

**SCRUTINY REVIEW PANEL 2 – 2020/2021**  
**CHILDREN'S SERVICES OFSTED IMPROVEMENTS**

**11 NOVEMBER 2020**

*Children and Families Services response to Covid 19*

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## CHILDREN & FAMILIES SERVICES



# Purpose of Briefing

This paper seeks to clearly lay out

- How the Council, specifically, Children's Services, responded to the Covid pandemic.
- How our services responded and adapted to ensure children and young people were protected and safe particularly where domestic abuse was an issue and with the added pressure of schools closures.
- Our response to the provision of school places for vulnerable and key worker children.
- Planning for recovery and schools re-opening.

# Brighter Futures: Children and Families Services Overview

## ECIRS

- 'Front Door'
- MASH
- EHAP portal

## Early Intervention and Prevention

- Our Early Help offer is delivered through key elements:
  - Supported EHAP
  - FAMILY LIVES Peer Mentoring Service
  - SAFE
  - SAFE Plus
- The SAFE Plus service provides an intensive offer, focusing on families most in need and most likely to escalate into social care.

## 'Children in Need' Service

- MAST Teams
- Multi-disciplinary teams, providing intensive early support and intervention for young people and families on the edge of care.
- Our MAST adolescent team is now a Contextual Safeguarding team leading to improved, consistent and expert practice in our response to exploitation of YP

## 'Children In Care' Service

4 Connect Teams, incorporating LAC and fostering service.

Multi-disciplinary teams, working with children in care and foster carers to prevent an escalation of need and placement breakdown.

A further 4 Connect teams incorporating the Care Planning Service including Court and Kinship Team

All 8 teams are supported by Clinical Psychologists embedded in the teams

## 'Leaving Care Service'

Care leavers

Leaving care team

After Care team

Housing support and UASC

At Risk of Homelessness (AROH)

# RESPONSE TO COVID 19 IN C&F SERVICES

C&F services took immediate steps to adapt our practice and service delivery to ensure that we were able to respond to the impact of the Covid 19 pandemic crisis for our most vulnerable children and families. Our two objectives are:

1. Safeguarding children and young people in the borough to drive continuous improvement and best social work practice.
2. Supporting staff and ensuring their mental and physical wellbeing is a priority. All staff are provided with appropriate PPE to undertake direct work and we have developed a robust Staff Support offer which is complemented by regular supervision.

## **Measures in place include:**

- Comprehensive staff support offer is in place, including daily mindfulness sessions and weekly advice and guidance from the Clinical Psychology Service.
- Support to care leavers include a newsletter, food parcels, increased subsistence payments and additional financial support for those who require it.
- A virtual youth service provision is in place, with some direct outreach work continuing and individual sessions as required.
- Effective and continued partnership working is a priority including weekly meetings with Head Teachers to support the most vulnerable children into school and with police lead for safeguarding to ensure that we have a collective understanding of risk and demand during the pandemic and are able to direct resource appropriately. Feedback from schools has been positive about partnership working with SWs.
- Ealing Safeguarding Children Partnership has continued to meet on a virtual basis. A risk register is in place and overseen by the partnership to ensure risks pertaining to COVID 19 are understood, tracked, and mitigated.
- Improvement Board continues to be held bi-monthly, chaired by the Exec Director ensuring our focus on practice improvement is a priority.
- The Staff Forum has continued on a monthly basis, sharing practice and ideas for development between staff and the Directors.

