

Committees	Dated:
Safeguarding Sub Committee – For information Previously shared with: Early Help Sub Group – For information Children’s Service Improvement Board – For information	19/09/2018
Subject: Early Help Annual Report 2017–2018	Public
Report of: Andrew Carter, Director of Community and Children’s Services	For Information only
Report author: Jacqui Frisby, Early Help Co-ordinator	

Summary

This report provides a summary of Early Help activity co-ordinated via the Children and Families Team across 2017–2018. The report includes an overview of children and young people supported via the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) and Team Around the Child (TAC) mechanisms. Caseload data in this report is available as part of the 2017–2018 performance monitoring dataset and is covered in the Safeguarding Sub Committee quarterly and annual reports.

This report also outlines the service development work (specific to Early Help) progressed by the Early Help team and the Multi-Agency Practitioners Forum (MAPF). These work streams are detailed in the Early Help Action Plan which is overseen by the Early Help Sub-group. A brief overview of the activity and progress of the Early Help Sub-group is also noted in this report, along with an outline of the key priorities agreed for the new 2018–2020 Early Help Action Plan.

Note: This report does not consider Early Help provision within Tier 1, (universal services and universal programmes), which is managed and overseen by the Education and Early Years Team.

Recommendation

Members are asked to:

- Note the report.

Main Report

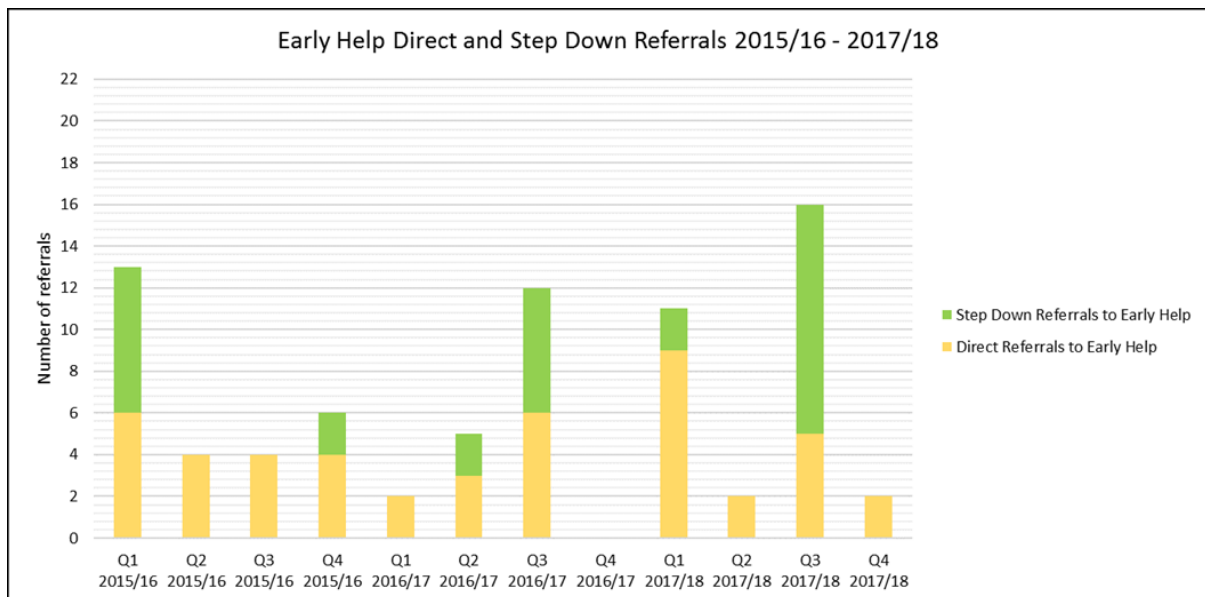
1. Background: vision and operational model

The vision and aim of Early Help, articulated in the Early Help strategy, is that we reach the right families with the right help, in the right place at the right time. This includes responding

to current needs and putting support in place so that escalation to statutory services is prevented wherever possible. The goal is that children and families would be able to manage well without targeted support and that early help would prevent dependency on, or referral to, statutory services in the future. Direct work with children and young people at Tier 2 is coordinated through the CAF and TAC mechanisms. While partner agencies have been encouraged to complete CAFs and to lead TAC meetings, there were no external CAFs completed in 2017/18. Therefore, data in this report refers only to cases held within the Children and Families Team.

