



Children and Young People Select Committee

Report title: Safeguarding 6 Monthly Update

Date: 10 March 2020

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 Social Care Services (CSC) in the time period between June 2019 and January 2020.

This report does not include information on Early Help, Child Sexual Exploitation, investigations undertaken by the Local Authority Designated Officer, or Children Looked After and Care Leavers. These areas are subject of a separate reports to either the LSCP and/or CYP Select Committee.

22.1 Summary

1.1. In July 2019, Lewisham Children's Services was subject to an unannounced three

week inspection under the Ofsted Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) framework. The inspectors judged that safeguarding services 'required improvement' to be good, this was in line with the council's own self-assessments in January and June 2019.

- 1.2. This report provides a summary of safeguarding activity and the quality of help and protection services being provided by Children's Social Care Services (CSC) in the time period between June 2019 and January 2020, after the Ofsted inspection. As at the end of December 2019. Children's Social Care (CSC) was working with a total of 2595 children and young people. Of these 590 were in the process of being assessed, 827 are receiving services children in need, including those with disabilities. 212 are subject to child protection plans and though the year 65 children have been subject to court proceedings. These children are being provided services by the following teams:

MASH	A multi-agency team that receives all incoming contacts where there may be concerns about the wellbeing or safety of a child. The MASH shares information to make a decision to direct the child and family to the most suitable service within 1 day.
Assessment teams	These 5 teams undertake Child & Family statutory social work assessments to establish the needs of the child and identify any risk of harm through Section 47 child protection enquiries.
Safe Space teams	The dedicated vulnerable adolescent team works with children and young people 11+ years, at risk of criminal and sexual exploitation
Family Social work teams	These 7 teams provide medium term services to children in need, children subject to child protection plans and initiate court proceedings where children cannot remain safely with their families.
Quality & Improvement Service	The Child Protection Conference co-ordination and quality assurance team is located in the QI service. These are the independent chairs of conferences.

1.3 What's going well:

- 1.3.1 Performance across many areas of Children's Social Care safeguarding practice has improved, some areas more acutely than others. In the MASH, performance and practice is much improved over the last 6 months, targets to make decisions within 24 hours are being met, half of the practice is now judged to be of a 'good' quality and the remainder requires some improvement to be good. This reduces delay for families receiving the right service to best meet their needs.
- 1.3.2 Risk is identified and responded to promptly, appropriate action is taken when young people are at risk of exploitation and processes for tracking missing children are robust. Children with complex needs are receiving a good service. Children in Need are being visited more frequently, their plans are being updated more regularly, review meetings are happening more routinely and fewer are open for over 18 months as a result of drift.
- 1.3.3 Fewer families are now unnecessarily subjected to statutory interventions, evidenced by falling child protection enquiries, conferences, plans and court proceedings.

Observations/audits of child protection conferences through 2019 and feedback from parents indicates they have moved away from what was described as punitive practice in the January 2019 self-assessment. CAF/CASS feedback the quality of practice in Lewisham is improving, the standard of court reports is well regarded and through the last 6 months there were fewer late notice applications.

- 1.3.4 Signs of Safety practice framework is changing our approach to families. Social workers have good relationships and know their families well, more fathers and wider family are being included. Social workers feel supported by their managers and supervision is regularly happening.

1.4 What needs to be improved:

- 1.4.1 When assessing children, we need to promptly see and assess children where the risk is less prominent. The quality of assessments is too variable, they need to be better informed by the history, be more inclusive of the wider family. Social workers need to develop their professional curiosity and how they work with resistance. We need to have stronger analysis which is not over-optimistic about parenting capacity and provides a clear rationale for decisions about the best service for the child and family.
- 1.4.2 Whilst performance for children in need is improved, it needs to be more consistent and the quality of child in need and child protection plans needs to improve and developed 'with' the engagement of the family, all associated activity (visits) needs to be more purposeful and the progress of the plan needs to be regularly and robustly reviewed to avoid drift. Children subject to child protection plans need to be seen more frequently and Core Group meetings need to be more effective. All of the above needs to be supported by management oversight and supervision that is more reflective & challenging.

1.5 What we are doing to improve:

- 1.5.1 Improvements through 2019 have been aimed at re-establishing the basics of practice, through 2020 the priority is to improve the quality of our interventions. The improvement plan has a strong focus on workforce development to address this. Top 12 priority areas for improvement through 2020/2021:
1. Workforce development, so staff have the skills & tools to do their jobs effectively.
 2. Having clear, updated practice standards, policies and procedures.
 3. Recruitment & Retention of staff, to improve continuity for children and families.
 4. Strengthening targeted Early Help for vulnerable families.
 5. Providing a range of services and help for children living with Domestic Abuse.
 6. Safeguarding young people at risk of exploitation in the community.
 7. Increasing family support, to reduce the need for children to come into care.
 8. Good Corporate Parenting for looked after children and our care leavers.
 9. Placement sufficiency, for our looked after children and care leavers.
 10. Stable ICT to support practice, performance & financial management.
 11. Having reliable performance information to monitor practice and plan services.
 12. Enhanced Business Support, allowing social workers to spend time with families.
- 1.5.2 The details of the Ofsted judgement and the service response was provided in a report to CYP Select Committee in January 2020, this report provides more detail about how the above priorities will be delivered.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are recommended to note and comment upon the contents of this report.

23.3 Policy Context

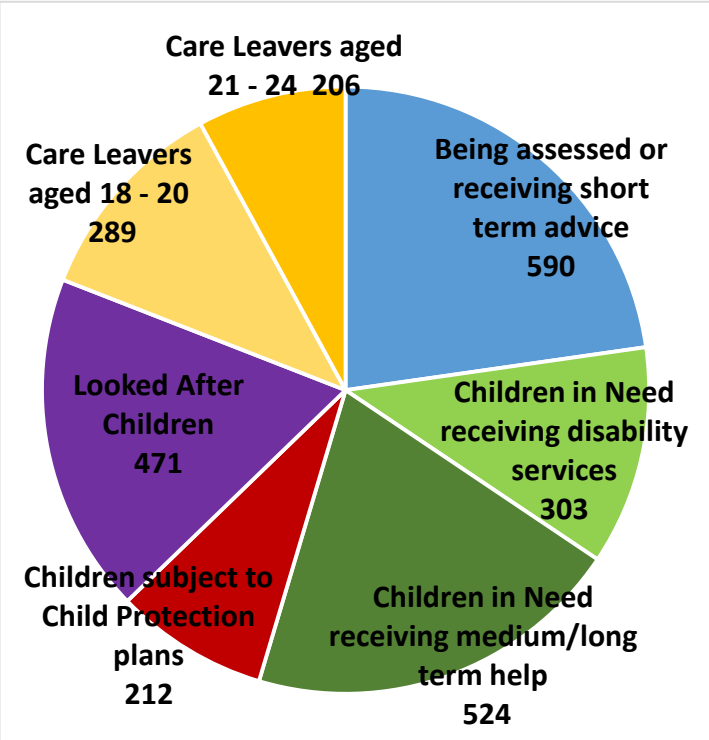
- 3.1 Children's Social Care (CSC) is governed by statutory legislation, regulation and guidance. The key legislative framework and guidance for this are outlined below via:
- [The Children Acts of 1989 and 2014](#), and subsequent guidance and regulations, impose a statutory duty on local authorities 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".
- 3.3 CSC helps deliver against the following commitments:
- 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.

