a duty to carry out a statutory assessment of young carer's and provide services where the child a CIN.

- 9.10 A Service Level Agreement between Lewisham Children's Services and 'Carers Lewisham' for services to young carers has been put in place from April 2020 to March 2022. Carers Lewisham delivers a range of child centred activities and support young carers up to 25. In 19/20 to date, Carers Lewisham has supported 217 young carers and their families through a range of activities including: Advice and information; Referrals/ Signposting; Grant application; Emotional support and Young Carers Holiday Club.
- 9.11 Measuring the number of young carers is challenging. It can be difficult to identify where there are children with caring roles, as it is often the adults in each situation that come into contact with services. Carers Lewisham estimates there are 3,357 school-age young carers providing moderate or high levels of caring responsibility in Lewisham (Feb 2020): Currently over 375 families with Young Carers are registered with Carers Lewisham. Of this, 200 families engage with Carers Lewisham on a regular basis. Many of these families have several children registered with Carers Lewisham programmes.
- 9.12 Due to the pandemic all outreach and face to face work is still currently suspended, including holiday and after school clubs and new referral numbers have reduced significantly. Staff continue to work remotely from home and are set up with all the necessary equipment that enables them to continue to provide a service. The Young Carers Holiday Club has adapted online workshops within the school half term breaks hosting successful clubs in the October half term break and during the Christmas and New Year holiday period. The feedback has been incredibly positive from the young carers and their families.

9.13 Private Fostering (PF)

A PF child is defined as 'a child who is under the age of 16 years old (18 if disabled) and who is cared for, and provided with accommodation, by someone other than: the parent, a person who is not the parent but who has parental responsibility, or a close relative defined in this context as a brother, sister, aunt, uncle, grandparent or step-parent.

- 9.14 CSC has a dedicated specialist PF Senior Social Worker who carries out all initial assessments and reviews. The PF worker monitors and provides support and advice to the PF child(ren) and carers for the first year of the arrangement through statutory visits every 6 weeks. Following the first year 12 weekly statutory visits are undertaken. In February 2020 the PF service moved from the CSC Assessment Service into the Corporate Parenting service and is now based in the Special Guardianship and Permanence team, to more closely align the work to other forms of caring/fostering.
- 9.15 From Jan. – Dec. 2020 (inclusive) CSC received 20 notifications of new PF arrangements, a decrease from last year (No.29), largely due to the reduction in international students staying with host families due to covid. From the 20 referrals, 10 cases went on to be new PF arrangements. There were also 10 existing PF arrangements subject, bringing a combined number of PF arrangements to 20.
- 9.16 Lewisham has undertaken targeted awareness raising in the Health sector, through information leaflets, practice guidance and promotional packs distributed to all GP surgeries (39 in total), developing PF guidance on the CCG website and creating opportunities for the PF Social Worker to provide training/awareness raising. Moreover during PF awareness week, webinar(s) were held on PF by the LSCP. It is anticipated that going forward this will lead to an increase in notifications.
- 9.17 **Families with no recourse to public funds (NRPF) and/or intentionally homeless.**
Children whose parents are not in a position to access private housing for financial reasons and do not have recourse to public housing are likely to be CIN and the Local Authority has a duty to assess their needs and provide support. In general such situations arises when a family become homeless and the parents have NRPF, or when a parent has been assessed by Housing as intentionally homeless.
- 9.18 Lewisham has a specialist NRPF team, located within Housing, the team has a link childrens social worker. When a family present as having NRPF, the Social Worker assesses the child's needs and the NRPF Officer completes a Human Rights assessment. The family will then be supported by the NRPF Officer until the family are in position to access resources in their own right. This could involve making an asylum claim, or employment (financial self-sufficiently), or returning to their country of origin.
- 9.19 Families who are assessed by Housing as intentionally homeless and are not able to access housing through the private sector, can present to the MASH for an assessment of need. CSC work with Housing allocations to find temporary accommodation, (Funded by the CSC budget), while the family are helped to identify alternative accommodation.
- 9.20 In 2020 there were 68 referrals arising from NRPF related issues and currently 17 children's assessments underway. The majority of the NRPF families are closed to CSC following completion of the child's assessment, where as no safeguarding concerns were identified. The number of NRPF related referrals have been relatively consistent over 2020, due to changes in process we do not have comparative data for 2019.
- 9.21 The processes for assessing both these groups of families is being reviewed as part of the programme of work to support the development of the joint CSC-Housing protocol. We are exploring the development of a joint CSC/Housing Team with responsibility for assessing and supporting families with NRPF and intentionally homeless families. The amalgamation of theses responsibilities under one team will provide families with constancy, improve joint working practice and improve management oversight.