2. Current position: Referrals in and movement of cases through Early Help

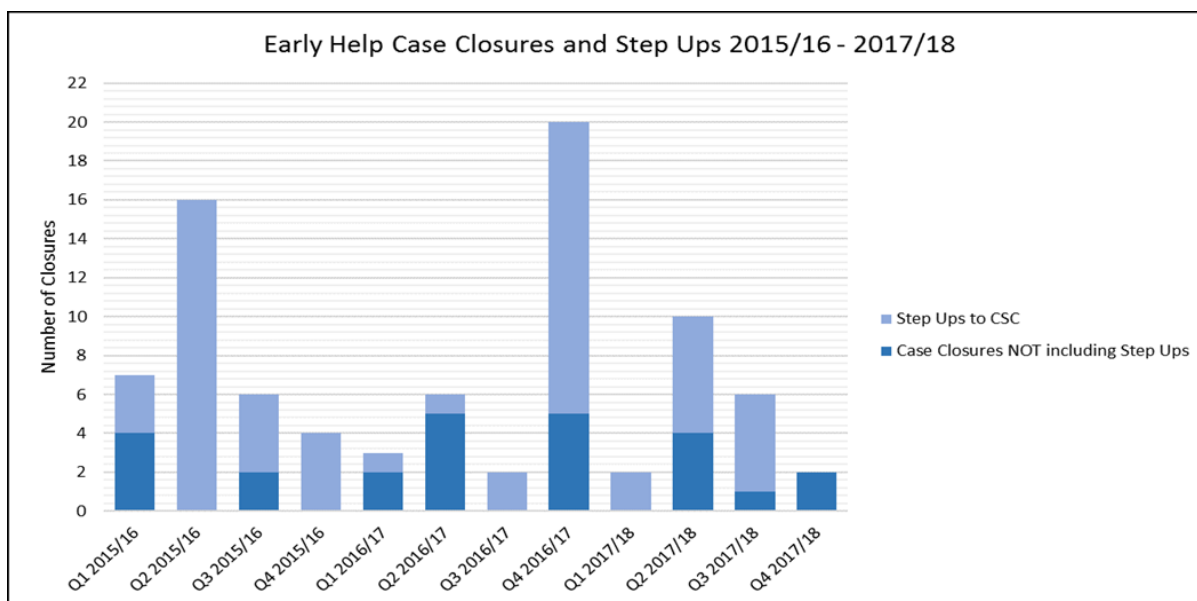
2.1 Early Help and Step Down cases referrals from statutory services



Note: Of the Step Down figures above, initial referral sources are:
 Police = 5, Health Visitor = 3, Self/family member = 1

The number of referrals allocated to Early Help from the front door, combined with cases stepped down from Children’s Social Care have increased by more than 50% year on year compared to 2016/17, and are also higher than numbers seen in 2015/16.

2.2 Case closures from Early Help and cases stepped up to statutory services



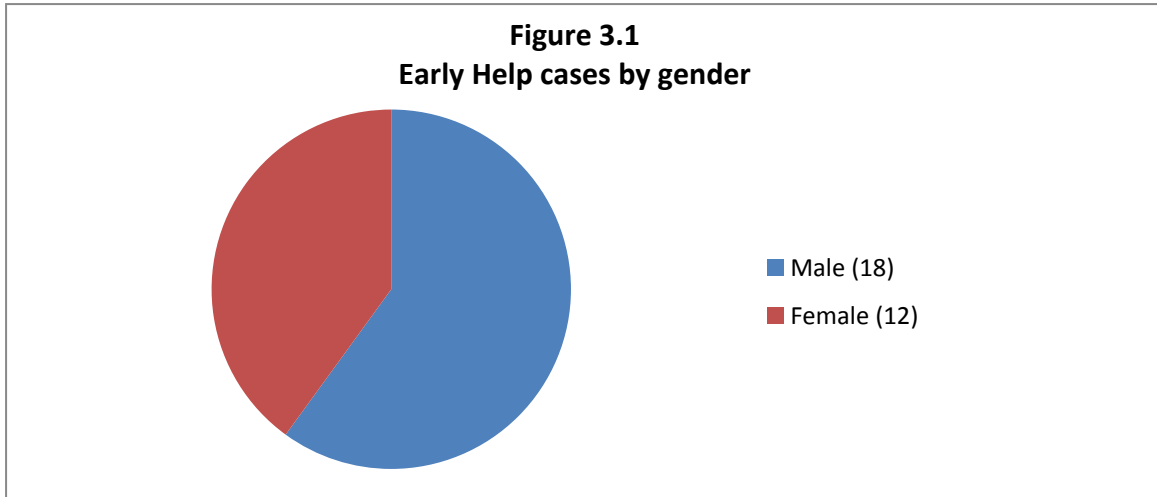
- A total of 20 Early Help cases were either closed or stepped-up across 2017/18.
- The number of case closures from Early Help remained largely consistent between 2015/16 and 2017/18 with no significant, identifiable spikes.
- The increased stability and consistency of the Early Help team and offer across 2017/18 may have had an impact on the number of step-ups. For example, spikes seen in the past correlated to changes to the team (in 2015/16 an Early Help worker moved into the statutory social work team) or changes to processes (2016/17), or to reallocation of some special educational needs and disability (SEND) cases for a Child and Family Assessment or to Children in Need (CIN) status.