24.4 Background

- 4.1 A series of reviews in Children's Services conducted in the spring of 2018 identified the intended impact of the changes were not being realised. In the summer of 2018, Children's Social Care revisited its approach and began reshaping the improvement programme. An Improvement Board was established, chaired by the Lead Member for Children's Services to drive change forward. In September 2018 the new permanent Director of Children's Social Care took up post. With the support of the Improvement Board, the Director developed the vision and values for the service, Strategic and Operational Improvement Plans were aligned to the introduction of the Signs of Safety Practice Framework. The improvement programme, has driven forward changes to improve our services to become consistently good. A summary of key milestones linked to improving safeguarding services is available in the appendices.
- 4.2 In July 2019, Lewisham Children's Services was subject to an unannounced three week inspection under the Ofsted Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) framework. The inspectors judged that safeguarding services 'required improvement' to be good, this was in line with the council's own self-assessments in January and June 2019. The Ofsted report was published in August 2019 and can be found online at: <https://files.api.ofsted.gov.uk/v1/file/50101634> A summary of key Ofsted findings that relate specifically to children in need of help and protection and the impact of leaders is provided in the appendices.

- 4.3 The last Safeguarding report provided to CYP Select Committee was June 2019, covering the reporting period of January 2019 to June 2019. This covered the 6 month period before the July 2019 Ofsted inspection. The details of the Ofsted judgement and the service response was provided in a report to CYP Select Committee in January 2020. This report provides a summary of safeguarding activity and the quality of services being provided by Children’s Social Care Services (CSC) in the time period between June 2019 and January 2020.
- 4.4 The report does not include information on Early Help, Child Sexual Exploitation, investigations undertaken by the Local Authority Designated Officer, or Children Looked After and Care Leavers. These areas are subject of a separate reports to either the LSCP and/or CYP Select Committee.

25. 5 Children who require safeguarding in Lewisham



- 5.1 As at the end of December 2019. Children’s Social Care (CSC) was working with a **total of 2595** children and young people.
- 5.2 The CWCN service is working with 338 children. 303 are receiving children in need services, at the time of this report 2 children were subject to child protection plans, 33 were Looked After. The numbers of children receiving disability services are similar to that during 2018/19.

26. 5.3 For children being assessed, with child in need or protection plans (No.1629) the numbers are the same as this time 6 months ago. However, there has been an increase of c200 more children compared to January 2019. The overall increases are seen in children requiring an assessment, more children in need and more care leavers. This is believed to be a combination of; changes in the MASH applying the revised LSCB thresholds, a change in approach to families where domestic abuse is a factor, increasing complexity of cases particularly in relation to adolescents. Increased children in need (+90) is thought to be as a result of more children being assessed (+100), and fewer children being subject to Child Protection plans (-65). Increased care leavers is understood to be as a result of improved recording and performance reporting.

27. 6 The workforce providing safeguarding services in Children's Social Care (CSC)

- 6.1 The CSC teams working with children who require safeguarding are the MASH, x5 Assessment Teams, x2 Safe Space (Adolescent) teams, x8 Family Social Work Teams and x3 Children with Complex Needs teams. In total there are 189 social workers and managers working in these teams.
- 6.2 Approximately 65% of the service is staffed by permanent social workers and managers. Vacant posts are mostly filled with agency social workers and there are a small number of vacancies as we struggle to recruit practitioners of good enough quality in a very competitive market. There is little movement on the permanent rate, from the previous 6 months, because recruitment activity through 2019 has been focused on establishing permanent management and the staff group has slightly expanded through 2019, in order to maintain manageable caseloads.
- 6.3 Our caseload management guide sets out that social workers should be allocated approximately 15 children. This enables sufficient time for relationships to be developed and good practice to be delivered, it is also an important recruitment and retention factor. Overall caseloads are much improved through 2019 and have been stable at around 15 for most of the service. However, in this has not been the case in the Assessment service over the last 6 months, which has seen an increase in cases as a result of more families being referred from the MASH. This has been monitored closely and actions have been taken to manage the volume, as at December 2019 the average was 20 and we are continuing to keep this under review to bring it in line with the rest of the service.

28. 7 How we know about the quality and impact of our services.

- 7.1 The findings from a broad range of performance information and quality assurance activity is scrutinised on a monthly and quarterly basis. Highlights are fed up to the Directorate Management Team, Executive Management Team, the Improvement Board, council meetings, committees and the LSCP as required.
- 7.2 Twice a year Listening & Learning events are held, which are concentrated periods of quality assurance. The information gathered from all of this activity is collated to produce a bi-annual self-assessment of CSC services. The self assessment was last updated in June 2019 and is in the process of being collated for the whole of 2019 following a Listening & Learning event in the last week of January.
- 7.3 The detailed findings of all our quality assurance activity is provided throughout this report. In addition, in July 2019 Lewisham Children's Services was subject to an unannounced three week inspection under the Ofsted Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) framework. Summaries of what Ofsted found are included throughout the report.

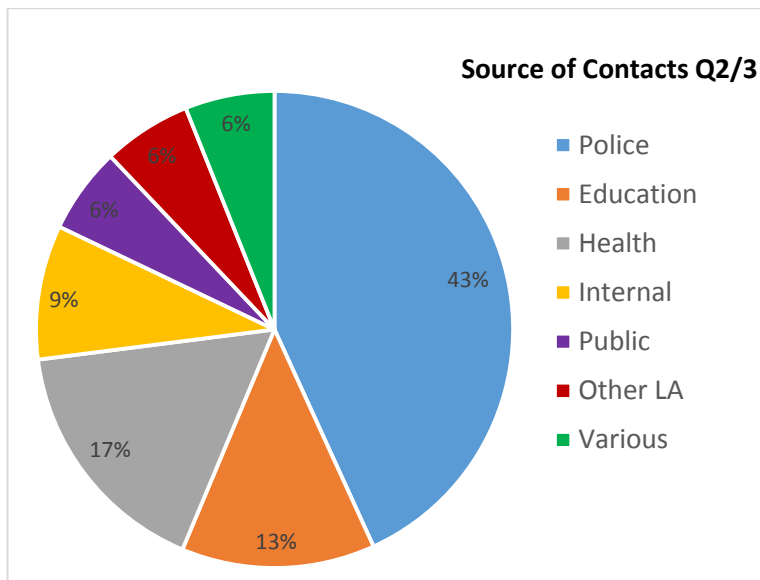
8 MASH and Out of Hours Emergency Duty Service

8.1 Lewisham MASH has representation from the following agencies: CSC, Police, Health, Education, Probation, Drugs Misuse services, housing and Youth Offending Service (virtual). The MASH receives all incoming contacts from members of the public and professionals where there may be concerns about the wellbeing or safety of a child. Advanced Practitioners in the MASH review all contacts to decide the most appropriate service for the child and family (Within 24 hours). Where additional information is required to make this decision, enhanced information sharing will be undertaken with the MASH partners. The Emergency Duty Service is available between 5pm & 9am weekdays and over weekends.