# RESPONSE TO COVID 19 IN C&F SERVICES

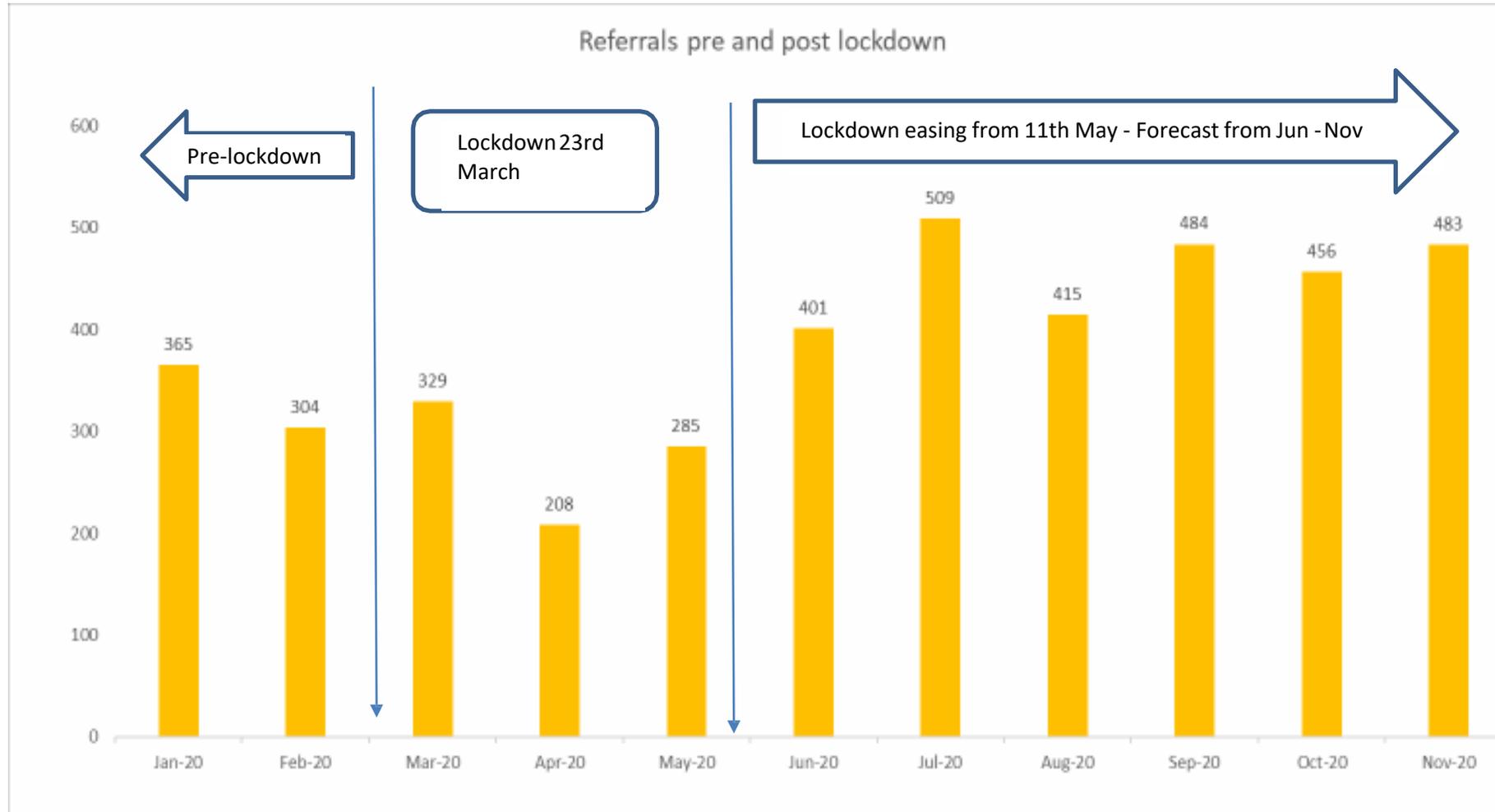
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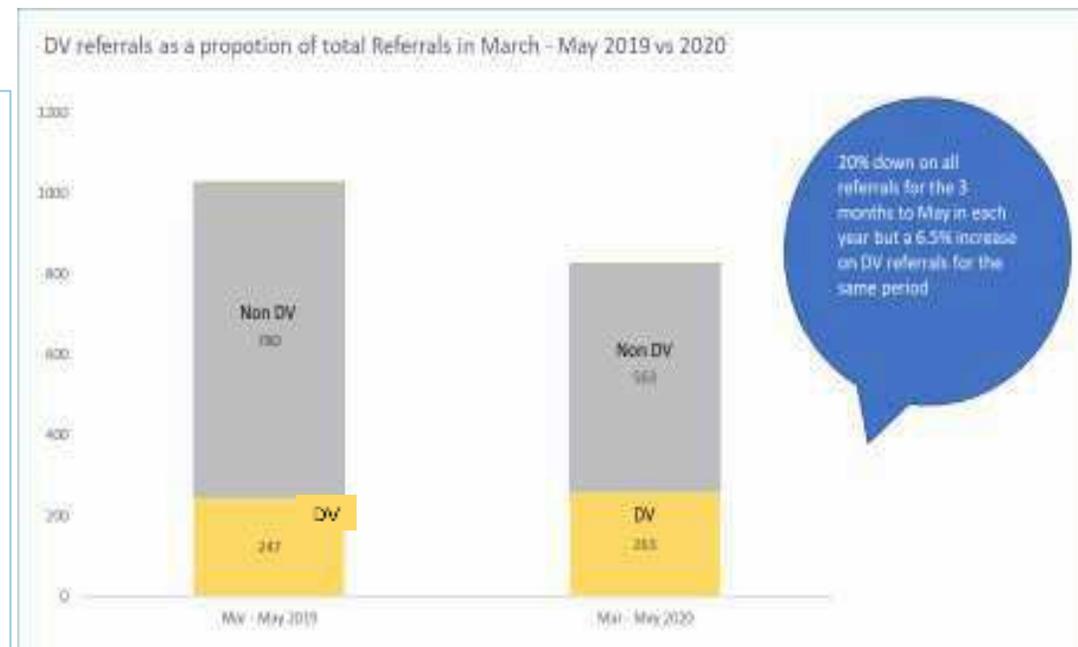
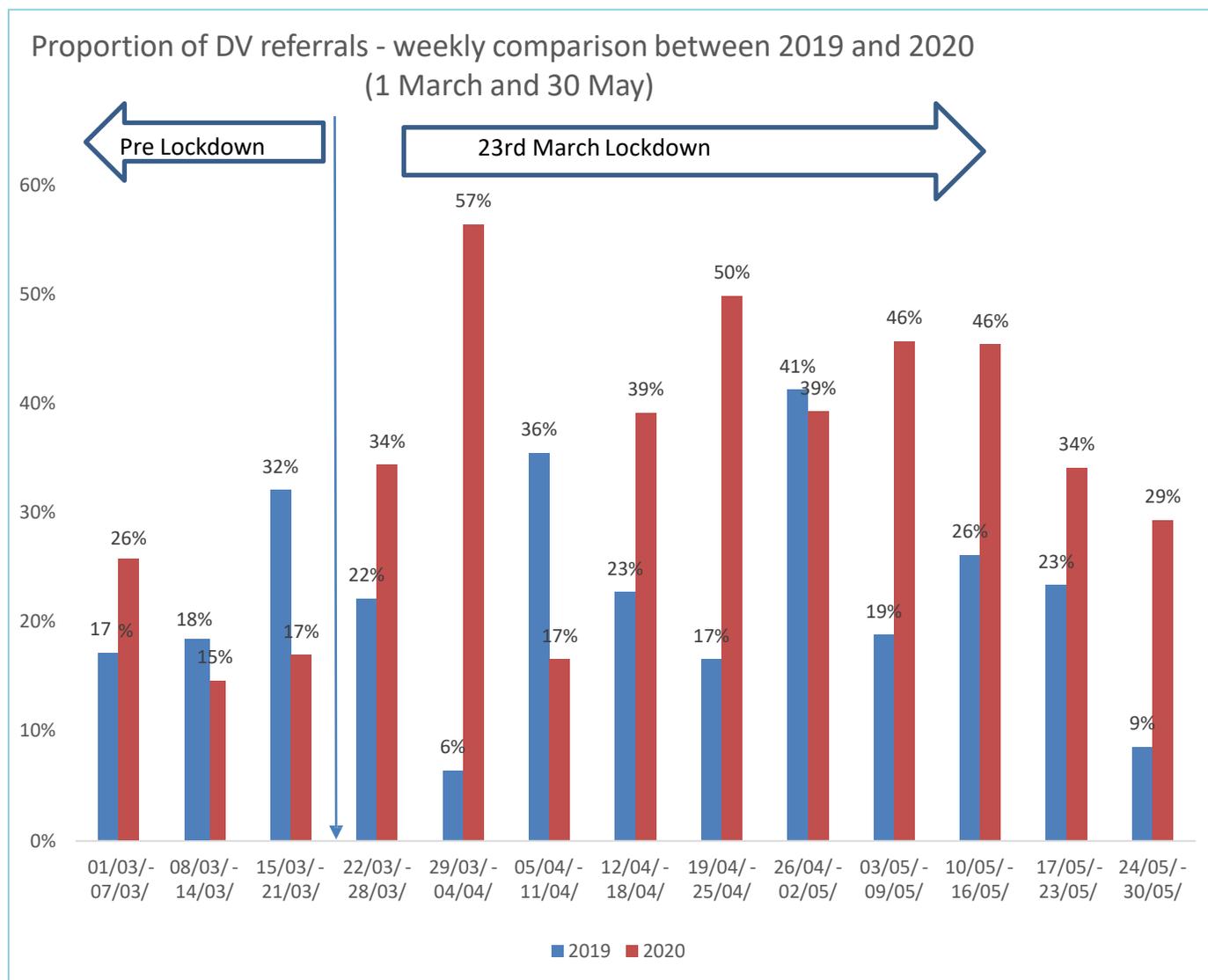
- Practice guidance for workers setting out expectations and advice on issues such as the use of video calls for visiting alongside direct visiting where appropriate, contingency planning for families, risk assessments, regular supervision, team meetings, daily check-ins, and contact for children in care.
- A duty system to manage all incoming referrals and S47's. All other staff work from home on their existing caseload.
- Use of virtual technology is successfully supporting effective staff and service communication and delivery, enabling all meetings and reviews relevant to C&F and safeguarding to continue.
- Weekly audit programme is in place to track practice and is carried out by managers at all levels including the Executive Director Children, Adults & PH. These audits support practice and ensure that visits to our most vulnerable children are timely and children are being appropriately safeguarded.
- Virtual workshop sessions are taking place with team managers and deputy team managers on practice issues identified by weekly audits to ensure that our staff are best equipped to support vulnerable families.
- Along with other London authorities we have experienced a significant drop in the number of young people being reported missing during the Covid-19 lockdown which was corroborated by our Trusted Spaces outreach team. They reported a significant drop in the numbers of young people being seen in the community. This will continue to be monitored closely in the coming year