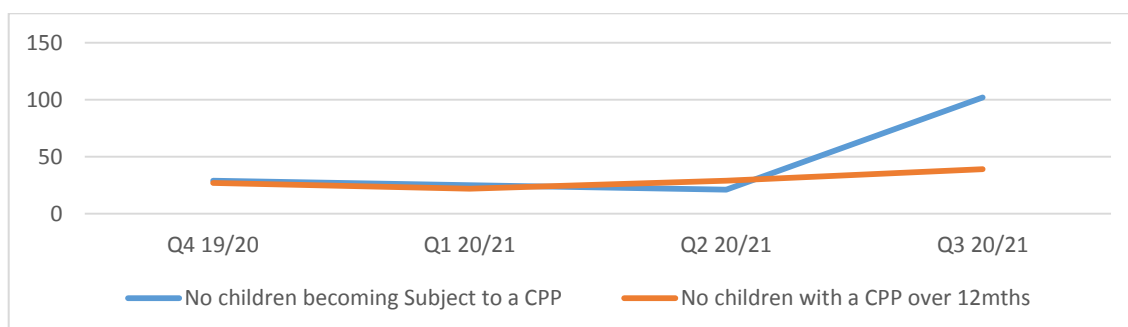
10. Child Protection Conferences and Plans

- 10.1 Where a child is judged to have suffered or be suffering significant harm, an initial child protection conference (ICPC) is convened and should take place within 15 working days of the strategy discussion at which s47 enquiries were initiated. The ICPC brings together the family, supporters, advocates and professionals involved with the family, to plan for the child's safety. If it is decided at ICPC the child remains at risk of significant harm, a Child Protection Plan (CPP) is put in place to support the family to safeguard the child. The CSC Family Support and Safeguarding Service works with children subject to CPP.
- 10.2 CPP are overseen by an independent CP chair who facilitates CPC's at 3 and then every 6 months until the child no longer required a CPP. The CP Chair's are part of the Quality and Improvement Service in CSC, to provide additional scrutiny and oversight.

	N*	P*	S*	E*
Lew (Dec 19)	38%	7%	0%	54%
Lew (Dec 20)	31%	5%	6%	58%
England 19/20	50%	8%	4%	37%
London 19/20	42%	10%	3%	44%

When a child is made subject to a CPP, they are placed under one of four categories: *Neglect, Physical, Sexual or Emotional Abuse. The number of CPP under the categories of neglect and physical abuse has slightly reduced from last year and is lower compared to the London and National figures. However the number of children with a CPP for sexual and emotional abuse has risen

- 10.3 The previous safeguarding report highlighted concern about the comparatively low numbers of children on CPP for sexual abuse and work has been undertaken to raise awareness and practice standards, which is likely to have influenced the increase. More needs to be done to understand the high number of CPP for emotional abuse, in comparison to others. This is likely to be connected to high rates of domestic abuse.
- 10.4 Throughout 2019 there had been a considerable drop in the number and rate of CPP's, attributed to the introduction of the Signs of Safety practice framework in CSC which encouraged a more collaborative approach to working with families and a different way of managing risk. This year as a direct impact of Covid, numbers have increased again, at the end of December 2020, 291 children were subject to a CPP, compared to 216 at the same time last year.
- 10.5 At the start of lockdown through to September 2020 there was a decrease in children becoming subject to CPPs. This coincided with schools closing and many professionals scaling back direct contact with families. However through this period the overall number of CPP's was increasing because with direct work scaled back, intensive risk reduction work was hampered, children were not exiting from CPP at the usual rate and the duration of the CPP's increased. This was followed by more children becoming subject to a CPP in Quarter 3 of 2020/21, when the easing of lockdown restrictions increased face to face visits from professionals and schools reopened. The combination of an increased number of CPPs in Quarter 3 and the increase in children who have had a CPP for longer than 12 months has lead to a significant rise in the overall number of CPP's. This is in line with national trends throughout covid.