3. Current position – CAF/Early Help case work

Across Q1-Q4 2017/18 there were a total of 30 cases active and open to Early Help within the Children and Families Team. These cases can be broken down by gender, age, ethnicity, residential location, referring agency and presenting need, as shown in figures 3.1 – 3.6 below:

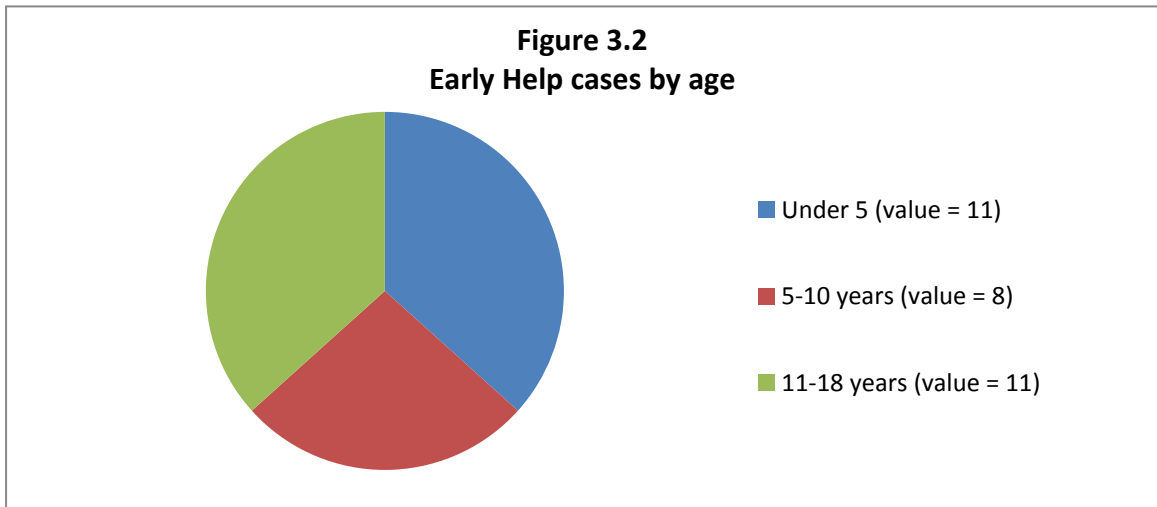
3.1 Gender

- A higher proportion of males vs. females have continued to be supported by Early Help across 2017/18 (this trend was also seen in 2016/17, whereas in 2015/16 there was a much more even split of males vs. females being supported).
- Males who were supported by Early Help across 2017/18 were evenly split across all age groups (five were aged under 5 years old, six were aged 5 to 10 years and seven were aged 11 to 18 years). Although a broadly even split, this is the first year that 11- to 18-year-olds comprised the largest age cohort, (albeit marginal).