## Impact on Referral activities



- Referrals reduction not being felt until April as measures put in place in late March.
- 37% reduction in referrals between lockdown in March to April.
- May saw an increase of 37% from April as lockdown eases
- Forecast referral activities to increase by 60% on average in the next 6 months from May
- Forecast based on the last year's levels

## Domestic Violence Referrals

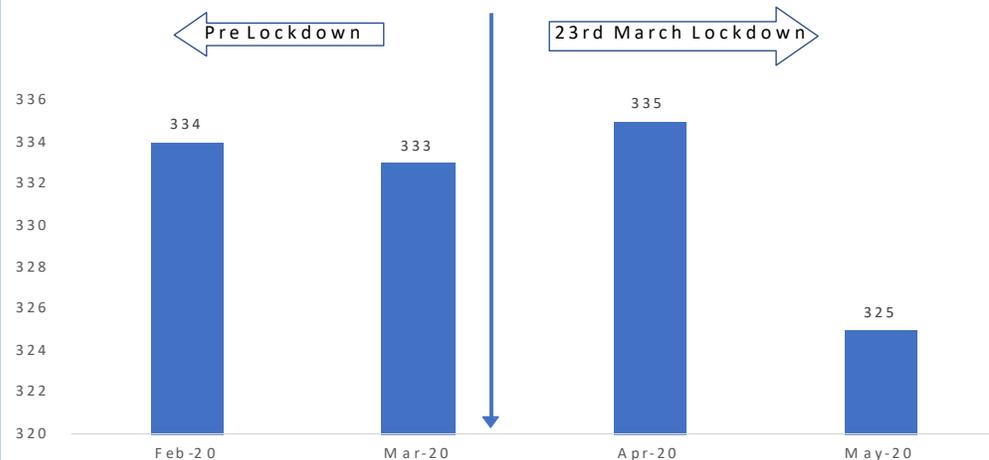


- The proportion of DV referrals from the total number of referrals received during the Covid 19 lockdown (red bars) is stark compared to previous year.
- Data shows weekly an average of 22% of DV referrals during the week beginning 29 March to 30 May in 2019. For the same corresponding period in 2020 during the Covid 19 lockdown, the average was 40%.
- In week one of the lockdown 29 March 2020, 57% were DV referrals compared to only 6% in the same week in 2019. The impact of the lockdown on DV related referrals is significant.
- Despite lockdown, Police continue to be the main DV referrer, sending a total of 173 DV referrals, up by 22% on same 3 month period on last year