8.2 The table below shows a summary of key performance data

Indicator	Q4 18/19	Q1 19/20	Q2 19/20	Q3 19/20	Average per month	Target
No. of Contacts received in MASH	4171	4063	3654	3774	1276	No Target
No. of Children <i>(Some events lead to more than one contact being received for the same child)</i>	3241	3258	3206	3244	1078	No Target
% Contacts progressing to a CSC referral	16%	18%	28%	23%	21%	20-25%
No. of Contacts progressing to a CSC referral for a CSC assessment	695	725	1006	880	275	No Target
MASH decision made on Contacts in 24 hours	60%	58%	83%	92%	N/A	90%
No of Contacts subject to enhanced MASH checks	131	318	351	495	N/A	No Target
Rate of CSC referrals (10k pop) rolling 12 months	443	459	489	534	N/A	No Target
% Re-referrals <i>(In the last 12 months rolling)</i>	10%	15%	15%	15%	N/A	No higher than 15%

8.3 A total of 15,662 contacts were processed by MASH during Jan–Dec 2019. This related to 12,949 children. For approximately 50% of the children, we were contacted more than once over a 12 month period. There was no increase in volume of children who have come to our attention over the course of 2019. However, we have no ability to compare with whether there has been a change on previous years, because of the different ways contacts were previously recorded prior to the improvements being made in the MASH (Jan. 2019).



8.4 The proportions of contacts from agencies is largely in line with the previous 6 months, with the exception of a moderate increase in contacts from various health agencies.

8.5 Police are always the highest contributor of contacts, as all incidents they respond to involving a child and where there may be any safeguarding issue are reviewed by the MASH.

8.6 Not all cases referred to MASH will require partner agency checks. However for complex cases we have been increasing the number of enhanced information checks to maximise the benefits of co-located professionals. We are now refining when MASH checks are carried out to ensure they are proportionate and enable better decisions to be made.

8.7 There have been significant improvements in the timeliness of decision making in the MASH across 2019 (92% in Q4). We were unable to report on this until this year, therefore there is no comparison data from 2018.

8.8 Not all contacts result in family being referred for a CSC service. A percentage are requests for information, a large proportion of professionals and/or families will be provided with information, advice and signposted to an early help service in the community.

8.9 3306 children have been referred onto CSC for a Child & Family Assessment this year. Lewisham's rate of referrals has increased from 440 at the end of 2018/19 to 534 in Q3 of 2019/20.

8.10 The 2018/19 National CIN Census benchmarking data indicates this referral rate is still low, but we are gradually coming to be more in line with others. It is also worth noting that while Lewisham's rate of referral is within the range of our immediate neighbours in the region and our assessment rate is slightly higher.

8.11 Ofsted found our thresholds generally right and having reviewed approximately 270 MASH decisions in the recent Listening & Learning week (Jan 2020), 88% of the threshold decisions were found to be correct and the quality of practice was judged to be 50:50 at the higher end of 'Requires Improvement' and 'Good'.

Area/ Borough	Rate of referral 2018/19
Inner London	580
Outer London	528
Statistical Neighbours	604
England	544
Greenwich	485
Bexley	493
Southwark	506
Lambeth	624
Croydon	651
Lewisham 2019 (Q3)	534

- 8.12 What the audit did highlight was that with stronger early Help services, more children could be diverted to preventive community services instead of requiring a statutory service.

% of referrals to CSC from source	Health	Schools/ Education	Police
London 18/19	17%	22%	30%
Lewisham 18/19	16%	19%	23%
Lewisham Q3 19/20	12%	22%	28%

- 8.13 We have noticed some slightly changing patterns in the source of the referral. We are now more in line with the rest of London on the proportion of Police notifications that result in CSC referrals, we believe this is associated with changes to how we respond to domestic abuse notifications in MASH. Since last year there has been a 5% reduction of referrals from Health, despite the contact rate remaining the same, this may be an indication that understanding of CSC thresholds needs to be better improved with health partners.
- 8.14 In conclusion, we are confident the practice and performance in our MASH has much improved and the service will continue to develop, calibrating threshold decisions in response to learning and changing practice influences.

Ofsted said

Most children receive a timely service at the point of referral and there have been some improvements since the focused visit in September 2018.

The co-location of police, health and education partners within a confidential space and the introduction of daily information-sharing meetings have increased partner confidence and enhanced the understanding of children's needs when they are referred for help. These improvements add value to decision-making at the 'front door'.

Appropriate and timely action is taken on referrals regarding children who are suffering or are likely to be suffering significant harm. This includes children who need a service out of hours. However, for some children who managers deem to be at lower risk, decision-making takes too long.

9 Assessments, Strategy Meetings and Section 47 Enquiries

- 9.1 Lewisham Assessment Service includes 9 teams of social workers who undertake assessments of children & families to establish whether they are 'in need' of services (s17 Children Act 1989) and/or are suffering 'significant harm' (s47 Children Act 1989). This includes x5 Assessment Safeguarding teams, x2 Safe Space (Adolescent) teams and x2 Children with Complex Needs teams.
- 9.2 Children's Social Care 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 (*Statutory Guidance: Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018*).

Indicator	Q4 18/19	Q1 19/20	Q2 19/20	Q3 19/20
No. of Assessments started (NB. Whole service)	794	906	1071	1062

9.3 Through 2019 CSC assessed a total of 3833 children, an average of 320 assessments were started every month, an increase from an average of 285 through 2018. This corresponds with the increase in referrals from MASH and the additional demand has placed pressure on the Assessment teams, increasing caseloads for social workers, which negatively impacts on our ability to deliver good quality and timely services.

9.4 Benchmarking data shows our rate of assessment, for every 10,000 children is increasing. In Q3 of 2019/20 it was 582, which is an increase from 545 at June 2019 and 539 the previous year.

9.5 The assessment rate across London in 2018/19 was 512, which suggests we are carrying out slightly more assessments than we should be. We will continue to explore this to ensure our practice is calibrated in the right way.

9.6 In summary we think that we should be within an assessment rate range of 520 – 560 which is the equivalent of 5-10% reduction and this could potentially be achieved with the strengthening of targeted Early Help services.