3.2 Age

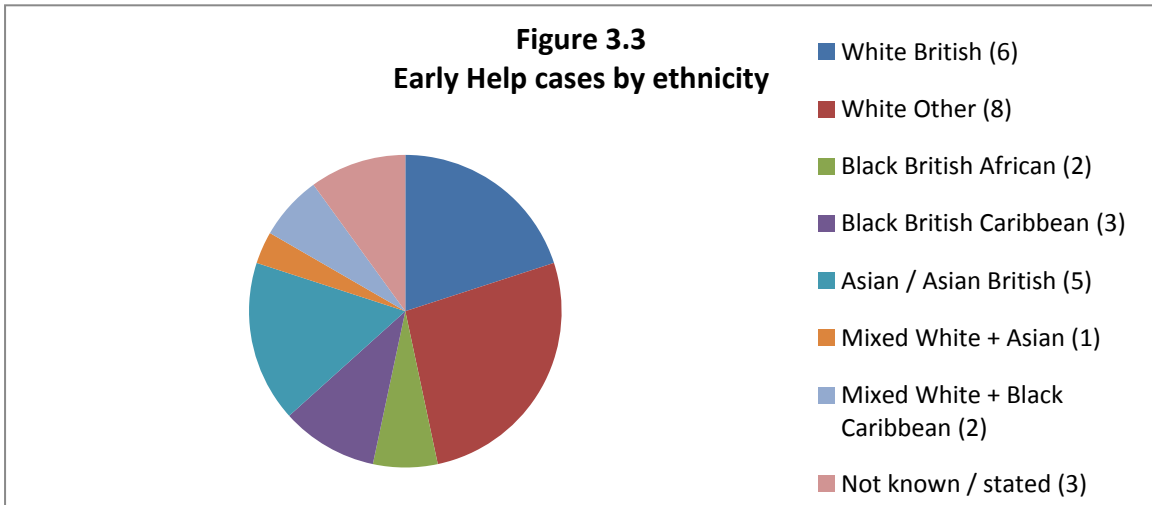
- Children of all ages, from unborn to aged 16 have been supported by Early Help across 2017/18.
- The split across the age ranges remains broadly even.
- This continues the trend of increased access to Early Help by the school-age population in the City of London (also seen in 2016/17, whereas in 2015/16 almost 50% of children supported by Early Help were aged 5 years and under).



3.3 Ethnicity

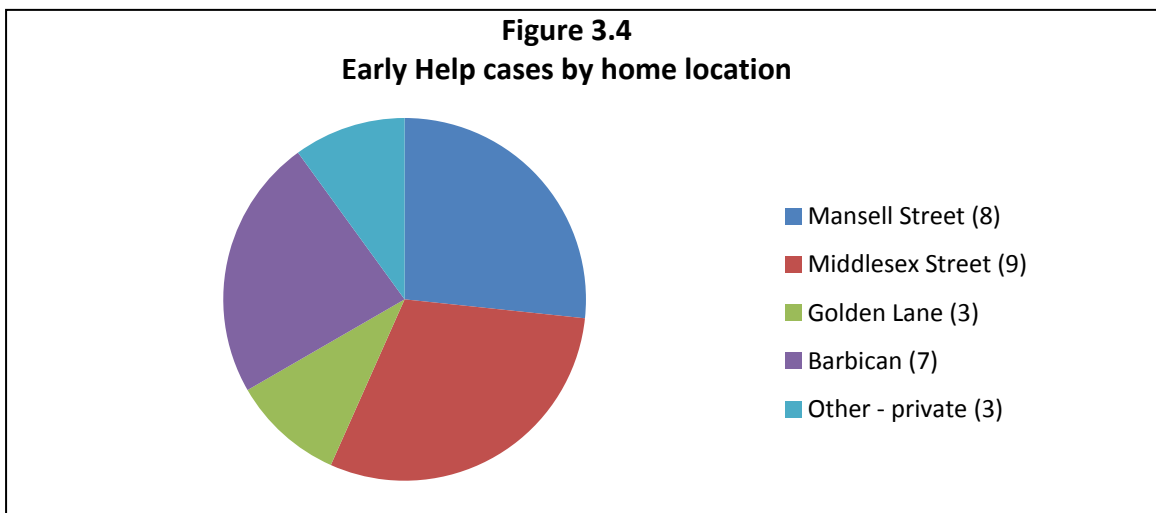
- Children from a broad range of ethnic groups were supported by Early Help across 2017/18.
- There was an increase in the number of White British children supported by Early Help across 2017/18. This is in contrast to the low number of White British children and young people accessing support across 2015/16 and 2016/17. However, despite the increase, White British children remain under-represented when compared to the population in the City of London.
- The number of children and young people from all other ethnic groups who are accessing support have either remained constant or increased. Although, the

Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) cohort as a whole is over-represented in access to Early Help support.