# Context and Overview : Safeguarding Children during Covid19

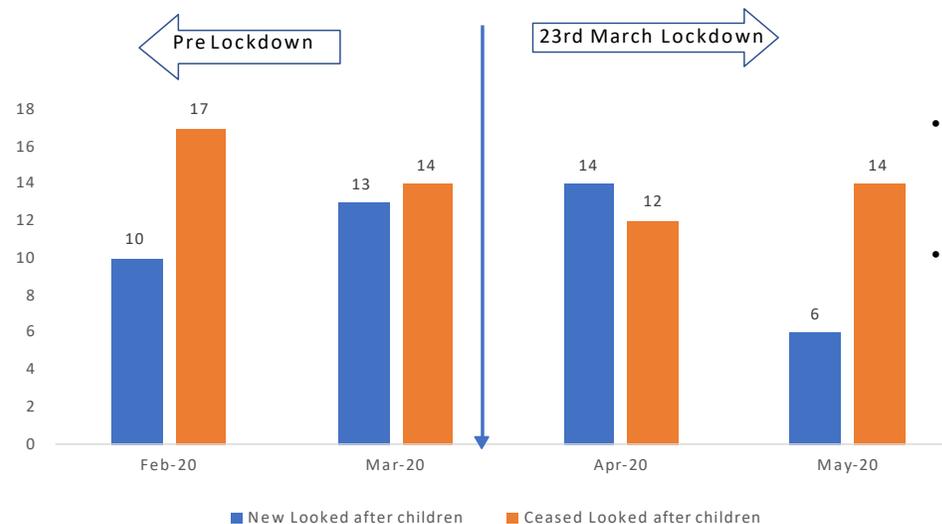
## Managing risks of looked after children