Area/ Borough	Rate of Assessment 2018/19
London	512
Inner London	522
England	539
Greenwich	482
Bexley	546
Southwark	481
Lambeth	589
Croydon	693
Lewisham	539
Lewisham 2019 (Q3)	582

9.7 We aim to see children within 10 working days of them having been referred. Timeliness of the first visit is of course dependent on the seriousness of the presenting situation and the availability of the family. In Q3 performance data suggests the visit in 10 days was being met in 60% of occasions and this is an area of priority for improvement. However reporting on this indicator is still requires adjustment for accuracy (e.g. data does not capture attempted visits).

Area/ Borough	Assessments completed in 45 days. 2018/19 data
Inner London	81%
Outer London	86%
England	83%
Stat. Neighbours	85%
Lewisham 18/19	80%
Lewisham Q3 2019/20	80%

9.8 In Q3 an average of 80% of assessments are completed within 45 days. A small remainder take longer. Whilst we would like to see this performance improve further, it is recognised reasonably good performance has been maintained despite demand and caseloads increasing through 2019, which is illustrated in the table below.

9.9 At the outcome of the assessment, a large proportion of families are provided with advice and signposted to community services. The percentage of families who go on to be provided with a medium term social work service as a child in need, child

protection or looked after is low (data accuracy under review). Whilst we do not have a reliable figure for this, we do know that in the last 6 months, 58% of children's cases are closed within 3 months and this is 4% increase from Q4 of 2018/19.

9.10 Audit activity also informs us that too many families are being closed prematurely and redirected to community services when a CSC intervention would have been more appropriate. In the January Listening & Learning week an audit of 126 assessments found in approximately 80% of the cases, auditors judged that a CSC assessment service concluded with the correct decision. We know from our quality assurance activity and Ofsted's feedback the areas that are working well are:

- Practice is being positively influenced by the Signs of Safety practice framework
- Immediate risk is identified and addressed in a timely way
- The application of statutory authority is more proportionate, with fewer families experiencing mandatory interventions unnecessarily.
- There are pockets of good strengths based work, challenging supervision, management oversight, including fathers, tenacity around engagement, use of family history.

9.11 The areas that need improvement are:

- Practice needs to be more consistent. Assessments need less description and stronger analysis, which includes better account of history.
- Wider family need to be better engaged in the process, especially the inclusion of fathers.
- Practitioners need to be more curious about the child's experience and not taking information at face value.
- Thresholds for families who require an ongoing CSC service needs further review.

Ofsted said:

The quality of assessments is variable...In weaker assessments, there is...insufficient analysis. While ethnicity, culture and faith are stated, their importance and impact on children's identity and experiences are not consistently explored.

Assessments for unborn babies ...demonstrate an overly positive view of parental ability to make the necessary changes...

10 Section 47 Enquiries

10.1 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).

Indicator	Lewisham					London
	Total 18/19	Q4 18/19	Q1 19/20	Q2 19/20	Q3 19/20	18/19
No. of Section 47 CP Investigations started	1010	206	177	239	276	N/A
Rate of s47 per 10,000 (rolling)	148	154	138	132	135	153

- 10.2 Through 2019, 898 Section 47 enquiries (s47) were started in total. The introduction of the Signs of Safety (SoS) practice framework (Jan 2019) promotes working with families in a strength based way and managing risk through a more proportionate use of formal statutory processes. This has had a positive impact on our rate of s47 enquires falling quite significantly over the last 9 months (135) and is now below the London average. It is of note that our neighbouring boroughs who use similar strength based models of practice and are rated as 'Good' or better, by Ofsted all had rates in 2018/19 that are similar to Lewisham's current 19/20 YTD rate: Greenwich = 129, Southwark = 137, Bexley = 137
- 10.3 In order to assure ourselves that our threshold decision making for initiating s47 enquiries was correct, in July 2019 the senior management team audited 126 cases to examine the decisions being made. 92% were judged to be correct and in the Ofsted inspection they agreed our thresholds were justified. Therefore, we are satisfied that working with less families through the use of mandatory statutory processes is where we want to be. We will be keeping this under review through 2020, to ensure that we are calibrating our threshold decisions correctly.

Ofsted said:

Appropriate and timely action is taken on referrals regarding children...likely to be suffering significant harm. This includes children who need a service out of hours. However, for some children...at lower risk, decision-making takes too long.

Child protection enquiries are timely and children are seen promptly. Risk is recognised and effective multi-agency information-sharing...leads to appropriate decision-making. Most strategy discussions are timely and partner agencies are consulted, although they are not always in attendance.

Timely screening of police notifications leads to prompt recognition of domestic abuse. However, the response to...families in these circumstances is not sufficiently robust and the options for support are not clear.

- 10.4 A separate multi-agency annual report referring to young people who are missing and/or at risk of criminal and sexual exploitation is presented to the Lewisham Safeguarding Children's partnership. Therefore details are not provided here, a summary of key information from this will be provided in a future CYP Select report. In Children's Social Care key milestones for strengthening this area of practice have been as follows:

- The dedicated vulnerable adolescent team 'Safe Space' became operational in August 2019 (Phase 1), this team works with children and young people 11+ years and includes edge of care prevention workers, missing officers, homeless 16/17 year old SHIP worker and social workers. Safe Space aims to be closely aligned to the multi-agency Concern Hub (Jun '19) which co-ordinates multi-agency responses to children at risk of exploitation and gang violence.
- The commissioned service for Return Home Interviews (RHI) will cease, co-ordination and delivery of RHI's will be absorbed into Safe Space team.
- Phases 2 and 3 of developing Safe Space will focus on developing a multi-professional service, a different caseload management mechanism and a complex safeguarding operating protocol suitable for young people at risk of harm in the community.

10.5 A summary of Ofsted's findings in this area are provided below.

Ofsted said:

...for young people identified as being at risk of ...exploitation, appropriate action is taken. However, a small number of children continue to be exposed to ongoing risk and harm as a result of an overly optimistic view of parental willingness and capacity to protect their children from risks presented by other family members.

Processes for... missing young people are robust. ...However, the completion of return home interviews...is not consistent, and this means that the experiences and the risks that some children face are not fully understood.

Staff are tenacious in tracking and following through all reported cases of children missing education....Monitoring arrangements for assessing the quality of provision for children who are electively home educated have improved over time.