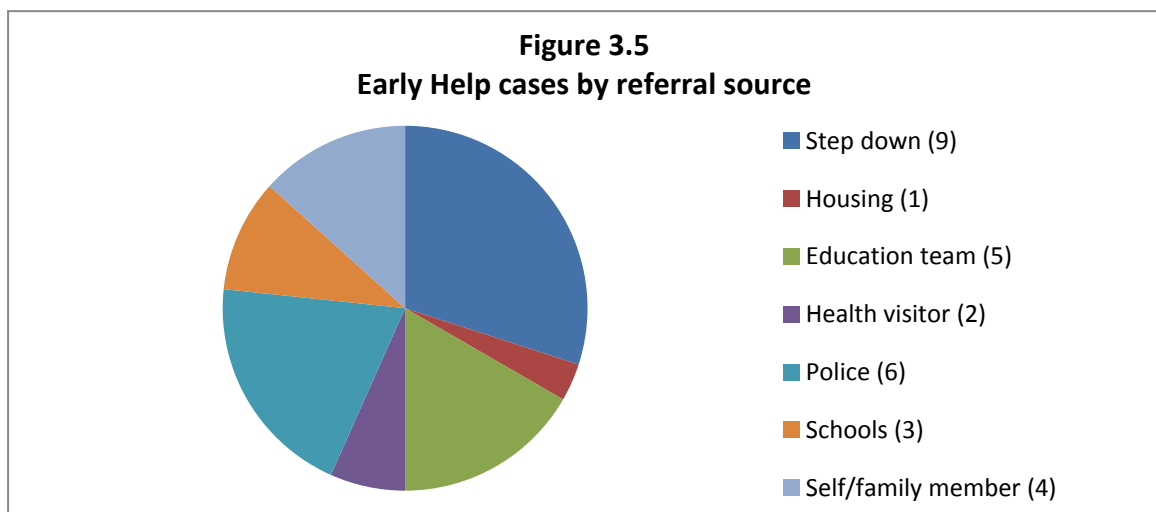
3.4 Home location

- With the exception of Golden Lane, there has been an increase in the number of children and young people accessing Early Help support from all locations within the City.
- There has been a decrease (from five to three) in the number of children and young people from Golden Lane accessing Early Help support in 2017/18.
- The Portsoken ward is home to almost 60% of cases that have been open to Early Help across 2017/18. This is possibly linked to the different social and economic characteristics of the ward.



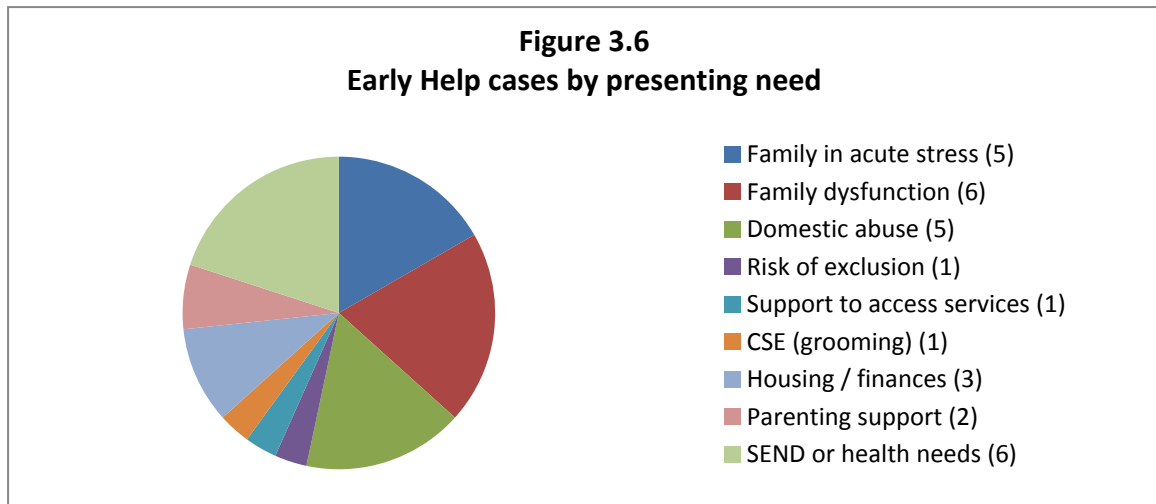
3.5 Referral source

- The number of cases in Early Help that have been stepped down following statutory social care involvement (either a Child and Family Assessment or a child or young person supported through a CIN plan) has significantly increased during 2017/18 compared to the previous two years.
- The Education Team remain a key source of referrals, particularly in terms of children and young people with SEND.
- The Police have been a significant source of referrals across 2017/18 (of cases allocated on referral to Early Help as well as stepped-down cases). This is in contrast to 2016/17 when no cases open to Early Help were originally referred by the Police.
- The number of referrals from schools and housing partners which result in Early Help work, although broadly similar to those seen across 2016/17, have declined slightly.
- There is a notable lack of referrals from youth service providers (City Gateway until January 2018, and Tower Hamlets since 1 February 2018) and this will need to be explored jointly between commissioning and the Children and Families Team.