Number of Looked After Children



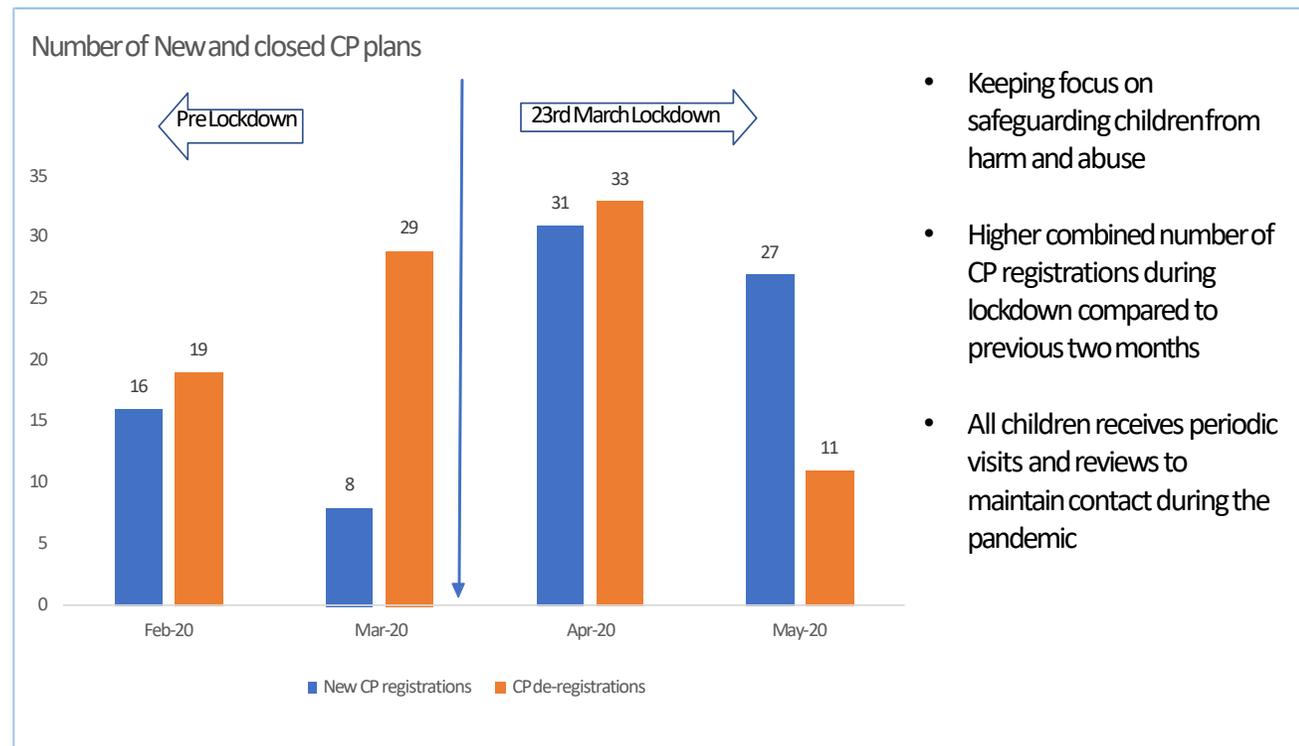
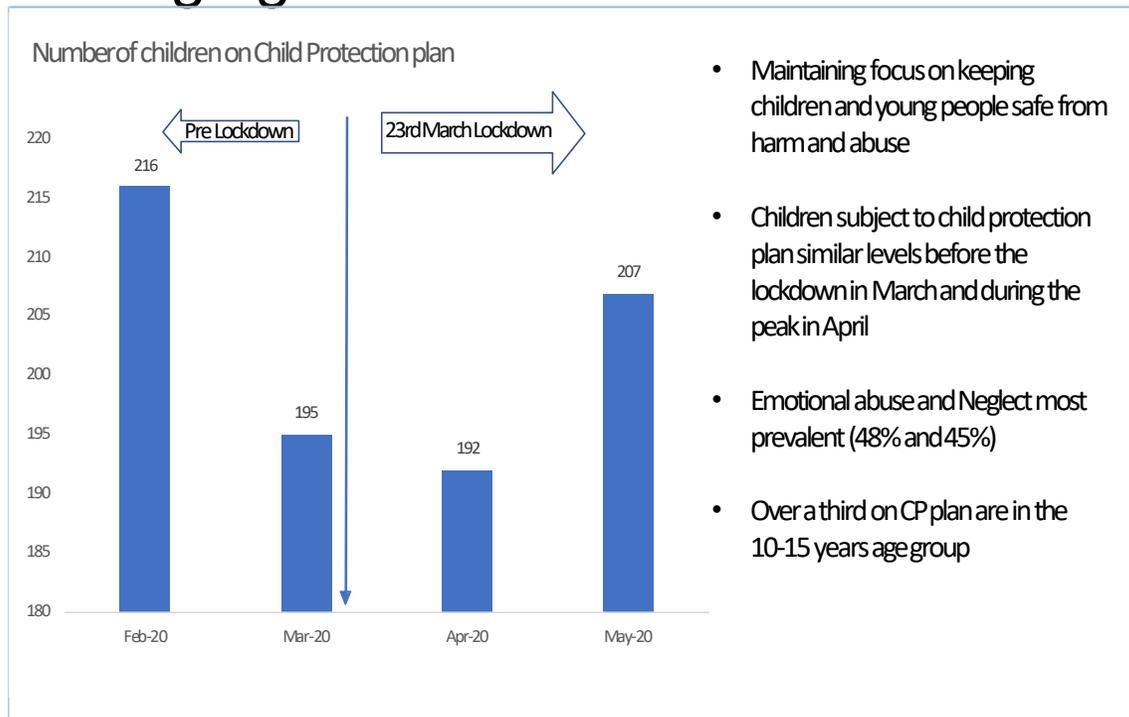
- Ealing's looked after children population remains stable throughout and even in the height of pandemic
- All Looked after children cases have been risk assessed and reviewed since the outbreak, alongside with periodic visits and reviews
- Adopting technology and innovative ways to maintain contact with children and families

Number of new and ceased looked after children



- Maintaining focus in identifying and managing risks of most vulnerable
- Similar levels of taking children into care in pre and during lockdown
- Similar levels of children and young people appropriately ceased care during May (easing lockdown 11<sup>th</sup> May)

## Managing risks of children – Child Protection



# EARLY HELP RESPONSE TO COVID 19

- SAFE, Children Centres and Early Start teams and our peer mentoring service for parents, run by Family Lives, have maintained contact with the most vulnerable families, working quickly and flexibly to support them, both virtually and in cases with higher thresholds, with face to face support from the SAFE team.
- They have swiftly developed the use of online support. E.g. the universal and targeted Triple- P parenting course is now delivered online and parents can access on-line CC activities.
- Early Help services are extending their partnership work with teams and community organisations to best support vulnerable families. E.g. supporting front line teams on duty system, offering family support on MAST cases and maintaining food bank distribution and delivery of food in partnership with Youth Services, the Felix project and the Emergency Duty Team with food related emergencies.
- It is evident from parental feedback that the early help support is responding to their needs and is highly valued.
- Service planning and response to Covid and transitions as lockdown is eased, are regularly reviewed.
- The Early Help services are vital in preventing the escalation of cases into statutory assessment processes.