11 Children in Need (including Children with Complex Needs)

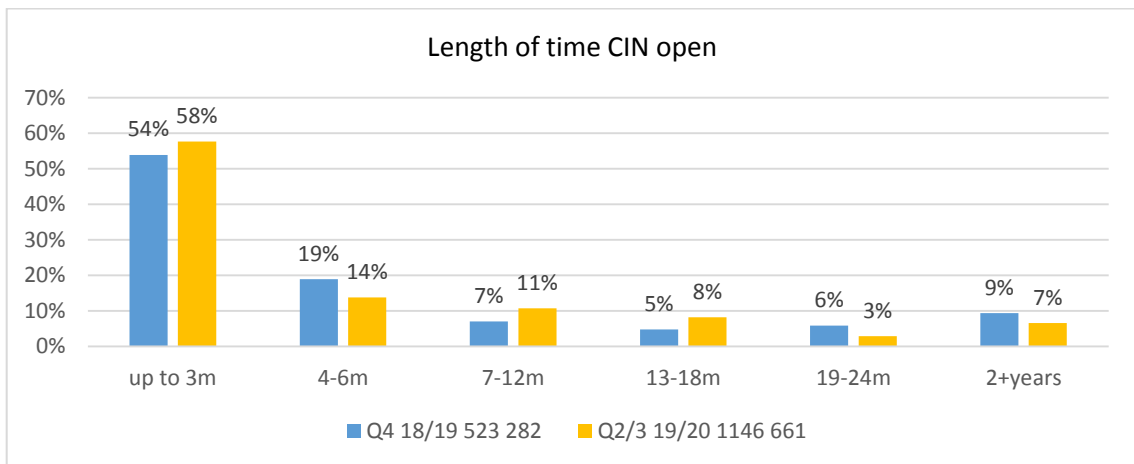
11.1 Where a child has been assessed as being a child 'in need' of services the child and family is transferred to one of the 7 teams in the Family Social Work Service. Every child will have a Child in Need (CIN) plan which outlines the services and support. The plan should be reviewed every 3 months, until the child's needs are met and/or the family no longer require statutory services.

Indicator	Lewisham					Inner London
	Total 18/19	Q4 18/19	Q1 19/20	Q2 19/20	Q3 19/20	18/19
Rate of CiN per 10K population (AS per DfE definition)	344	292	300	290	300	398
% CiN in FSW service only with an up-to-date plan	N/Av	62%	72%	80%	88%	-
% of CIN in FSW service only visited within 20 days	N/Av	69%	69%	70%	80%	-
% of CIN review meetings held in last 3 months.	N/Av	N/Av	N/Av	N/Av	76%	-

11.2 As at the end of December 2019, 847 children were receiving CSC services as a 'Child in Need' (CIN). Of these 303 were children with a disability. The rate of CIN as specified by the Department of Education is a wider category and includes all children that are not looked after. Therefore specific CIN comparisons are a challenge, however as a guide it is worth noting Lewisham's relatively stable DfE defined CIN rate (300) in comparison the others in the region: In 2018/19: Greenwich CIN rate = 371, Southwark = 394, Bexley = 280, Lambeth = 464.

11.3 The chart below shows the length of time CIN cases are open i.e. how long CSC is working with the family. The 54-58% of families whose case was open less than 4 months are mainly those who have been assessed and redirected to community

services. What the trend shows is of those families who are referred to CSC, assessed and go on to receive a service as a CIN, 25% receive a service for up to 1 year. 11% receive a service for up to 2 years and for 7% the service continues for longer. This is not significantly different to Q4 2018/19, although there has been a 5% improvement in families receiving services beyond 18 months. This is a likely indication that there is less drift in CIN cases, but we are also mindful that some cases may be closed prematurely.



- 11.4 The majority of children with a CIN plan are allocated in the Family Social Work Service. Performance for CIN in relation to visits, up to date plans and reviewing is all much improved from 2018. Through Listening & Learning week findings indicated social workers had good relationships and knew their families well (also found by Ofsted), more fathers and wider family were being included. The priorities through 2020 are to improve the quality of the practice, ensuring the CIN plans are developed with families, they have clear and timely goals, social work activity is purposeful, impactful and CIN plans are meaningfully reviewed.

Ofsted said:

Children in need are regularly visited by social workers, who know their children very well. Children'sexperiences mostly inform plans and decision-making... plans are not sufficiently detailed and do not help families to understand what needs to change...Some cases have been closed prematurely, or stepped down to early help...

12 The Children with Complex Needs Service

- 12.1 This service includes 3 Disabilities Social Work Teams, located at Kaleidoscope, Children and Young Person's Centre and sits within the Education Directorate with close links to Social Care. Two of the teams undertake Child & Family Assessments and carry out Section 47 safeguarding assessments. The third team undertakes the reviews of the Short Break packages, care co-ordination and works closely alongside the two social work teams. The assessed impact of the child's disability determines the level and nature of the support the family are provided with.
- 12.2 The Social Work Service for Children with Disability criteria is as 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.

- 12.3 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:
- Multiple and complex health needs;
- 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 DLA (usually higher rate)
 - Sensory impairment: hearing loss, visual impairment, deaf-blind
 - A chronic physical illness
- 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 conditions

Ofsted said:

Disabled children ... benefit from effective services...The well-trained team undertakes regular direct work with children and their families using a range of communication methods. This informs assessments and plans, and, as a result, the lives of disabled children are improving.

13 Young Carers

- 13.1 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 Child & Family Assessment of young carer's and provide services where the child is in need. In Lewisham there are two small services funded by the council who provide support:

- 13.2 Carers Lewisham Young Carers Programme: consists of a range of support and interventions for ages 5-25 as below:
- Young Carers Holiday Club (5–16 yrs)
 - Young Adult Carers Transition to Adulthood Programme (16-25 yrs)
 - Wednesday After-School Drop-In Sessions (8–16yrs: started Oct. 2019)
 - Assistance with applying for grants and additional supports
 - Coordinating family supports with CSC
 - Signposting to other agencies/services
 - Home or school visits for new referrals (started in October 2019)
 - Raising awareness about Young Carers around Lewisham
- Family Action: run a family support project offering holistic family intervention to young carers aged 8-18 years and other family members. Delivering activities:
- 121 mentoring - fortnightly or three weekly for 6-9 months, facilitating the young carer to identify and follow their interests
 - Group activities a year providing a range of activities including; theatre visits, outdoor sport activities, BMX'ing; swimming, ice skating, tennis, badminton, zoo trips, science museum visits and cycling.
 - Health and Wellbeing Workshops
 - Family Assessments

3.4 Measuring the number of young carers in Lewisham is challenging, in part because they often wish to remain hidden. It can also be difficult to identify where there are children or young people 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. We do know that as of Feb 2020:

13.5 Carers Lewisham:

- Over 375 families with Young Carers are registered with Carers Lewisham. Before the GDPR rules came into effect in May 2018, this number was over 700.
- About 160 families engage with Carers Lewisham on a regular basis. Many of these families have several children registered with Carers Lewisham programmes.
- The majority of Carers Lewisham families have Young Carers between the ages of 8-16 and engage because of the Holiday Club respite trips
- About 60% are listed as parent carers and 35% are sibling carers. The number of sibling carers registering with Carers Lewisham has been increasing
- About 85% of the Young Carers are BME.