3.6 Presenting need

- There has been an increase in the breadth of needs identified at the time of referral and allocation (or step down) to Early Help.
- Family dysfunction and families in acute stress or experiencing domestic abuse make up just over 50% of cases being supported by Early Help – this is a significant increase when compared to 2016/17 and 2015/16.
- Children and young people with SEND remain a significant cohort within the Early Help caseload across 2017/18.



Note: 'Family in acute stress' includes issues with parental mental health difficulties, and serious risk of homelessness. 'Family dysfunction' includes socially unacceptable behaviour (parental), inter-parental conflict, and relationship difficulties between adolescents and their parents/carers.

3.7 External (partner agency) casework

- While partner agencies have previously been encouraged to complete CAFs and to lead TAC meetings, across 2017/18 there were no external CAFs completed.
- Multi-agency partners do, however, continue to make a significant contribution to the CAFs completed by the Early Help Support Worker. They also make a significant contribution to the TAC review meetings. All TAC review meetings take place outside of the Guildhall, usually in school for school-age children, although sometimes in the home (when requested by the family).
- There has been ongoing dialogue among the partnership about the CAF within the Early Help Sub-group. Following consultation and feedback, the Early Help Sub-group agreed to simplify and redevelop the assessment and planning tools via a Task and Finish Group.

3.8 National and London-wide context

- Benchmarking the number of CAFs against other local authorities is difficult due to variance in reporting – some authorities report the number of assessments initiated on an annual basis and some report open cases (regardless of date the CAF was opened).
- In addition, some authorities (such as Hackney) require a CAF as a referral for specific multi-agency services. As a result, CAF numbers may be higher.
- The Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS) thematic report on Early Help, published in early 2017 shows that 1.78% of the national children and young people (CYP) population had an Early Help assessment (CAF or other) completed during 2015/16. Figures for City of London show that more than 3% of the CYP population have been supported via an Early Help Assessment (CAF) across each of the last three years 2015/16, 2016/17 and 2017/18. The rate is therefore above the national average.
- Other London local authority figures obtained for 2016/17 range from less than 1% to a maximum of 7% of the CYP population having CAFs (or equivalent) across a full year

(2017/18 not available). Again, City of London figures show that Early Help support in the form of a CAF is well within the range of other London boroughs.ⁱ

4. Annual Consultation

4.1 For the first time, Early Help cases were included in the annual consultation (2017/18) completed by Action for Children. There were six respondents who received support via Early Help. Feedback about Early Help was very positive, particularly when it came to relationships with the support worker. Comments include:

“She’s very reachable.”

“She is genuine, she cares. She has my child’s best interest at heart.”

“She’s trustworthy, proactive.”

“I give her 10/10. She’s doing everything she can. I’m blessed, lucky.”

4.2 Comments describing further support desired or required related specifically to the Short Breaks offer and to health provision within the City. This feedback has been passed on to commissioners.

4.3 It is anticipated that Early Help will continue to be a part of the annual consultation going forward.

5. Early Help Workforce and Structure

5.1 A permanent Early Help Support Worker joined the team in September 2017 and is line managed by the Early Help Co-ordinator. The previous worker was also employed on statutory social care cases. Returning to a structure with a dedicated Early Help Worker has increased capacity within the team. There is also evidence of increased movement of cases since the permanent Early Help Support Worker has been in post.ⁱⁱ

5.2 The Early Help Co-ordinator has been line managed by the Children and Families Team Manager as a six-month pilot from November 2017. This has provided a context in which the Team Manager maintains oversight of cases across all thresholds. However, the majority of the service development work across Early Help is supported and overseen by the Service Manager.

6. Service Development: Early Help Action Plan

6.1 Summary of progress of 2016–18 Early Help Action Plan

The Early Help Sub-group approved a refreshed version of the 2016–2018 Early Help Action Plan in December 2016 and have been monitoring progress against all actions on a quarterly basis. The Sub-group agreed to closure of the plan in April 2018 with the majority of actions complete (two incomplete actions have been transferred to the 2018–2020 plan).