# IYS&YJS: Directly Supporting Our Young People

In response to Covid, the Integrated Youth Service (IYS) restructured to provide a model which allows them to communicate with, and respond to, young people who are in urgent need of support during lockdown. The new approach to working evolved following consultation with young people and staff and has several strands of interventions with the key aim to keep YP safe, engaged and healthy.

## **Strand 1. – Engagement**

- This strand allows all young people in Ealing to feel supported. This is provided via the Trusted Spaces 24/7 phone number, **0800 029 3606** which will offer YP immediate support supported by The Young Ealing website which has an email address [youngealing@ealing.gov.uk](mailto:youngealing@ealing.gov.uk). Enquiries that come in on email will be transferred to the support team to contact the young person and address any of the concerns raised in the enquiry.

## **Strand 2 - High risk cases.**

- If any calls are received through the helpline then the young person will be able to speak face to face with a youth worker by appointment at one of the youth clubs of YAC or Bollo.

## **Strand 3 – Targeted Interventions**

- The integrated Youth Service (IYS) reviewed all cases and identified 130 young people where a case worker has identified them as being at a higher level of risk or vulnerability.
- These young people will be contacted to check on their wellbeing, referencing safeguarding and an offer of support.
- The Connexions Service is working remotely and fully engaging with their schools to support the students. Young people who are out of school will be targeted to help them identify a way forward for their education, training or employment.
- Continue to focus on vulnerable children involved in a gang lifestyle in order to offer them and their families an exit strategy and keep them safe.

## **Strand 4– Outreach**

- In the short-term youth workers are working as a pair targeting areas where young people frequent. The purpose of this is to engage the young people, make them aware of the Government advice on social distancing, small groups and not going out if possible and if so, what the circumstances are. The outreach will also make them aware of any advice and guidance support that we can provide to them over the phone or by email. The outreach engagement will be reviewed weekly or as the Government advice changes.

## **Strand 5 - Young Ealing Safeguarding (YES) Group**

- The YES group in Ealing has undertaken peer to peer consultation during Covid on what they would like the IYS to provide to them during Covid. This feedback will help refine this new approach to working with YP and the YES group will also provide a route back to YP directly from a peer in order to provide as much reassurance as possible

# Directly Supporting our Young People

## Support for Care Leavers

As well as delivering food parcels and providing additional individual support where required, during lockdown we have –

- ✓ Produced newsletters, particularly providing links for support in all aspects of health and mental health.
- ✓ Run an emergency helpline in the evenings via the Horizons centre.
- ✓ Put on group support and activities for care leavers via Zoom.
- ✓ Provided dongles and laptops via the national scheme and financial support for those young people who were furloughed.

## Support for Vulnerable adolescents

- For vulnerable adolescents during the Covid pandemic, we have enhanced QA through weekly audits. These have shown that in relation to S47s, 88% were judged as having the correct decision made on threshold, for Care Planning 90% of cases were judged as having a plan that kept the child 'safe and well' and CIN visits were within time in 88% of cases.

## Adopt West London Covid Fund:

- ALW and the other 3 Adopt London RAA's have jointly commissioned comprehensive support services funded through the additional Emergency ASF Covid fund.

### Services include:

- online support membership services for up to 500 families.
- annual subscription service provided by Grandparents Plus to support Special Guardians.
- a helpline providing immediate direct access to counselling services and
- a range of specialist therapeutic brief intervention services in partnership with PAC UK and Adoption Plus, with online training packages for both Adopters and Special Guardians.