13.6 Family Action: In 18/19 Family Action supported 32 young carers (target was 18) and their families through a range of activities including:

- One-to-One mentoring - fortnightly or three weekly for 6-9 months, facilitating the young carer to identify and follow their interests
- X6 group activities a year providing a range of activities
- X4 Health and Wellbeing Workshops
- X18 Family Assessments
- Up to Q3 19/20 18 Young Carers were accessing intensive support

Total number of children supported by age in 18/19	Aged 9-11	Aged 12-15	Aged 16-18
	8	21	3

13.7 At this point in time it is not possible to say whether the same children feature across these services and are double counted. There is insufficient performance and quality assurance information on this area of practice to understand the full impact and reach of our current offer and the needs our young carers face, and this is being considered through the development of Lewisham’s Early Help Approach and ongoing social care improvement programme.

14 Private Fostering

14.1 A privately fostered (PF) child is ‘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. The Local Authority has a duty to assess and monitor the PF arrangements when a PF notification is received or the local authority becomes aware that a PF arrangement already exists.

14.2 A separate annual report is due to be submitted to the LSC Partnership which provides an overview of practice in this area. A summary will be provided in the next safeguarding report.

Ofsted said:

Private fostering is promoted effectively... This leads to timely initial visits, detailed assessments and appropriate checks and oversight of private fostering arrangements. Children are visited regularly, and there is appropriate liaison with a range of relevant agencies. The views of children and their parents are well considered.

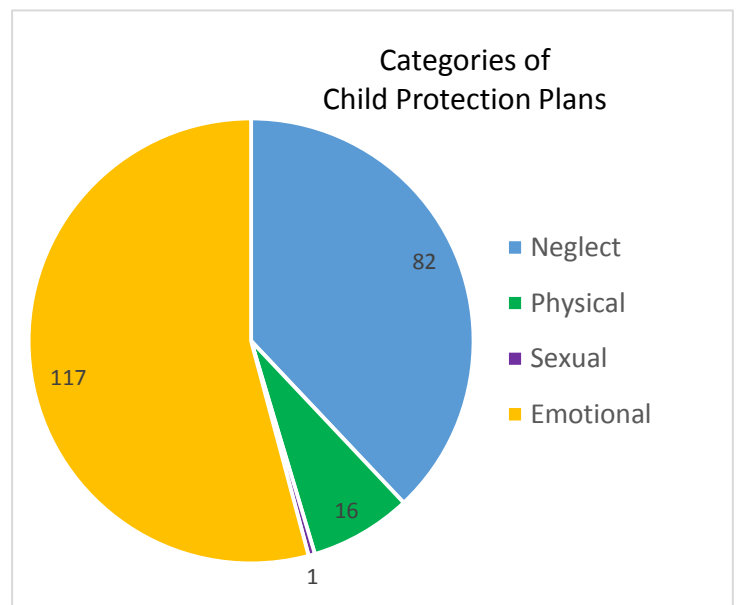
15 Child Protection Conferences, Child Protection Plans & Core Groups

15.1 Where a child is judged to be suffering 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 future 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. Where a child has been made subject of a CPP the child and family is transferred to the Family Social Work Service.

15.2 As at the end of December 2019 Lewisham had 216 children subject to a CPP, under the categories seen here.

15.3 The numbers and rate has fallen considerably from 48 at the end of 2017/18 to 34 in 2018/19, there has been a smaller drop this year and numbers are now levelling out.

	N	P	S	E
Lon (18/19)	41%	10%	4%	44%
Lew (Dec19)	38%	7%	0%	54%



Indicator	Lewisham					London
	Total 18/19	Q4 18/19	Q1 19/20	Q2 19/20	Q3 19/20	18/19
Rate of children becoming subject of a CPP (rolling) per 10,000	34	37	32	28	30	36
No. of CP plans lasting 2 years or more	0%	2%	1%	3%	1%	3%
% of children visited within 10 working days (Average across the quarter)	-	83%	80%	79%	69%	N/A

- 15.4 The drop in CPPs has been an intentional service development and connected to the introduction of our Signs of Safety practice framework. In July 2019 the senior management team audited 126 cases to examine the decisions being made. 92% were judged to be correct and in the Ofsted inspection they agreed that our thresholds were justified. Therefore, we are satisfied the rate of child protection plans is in the range of where we want to be and we will be keeping this under review through 2020, to ensure that we are calibrating our threshold decisions correctly.
- 15.5 We will be looking more closely this year at plan categorisation, to better understand the reason for the low percentage of sexual abuse and higher percentage of emotional abuse categories. Children can only be registered under one primary category, therefore Lewisham's differences compared to London may be a recording issue, we want to assure ourselves our response to these areas of practice is where it should be.
- 15.6 There has been a slight increase in children becoming subject to CPP for 2nd or subsequent time in 2 year period from 13% last in 18/19 to 15% in Q3 of 19/20. In May all these cases were reviewed and no link was found between reducing numbers of CPP and an increase in second time re-registrations. Whilst it has risen, this is the case across the country and Lewisham is still below the London 18/19 average of 18%
- 15.7 London Children Protection Procedures require visits to children on CPP to be a minimum of every 20 working days. Lewisham locally determines they should be visited no less than every 10 working days, performance here has taken a dip in the last quarter and is a priority for the service, but would still meet statutory guidance.
- 15.8 The 'Core Group' of professionals working with the child on a CPP are required to meet every 6 weeks between conferences (every 6 months), this is called the Core Group Meeting. Our performance on this is 62% and there are a range of reasons for this, some of which are not in our control, nevertheless, both visits and Core Groups are areas of practice we are prioritising for improvement. New monitoring arrangements were introduced in January to address this.
- 15.9 Child Protection Conferences have been adapting to the introduction of Signs of Safety through 2019 and progress has been limited as a result of changes in management and staff capacity. Observations/audits of conferences through 2019 and feedback from parents indicates they have moved away from what was described as punitive practice in the January 2019 self-assessment. Improvements have been made that enable parents to better participate. 95% of review conferences continue to happen within the required timescales and only 1% of children are subject to a plan for over 2 years and fewer are subject to plans for over 18 months compared to Q4 of 18/19.

Ofsted said:

Child protection plans are not sufficiently detailed and do not help families to understand what needs to change to improve circumstances for their children, or what will happen if these changes are not made...Multi-agency core groups meet regularly to consider children's progress...However, not all plans are written using language that parents can easily understand.

- 15.10 The quality of child protection plans and child in need plans to be developed 'with' families, be SMART and purposeful requires improvement as is at the top of the list of priorities for practice improvement. To do this through Q3 of 2019 and through 2020 we are concentrating on plans and delivering a range of practice learning activities to raise the quality of practice in plans.