6.2 Overview of Early Help Action Plan 2018–2020

The Early Help Sub-group has approved the new 2018–2020 Early Help Action Plan which details priorities for the Early Help work being led by the Early Help Co-ordinator. The new Action Plan has been informed by the Children and Young People's Plan, the joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy and the Community and Children's Services Outcomes Framework. In addition, it has been developed in line with the service development requirements identified by the Service Improvement and Development Board and the Children's Senior Management Team.

6.3 Progress against outcomes and actions in each of six priority areas will be monitored on a quarterly basis by the Early Help Sub-group. Priorities are:

- Priority 1: Developing Early Help casework
- Priority 2: Evidencing the impact of Early Help support
- Priority 3: Quality Assurance and Service Improvement
- Priority 4: Raising awareness and community engagement
- Priority 4: Multi-agency partnership and joint working
- Priority 6: Service user involvement and co-production.

7. Service Development: Progress of the MAPF

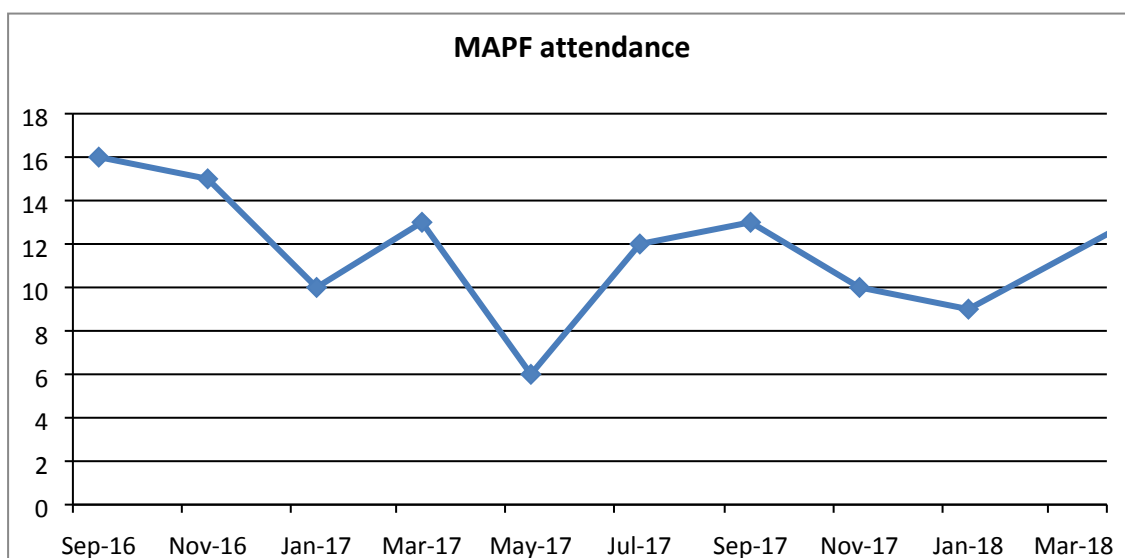
7.1 Purpose of the MAPF

- The core purpose of the MAPF, as set out in its terms of reference, is:

“... to provide regular opportunity for front line staff within a multi-agency context to discuss practice matters, encouraging consistent and effective service delivery to children, young people and their families.”

- The MAPF is accountable to the Early Help Sub-group and plays a significant role in the development and implementation of tools and processes used by Early Help practitioners across the partnership.

7.2 Attendance at the MAPF



- Attendance has averaged 12 over the past two years, with representation from the following regular partners:
 - Children and Families Team (Early Help)
 - Education and Early Years Team
 - Prospects
 - Sir John Cass's Foundation Primary School and the Cass Child and Family Centre
 - Health (Health Visiting, First Steps, Hackney Wellbeing Network)
 - Vulnerable Victims Advocate
 - City of London Police
 - City Advice
 - City of London Housing/Estate Management Team
 - Young Hackney Substance Misuse Service.

7.3 MAPF case discussion and shared learning

- The MAPF continues to make use of Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) and First Steps practitioners who regularly facilitate case discussions using a Solihull Approach consultation framework. This helps to maintain awareness of the approach across the Early Help partnership and has encouraged a shared language to describe practice, based on Solihull Approach principles. Recent case discussions have covered the following presenting needs and practice issues:
 - Children missing education due to exclusion from school
 - Adolescent substance misuse
 - Parental anxiety over the denial of a child's Special Educational Needs
 - Mental health needs, including the negative impact of excessive parental expectations
 - Neglect of emotional needs
 - Impact of parental conflict on a child
 - Financial hardship and the impact of universal credit
 - Building effective working relationships with difficult or confrontational parents.