# RISKS AND IMPACT of COVID

- Hidden harm
  - Impact of not having a line of sight of C&YP compounded by school closures
- Avoidant families
  - Disguised compliance
  - Social worker access
- Limitations of virtual visiting
- Vulnerability of our care leavers
- Increased risk of mental health issues for our young people
- Increased pressure for families including
  - Poverty and its impact on health
  - Social isolation
  - increased risk of DA ,substance misuse and MH problems
- Supporting staff
  - Majority BAME workforce, affected by the disproportionate impact of COVID and continuing inequalities highlighted again by the Black Lives Matter movement
  - Staff demographic- workforce is predominantly young, many of whom have young families

# MAINTAINING STANDARDS OF PRACTICE AND PROGRESS

- We have enhanced Quality Assurance (QA) through weekly audits to ensure effective practice during Covid, overseen by a fortnightly Improvement Board to review and respond to audit findings and to drive progress.
- A focus on increased oversight and management of risk.
- Development programme for Team Managers(TM) and Deputy Team Managers (DTM) held every 2 weeks.
- Provision of coaching to DTMs as part of the DTM development programme. We are working on an internal development programme for team managers and DTMs to enhance leadership practice.
- Continued training and development to staff , much of which has moved to virtual platforms during C19.
- Weekly interface with Teachers and Police colleagues to identify and manage risk.
- Increased levels of contact between management and staff through
  - Group, casework and 1:1 supervision
  - Revised CIN processes
  - Weekly performance clinics
  - Staff forum

# PLANNING FOR RECOVERY AND LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

- A move towards more regular direct visits, complemented by virtual visits to children and families with higher levels of risk.
- Moving to a consistent approach to visiting children post Covid.
- Proactive and focussed oversight of intervention and outcomes for families, ensuring there is no delay.
- Effective planning for a probable increase in safeguarding referrals as lockdown eases.
- Supporting a culture of workforce flexibility for e.g.
  - Being able to offer flexibility to staff – wfh – reduced travel
  - Maximising staff and partners productivity and time via use of virtual meetings
- Working with young people in a digital arena.
- Engagement with partners on a digital platform – easier to bring staff together through use of virtual technology.

# GLOSSARY OF TERMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

<b>AIDHOUR</b>	External Safeguarding & Child Protection Services (contracted for IRO services)	<b>ICT</b>	Information and Communication Technology
<b>ADM</b>	Agency Decision Maker	<b>IDM</b>	Information and Data Management
<b>AROH</b>	At Risk of Homelessness	<b>IRO</b>	Independent Review Officer (Social Care)
<b>ART</b>	Access to Resources Team	<b>ILAC</b>	Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services
<b>Business Objects</b>	Corporate Business Intelligence Software	<b>MASH</b>	Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub
<b>CFA</b>	Child and Family Assessment (used by Children's Social Care Locality Team)	<b>MAST</b>	Multi-Agency Support Teams
<b>CONNECT</b>	Teams Supporting Children Looked After	<b>MASE</b>	Multi Agency Sexual Exploitation Panel
<b>CIN</b>	Children in Need	<b>NEET</b>	Not in Education Employment or Training
<b>CLA</b>	Children Looked After (also LAC, Looked After Children)	<b>NFA</b>	No further action
<b>CP</b>	Child Protection	<b>Mosaic</b>	Social Care Data System
<b>DTM</b>	Deputy Team Manager	<b>Practitioner</b>	Is used to refer to anyone who works with children and families
<b>ECIRS</b>	Ealing Children's Integrated Response Service	<b>LAC</b>	Looked After Children (also CLA, Children Looked After)
<b>EDT</b>	Emergency Duty Team	<b>LC</b>	Leaving Care
<b>EHAP</b>	Early Help Assessment and Plan	<b>OFSTED</b>	Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills
<b>EHCP</b>	Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan	<b>Pathway Plan</b>	Care Plan detailing the services and support needed by care leavers
<b>ELP</b>	Ealing Learning Partnership	<b>SAFE</b>	Supportive Action for Families in Ealing (Early Help)
<b>ETE</b>	Education Training and Employment	<b>SEND</b>	Special Educational Needs and Disabilities
<b>FE</b>	Future Ealing' (FE) Transformation programme which includes specific targets and outcomes for children and families	<b>SW</b>	Social Work / Social Worker
<b>FSW</b>	Family Support Worker	<b>S47</b>	Child Protection investigation
<b>Horizons</b>	A physical and virtual space for LAC and CL	<b>TM</b>	Team Manager
		<b>UASC</b>	Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children
		<b>YJS&amp; IYS</b>	Youth Justice service & Integrated Youth service
		<b>WLA</b>	West London Alliance

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

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