16 Public Law Outline: Pre Proceedings & Care Proceedings in Court

16.1 The Local Authority can initiate care proceedings (s31 Children Act 1989) where a child is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm attributable to the care being given to the child, or because the child is beyond parental control. The Public Law Outline (PLO) initially came into force in 2010 and aimed to streamline court procedures by introducing a pre-proceedings period to divert the need for proceedings in some instances and to ensure preparatory work facilitated the smooth running of court cases, within a 26 week timescale. Before a decision can be made to initiate Care or Supervision Proceedings, a Legal Planning Meeting is held where a decision is made about whether the threshold criteria have been met and whether a legal order is necessary to protect the child. Children subject to pre and care proceedings are allocated in the Family Social Work Service.

16.2 In line with our falling rates of children subject to child protection plans, Lewisham is also reducing the number of children that it is seeking to remove through court orders. In 2018/19, 93 court applications were made (152 children) *Source: CAFCASS*

Care Applications Rate per 10,000	2017-18	2018-19
England	12.2	11.4
London average	9.8	8.6
Lewisham	14.1	13.2

16.3 In 2018/19 applications were on average of 23 per quarter and Lewisham was the 4th highest of the 32 London Boroughs. Through 2019/20 (Q1-3), 47 proceedings (relating to 65 children) have been commenced, this has reduced to an average of 16 per quarter and we have fallen to 9th highest of the London Boroughs. This reduction is in line with other London Boroughs, where care applications are falling overall.

Average duration	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20 (Q1-2)
England	31	29	Not yet available
London	31	29	35 weeks
Lewisham	27 weeks	28 weeks	30 weeks

16.4 The timeliness of proceedings has been falling outside the court recommended timescales, but this has been a challenge across the country. Delays are most commonly caused by court and judge availability, late presentation of family members coming forward to be assessed for suitability as carers, additional assessments requested at court.

16.5 Quarterly meetings with CAFCASS feedback that their experience of the quality of practice in Lewisham is improving, the standard of court reports is well regarded and through the last 6 months we have had fewer emergencies and late notice applications.

16.6 Our aim is to further strengthen our PLO pre-proceedings activity, the PLO and court tracking panel has been refreshed to oversee pre-proceedings progress and minimise drift. We are revising practice guidance to help improve the quality of decision making and the recording thereof. We also aim to reduce applications by strengthening our edge of care family support services through 2020-21. Through a successful Department of Education 'innovation' bid, Lewisham will be introducing a Family Group

Conference (FGC) service for some families entering pre-proceeding, in April 2020. This is part of a national research project with the What Works Centre <https://whatworks-csc.org.uk/> to test the effectiveness of FGC's in reducing care rates. We hope that this will contribute to reducing further the need for court orders and delays in court proceedings. Approximately half of all proceedings result in the child remaining in local authority care, under a Care Order, approximately half again go on to be adopted.

Ofsted said:

...pre-proceedings is properly initiated... The access to resources panel provides oversight ...children's cases are appropriately stepped down when there is evidence of change. However, in a minority of cases, children continue to experience drift...because planning is unfocused.

17 What we are doing to improve

17.1 The improvement plan focus through 2019 was aimed at re-establishing the basics of practice, through 2020 the priority is focusing on improving the quality of our interventions. The improvement plan has a strong focus on workforce development to address this.

17.2 Top 12 priority areas for improvement through 2020/2021:

- Workforce development, so staff have the skills & tools to do their jobs effectively.
- Having clear, updated practice standards, policies and procedures.
- Recruitment & Retention of staff, to improve continuity for children and families.
- Strengthening targeted Early Help for vulnerable families.
- Providing a range of services and help for children living with Domestic Abuse.
- Safeguarding young people at risk of exploitation in the community.
- Increasing family support, to reduce the need for children to come into care.
- Good Corporate Parenting for looked after children and our care leavers.
- Placement sufficiency, for our looked after children and care leavers.
- Stable ICT to support practice, performance & financial management.
- Having reliable performance information to monitor practice and plan services. Enhanced Business Support, allowing social workers to spend time with families.

29. The activity associated with delivering the above was provided in the CYP Select Report (January 2020) on the response to the Ofsted report, therefore I refer members to this earlier report for further details.

30. 18 Financial implications

- 19.1 The Children's Social Care budget has been increased in 2020/21 by £800,000 to provide sufficient staff to maintain reasonable caseloads and management oversight. A further £600,000 has been committed to fund one off development activity to maintain the pace of change in the improvement programme. These additional funds for 2020/21 are being met from within the Children and Young People's Directorate.
- 19.2 The 2021/22 financial position will need to be reviewed again in Quarter 2 of 2020/21, following the completion of the Workforce Development Strategy (WD) and the Family Support Feasibility Review (FSF). The first WD strategy will examine whether additional pressures emerge in the staffing budget as a result of reviewing and benchmarking social worker pay. The second FSF review will identify whether there is sufficient existing resource to develop an in-house Family Support Service, to strengthen Edge of Care provision to prevent children becoming looked after unnecessarily, or whether an invest to save business case is required.

31. 20 Legal implications

Not applicable

32. 21 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.

33. Climate change and environmental implications

Not applicable

23 Crime and disorder implications

- 23.1 Investment in the Safe Space, Leaving Care and additional Domestic Violence services are specifically aimed at reducing rates of crime and violence in the community.

24 Health and wellbeing implications

- 24.1 The improvement plan seeks to improve conditions and support for social work practitioner's which aims to better staff welfare and reduce sickness levels.

25 Background papers

- 25.1 The Ofsted report was published in August 2019:<https://files.api.ofsted.gov.uk/v1/file/50101634>

26 Report author and contact

- 26.1 Lucie Heyes, Director Children's Social Care, 0208 314 8140, Lucie.Heyes@lewisham.gov.uk
- 26.2 Quality Assured by interim Executive DCS Pauline Maddison. Contributions from: Risthardh Hare (Director Early Help & Commissioning), Sean Maguire (Head of Service – MASH, Assessment & Safe Space), Rebecca Hare (Head of Service – Family Social Work), Jan Kamil (Service Manager – Children with Complex Needs)

34. Glossary

Term	Definition
ILACS	Ofsted Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services. Details of the framework for inspection can be found here: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government
MASH Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub,	The multi-professional team based in Children's Services that provides a referral point for all professionals and members of the public requesting services for vulnerable children.
CAFCASS	Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service represents children in family court cases. Family Court Advisers and Guardians are independent of the Local Authority and advise the court on the best interests of the children involved in private law proceedings, where parents or carers can't agree on arrangements for their children. Public law care proceedings and adoption. https://www.cafcass.gov.uk/about-cafcass/
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.
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
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/
KSS Knowledge & Skills Statements	The children's social work national standards set by the Department of Education. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government
Tri – X	Internet based online procedures manual, used by a number of Local Authorities to host all practice procedures.
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
EHM/LCS ControCC	EHM/LCS - Electronic case file recording and management system for Children's Social Care. Provided by Liquidlogic suppliers. ControCC – Electronic Finance management system linked to LCS