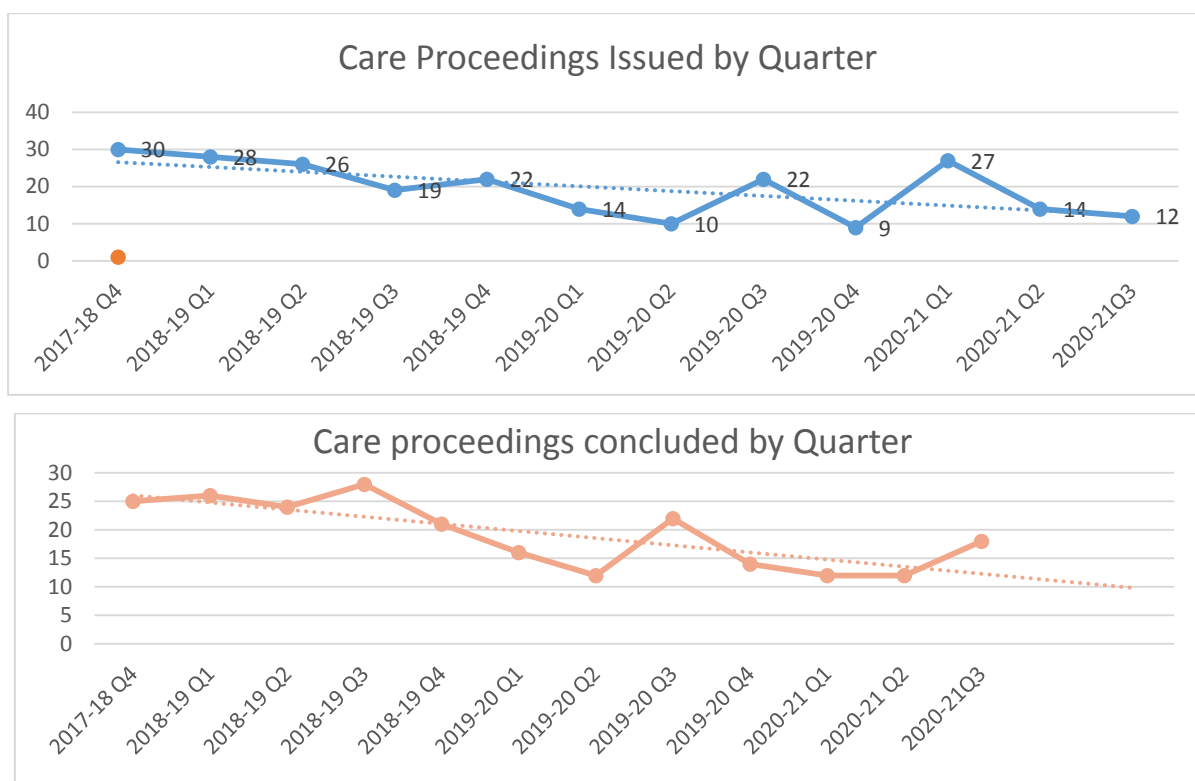
- 10.6 London Children Protection Procedures require visits to children on a CPP to be every 20 working days (min.). Lewisham determines they should be no less than every 10 working days. The expectation is also that the CPP are reviewed with the family and professional network every 6 weeks at the core group meeting. Despite a dip in performance at the onset of lockdown, there has since been a improvement in both performance indicators and overall it exceeds performance in 2019. The quality of plans and the effectiveness of our reviewing mechanisms are a significant area of focus at present and it is anticipated that there will be improvements in this area going forward.

Indicator	Lewisham					SN
	Total 19/20	Q4 19/20	Q1 2020	Q2 2020	Q3 2020	19/20
% of CP plans lasting 2 years or more	1.3%	1.1%	1.1%	1.8%	2.4%	1.9%
% of children visited within 10 working days (Average)	72%	64%	53%	71%	81%	n/a
Core Group Meetings within Timescale (%)	68	64	53	77	76%	n/a