Key milestones in the CSC Improvement Plan since June 2019

What we have done	Why we have done it	When
Transition from LSCB to new partnership arrangements developed	Launched: As required by changes in legislation.	Jul 2019
Transfer process revised. New transfer panel introduced.	Minimise delays and ensure good quality transitions between workers and teams.	Q1 2019/20
Service wide appraisal targets linked to the Knowledge & Skills Statements (KSS) for Social Work for 2019/2	Set practice expectations, embed Vision, Values & KSS	Jun 2019
Establishment of Inter-agency Concern Hub, lead by Community Safety & Police. (Formerly the MET group)	Improve identification, information sharing and safety planning for young people experiencing exploitation	Jul 2019
OFTSED ILACS Inspection		Jul 2019
Recruitment campaign for Senior Managers (Group Managers & HOS)	Stabilise leadership team to take forward improvement programme.	Aug 2019
	New senior management team in post:	Nov 2019
Creation of Safe Space adolescent/contextual safeguarding team, to work alongside the Concern Hub.	Improve response and services to young people experiencing exploitation.	Aug 2019
Interim senior management team in place transitioning from previous permanent HOS to new team & introduction of new management layer (Group Managers)		Aug-Nov 2019/20
Department of Education (DfE), successful bid for innovation grant set up Family Group Conference service.	Enhance our family support offer to keep more children safely with their families.	Sep 2019
Recruitment campaign for Team Managers	Improve permanent, stable workforce & strengthen management oversight	Sep/Oct 2019
New post of Director of Early Help, CYP Commissioning & Placements established. Interim appointment made	Drive forward Early Help & commissioned services for children and young people	Oct 2019
Introduction of CSC service wide Practice Standards workshops and Core KSS skills training sessions.	Establish minimum standards and improve consistency of practice in core areas i.e. recording, assessment & planning.	Start Oct 2019.
Signs of Safety (SoS) managers on 5 day Practice Leaders training	Establish shared practice approach aligned with vision and values	Nov 2019

Phase 2: Re-design programme to improve the Liquidlogic Children's Recording System (LCS & EHM) approved	Reduce bureaucracy, simplify convoluted systems, to increase capacity for more direct work with children and families	Agreed Nov 2019 to start in Dec 2019
Staffing establishment reviewed and reset. Additional capacity agreed to expand staff group, staffing budget rightsized.	Better alignment of existing resources. Increasing capacity to manage demand and maintain reasonable caseloads. Introduction of Advanced Practitioners	Agreed Nov 2019 to start Jan 2020
New Interim Executive DCS appointed		Dec 2019
Recruitment campaign for Advanced Practitioners	Improve permanent, stable workforce & strengthen management oversight and practice development	Jan 2020
Team managers 12 month training and development programme commences	Supporting the professional development for frontline managers	Jan 2020
Listening & Learning event (5 days): auditing, observing & feedback	Concentrated activity to gain a clear picture of practice quality & impact	Jan 2020

29 Summary of Ofsted Findings for children in need of help and protection and the impact of leaders

The inspectors judged that services 'required improvement' to be good across all three headings, this was in line with the council's own self-assessments in January and June 2019. The Ofsted report was published in August 2019 and can be found online at:

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

What is going well:

- *"The pace of improvement has significantly accelerated"*
- There has been an improvement in management capacity, including the reinstatement of a layer of management (Service Group Managers)
- The decision to introduce a practice model (Signs of Safety) is having a positive impact
- Social workers feel well supported by their managers.
- Threshold decisions are generally accurate
- Additional social work capacity has reduced caseloads
- Newly qualified social workers are well supported
- At the front door/MASH most children receive a timely service and there have been improvements since Ofsted last visited in September 2018. The MASH is helped by the co-location of police, health and education partners.
- For the children at greatest risk, action is appropriate and timely.
- Children in Need and those children on Protection Plans are regularly visited and social workers know children well.
- Private fostering arrangements are well promoted and supported.
- Services for 16 to 17 year olds at risk of homelessness are effective.
- Support for disabled children is praised and as a result of the work of the team based at Kaleidoscope *"the lives of disabled children are improving"*.
- When children and young people are identified as at risk of criminal or sexual exploitation, appropriate action is taken to reduce risk.
- Staff in the education team are tenacious in tracking and following through cases of children missing from education and monitoring arrangements for children electively home educated have improved.

Issues that need to be addressed:

- Casework audits are too positive and the quality assurance framework is not yet embedded
- Not all performance reports are reliable
- The Ofsted Team saw social workers experiencing significant IT (server) problems
- Commissioned services need to be improved, as has already been recognised
- Social worker caseloads are still too high in some areas
- Training and professional development of social workers has not had enough priority but this is changing
- Early help services need to be better developed, with more capacity, better systems and stronger management oversight.
- For children at lower risk, decisions in the MASH can take too long.
- While domestic abuse is recognised promptly, the response is not sufficiently robust and options for support need to be clearer.
- The quality of assessments needs to be improved.
- Children's Plans need to be more detailed and better quality.
- Supervision and management oversight of social workers needs to improve.



Our Vision



What good children's social work looks like in Lewisham

Families will tell us they understand why we are involved, the reasons for our decisions and the actions we take

We will make sure children/young people, parents, carers and others are clear about why we are involved, what needs to change and what we are doing to help. We will work 'with' families and support everyone to participate by listening to their views and encouraging them to find their own solutions. We will always respect that families are all different and they know themselves best, we will be balanced and recognise their strengths, seeking to build on what is working well to help change happen.

Children & young people will tell us their social worker spent time getting to know them and has made a difference to their lives

We will always make sure we spend enough time with the child/young person so we understand their experiences and what is important to them. The child/young person will always know that we are looking out for them, that we care about what is happening to them and that their wellbeing and safety is our top priority. We will explain to children and young people what we are doing and why, in a language they will understand and will encourage them to participate and help them make good choices to shape their own experience and futures.

Families are respected and supported to stay together whenever there is enough safety

Through building trust and relationships, families will be helped to find their own solutions and become more resilient. We will always recognise the importance of the child and young person's network and strengthen support for families to stay together wherever it is safe to do so. We will always look for care for children and young people in the naturally occurring network as the first option. We will work with families, their communities and other agencies to help young people navigate the challenges they face to keep safe in their homes, schools and in the community.

Children and young people who are in our care know we care and we won't give up on them

When a child or young person comes into our care we will do everything we can to make them safe and secure. We will talk with them about their life story, to help them understand and make sense of the difficulties they may have experienced. We will keep them connected to their family, culture and community. We will always champion their interests, celebrate their achievements and have high aspirations for them, to help them grow and to do the best they can in their lives.

Young people who have been in our care feel confident about themselves and their future

The young adults who have been in our care will be provided with the tools and support they need to build their knowledge, skills and confidence to lead successful, independent lives. We will help them access services and keep connected in their culture and communities. We will encourage and support them to realise and achieve their hopes and ambitions. We will ensure they always have someone to turn to if they need advice or help.