11. Public Law - Pre Proceedings (PLO) & Court Proceedings

- 11.1. Where a child is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm attributable to the care being given, or because the child is beyond parental control, the Local Authority can make an application to court to initiate care proceedings (s31 Children Act 1989). The Public Law Outline (PLO) is the pre-proceedings period aimed at diverting the need for proceedings and to ensure preparatory work facilitates court cases being completed within a 26 week timescale.
- 11.2. Before a decision can be made to enter into PLO or initiate Care Proceedings, a Legal Planning Meeting is chaired by a Senior Manager and a decision is made about whether the threshold criteria has been met and whether a legal order is necessary to safeguard the child. This recommendation then has to be ratified by the Director of CSC in the 'Access to Resource and Care' panel as a further check and balance. Children subject to proceedings are allocated in the Family Support and Safeguarding Service.
- 11.3. At the end of December 2020 there were 44 children/24 cases in PLO Pre-proceedings. In the 2019 Ofsted inspection it was noted that within pre-proceedings, planning needs to be more focussed and as a result some children experience drift. The PLO protocol has been revised and the legal tracking panel chaired by the Head of Service, now provides greater focus. It is anticipated this will lead to an improvement.
- 11.4. Lewisham has historically had high numbers of care proceedings. There has been a substantial reduction in the number of applications made since 2018/19. This corresponds with a downward trend in children coming into care and is attributable to changes in practice culture resulting from the Signs of Safety practice framework. Despite a fluctuation during covid, this downward trend in proceedings has continued, bringing our numbers in line with neighbours and is expected to reduce further with the development of the 'Edge of Care' Family Support Service.

	Lewisham Total 18/19	Lewisham Total 19/20	Lewisham Q1-Q2 20/21	RBG Q1-Q2 20/21	Lambeth Q1-Q2 20/21	Southwark Q1-Q2 20/21
No. of intial applications to court <i>Figures in brackets represent figure for same period in 19/20.</i>	95	55	41 (26)	36 (24)	57 (24)	38 (33)
Total no. of cases (families) currently open in proceedings	-	-	48	49	78	58



- 11.5. At the onset of lockdown, restrictions made it difficult for families to access support from their professional and family networks. For a number of families we were working with, the risk that would ordinarily have been managed with children remaining at home with high levels of support became heightened and was no longer safe. This resulted in a spike in the number of care proceedings being issued in Quarter 1 2020/21, particularly where parents had complex mental health needs or difficulties with drug and/or alcohol use. This pattern is consistent with statistical neighbours across South East London.
- 11.6. Covid has placed significant pressures on the Family Court system. In the initial lockdown period, courts struggled to manage face to face hearings and remote working. Eventually protocols were developed to enable most, if not all hearings to be dealt with remotely. This has caused significant delays to many cases being able to conclude.
- 11.7. The standard expectation of case duration is 26 weeks. The average nationally has lengthened to 36 weeks though covid. In Lewisham, the average duration reached 39 in Quarter 2 but then reduced to 33 in Quarter 3, less than 2019. There are still a number of longstanding cases needing to conclude which are significantly delayed due to court availability. This will mean our average case duration is likely to remain high over the next six months. The increase in number of applications for care proceedings in quarter 1, combined with delayed case conclusions has meant the total proportion of children we were working with through the courts created significant social worker caseload pressures across the service throughout 2020.

	2019/ 2020	Q4 19/20	Q1 2020	Q2 2020	Q3 2020
Average case duration (weeks)	35	38	31	39	33

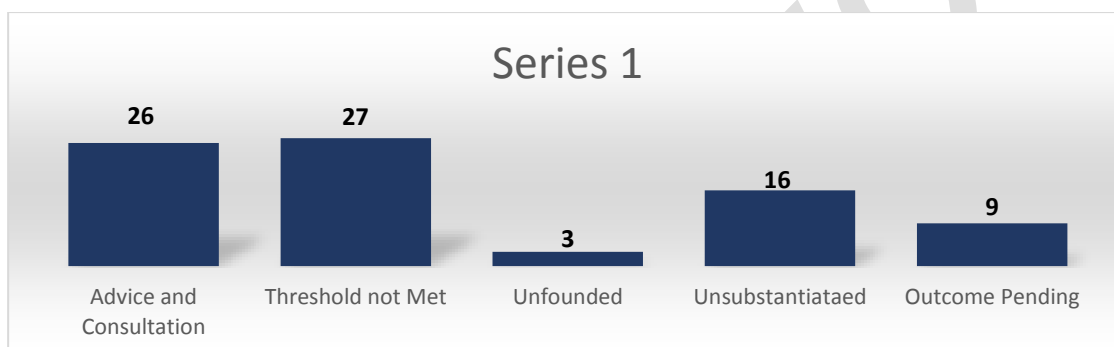
- 11.8. There has been a lot of work done within the Family Support and Safeguarding service to enable earlier thinking and planning and clear contingency planning for cases within the court arena. This has resulted in recent positive feedback from judges and children's guardians about the quality of the work being done in this area.

12. Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)

12.1. The LADO provides advice and guidance to employers and organisations in Lewisham who are concerned when a person who works with children, in a voluntary or paid role, has harmed a child. Where a direct allegation of harm has been made, the following categories of harm are applied. There may be concerns about that the professional has:

- behaved in a way that has harmed or may have harmed a child
- possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child
- behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm to children.

12.2 Between Jan. and Dec. 2020 the LADO received 280 contacts where consultation was provided. Of these 97 progressed to a referral as a result of a direct allegation being confirmed. The chart below shows the outcome of these referrals.



12.2. Schools represent the highest proportion of referrals to the LADO. Plans are being made to raise awareness of allegations processes in relation to Faith groups and religious organisations in Lewisham through the LSCP. Work is also being planned to enhance audit and quality assurance of LADO work.

13. Financial implications

The current net budget allocation for the CSC Directorate is £44.1m, of which £2.5m is dedicated to the delivery of Safeguarding Services and a further £2.9m for NRPF. The work being undertaken to re-design the Edge of Care Family Support Service is exploring new ways of working to improve services within the existing CSC budget envelope.

14. Equalities implications

The Council's Comprehensive Equality Scheme for 2016-20 provides an overarching framework and focus for the Council's work on equalities and helps ensure compliance with the Equality Act 2010. A key ambition for the Children's Social Care vision for social work is 'Promoting inclusivity and diversity'. Promoting anti-discriminatory practice is core to our workforce development plans ensure services are providing culturally sensitive and equitable services.

15. Crime and disorder implications

CSC are actively engaged in the development of the Domestic Abuse and Violence strategy. The purpose is to set out the partnership approach to ending domestic abuse and violence against women and girls. It aims to ensure that everyone living and working in Lewisham feels able to contribute to making the borough a safer place for victims of abuse. The strategy aims to build on our existing partnerships to provide a more co-ordinated and strategic response to tackling violence and abuse.

Investment is being made in the 'Safe Space' service with the aim of reducing the risk to children and young people who are at risk of sexual and criminal exploitation.

16. Health and wellbeing implications

- 16.1. As noted above, this has been a challenging period for front line services. Social workers have experienced professional isolation as a result of working and visiting from home and many have experienced the stress of juggling work and childcare from home. Most Social Workers are now working out in the community which brings an inevitable level of anxiety and many have experienced personal loss as a result of the pandemic.
- 16.2. Social Work Managers have been proactive in checking in with front line staff and having regular one to one supervision and team meetings through this time. In the most recent staff survey, staff reported that they felt supported by their line managers and they felt senior managers had shown good leaderships through the pandemic.
- 16.3. There has been regular communication directly from the director of Children's Social Care and through the newsletter with reference to the Council's Employee assistance scheme which has been promoted in the services.

17. Legal implications

Not applicable

18. Climate change and environmental implications

No applicable

19. Background papers

The Ofsted report was published in August 2019:

<https://files.api.ofsted.gov.uk/v1/file/50101634>

20. Report author and contact

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Lucie Heyes (Director of Childrens Social Care)

21. Glossary

Term	Definition
CSC Children's Social Care.	The service area of Children's Services that provides statutory social work services to children in need, including those with complex disabilities, children in need of protection, children who are looked after (in care) and young people who her previously been in care.
NRPF 'no recourse to public funds'	Families who have 'no recourse to public funds', a condition applied to those staying in the UK with a temporary immigration status.
FGC Family Group Conference	A meeting of the extended family and friends to make decisions and plans for resolving problems around a child or young person. More information can be found here: http://www.daybreakfgc.org.uk/what-is-an-fgc
SoS Signs of Safety	The practice framework for children's social work that guides a particular approach to working with families. More information can be found here: https://www.signsofsafety.net/signs-of-safety/
LSCP Local Safeguarding Children's Partnership	Replacing the former Local Safeguarding Children's Board in 2019. The partnership ensures member agencies work together to keep children and young people safe, hold one another to account and ensure that safeguarding remains a priority. More information can be found here: https://www.safeguardinglewisham.org.uk/lscp/lscp

22. Comments for and on behalf of the Executive Director for Corporate Resources

22.1.

23. Comments for and on behalf of the Director of Law, Governance and HR

23.1.