7.4 MAPF contribution to service development

- The MAPF actively contributes to service development in a number of different ways. It is often the first group to be consulted on each of the Early Help Action Plan priorities and MAPF workshop minutes and outcomes are regularly incorporated into review papers. Examples include:
 - Engaging with the Bangladeshi Community Workshop summary used to inform a wider DDCCS engagement project
 - Distance Travelled tool developed collaboratively by MAPF members
 - Co-location report included feedback from MAPF
 - Draft CAF communications reviewed, amended, and shared with service users for feedback by MAPF
 - Service User Engagement report based on MAPF workshop
 - A number of MAPF members completed CAF self-evaluations which will be used to inform the redevelopment of the CAF or an alternative assessment and outcomes framework.

8. Service Development: Progress of the Early Help Sub-group

8.1 Thematic reports and review papers

- Across 2017/18 thematic reports were requested and presented to the Early Help Sub-group covering the following areas:
 - CAF progress summary
 - service user involvement
 - review of co-location
 - summary of MAPF activity
 - distance travelled and evidence of impact
 - interface with short breaks.

Feedback and recommendations from discussions resulting from these reports have been incorporated into the 2018–2020 Early Help Action Plan.

8.2 Service updates and building evidence across the partnership

- During 2017/18 a partner update template was developed for the Early Help Sub-group to consistently record the activity and progress of Early Help work across the partnership. At each of the quarterly meetings, one or more of the multi-agency partners present an update which includes:
 - current priorities and projects
 - forward planning: areas of service development relevant to Early Help
 - existing or emerging needs within the community/service user group
 - number of MARFs or other agency referrals made to date
 - number of CAFs completed to date
 - evidence of impact (distance travelled and case studies) including examples
 - recording service users' views and involving them in planning
 - opportunities for partnership working
 - upcoming events and training (if applicable).

There were six partners who submitted update reports in the formats listed above across 2017/18. These are held by the City & Hackney Safeguarding Children Board (CHSCB) as part of the evidence bank for the broad Early Help offer.

8.3 Task and Finish Group to review the CAF

- The Early Help Sub-group have agreed to review the CAF via a Task and Finish Group comprised of leads from Health Visiting, Education and Early Years and Early Help, along with the senior professional advisor to CHSCB.
- So far, the group have met once for an initial discussion to explore whether a multi-agency assessment and support plan is realistic.
- This remains an ongoing area for development within the new Early Help Action Plan.

8.4 Terms of Reference

- Following declining attendance across 2017/18, particularly from external partners, there has been a review of the terms of reference and membership of the Early Help Sub-group. This is due to be finalised at the meeting in July, with subsequent communication from the Sub-group chair and the CHSCB to ensure that the group remains quorate and can effectively fulfil its core purpose:

“The Early Help Sub-group will be tasked with seeking assurance of the effectiveness and impact of the implementation of the City of London Early Help Strategy. As such, the Sub-group will build on and improve partnership working across agencies, creating the infrastructure to provide a seamless service delivery which will evidence clear and positive outcomes for our children and families.

The group will provide strategic oversight and assurance to the work being carried out by all agencies charged with realising the ambitions of the City of London Children and Young People’s Plan and Early Help Strategy.”

8.5 Innovation

- The multi-agency nature of the Early Help Sub-group ensures that there is a partnership approach to pilot programmes and innovative practice, for example:
 - An exam stress webinar for years 10 to 13, facilitated by First Steps in the Easter holidays, was first discussed at the Early Help Sub-group. Meetings between Early Help, First Steps, Youth providers (Tower Hamlets and Prospects) and the Education and Early Years Team followed to discuss how to best implement the webinar within the City.
 - Early Help has offered support and involvement with the Tenancy Visits Programme to profile and highlight the City of London’s local offer in terms of services for children, young people and their families.

9. Concluding remarks and next steps

- The caseload of targeted Early Help support by the Children and Families Team has increased – in numbers and in terms of the breadth of needs being supported across 2017/18. This is a positive trajectory and it is hoped that cases (both referrals allocated to Early Help, and step-downs from Children’s Social Care) will continue to progress well through the service. This would result in a reduction of cases open long-term and an increase in cases closed due to outcomes being met and needs being well supported via universal services.
- In addition to the progress seen in Early Help casework, there has been a significant amount of wider service development activity within Early Help across 2017/18. This has been led by the Early Help Co-ordinator. It also includes a significant contribution from the MAPF which continues to be a key context in which partnership working is supported and facilitated at a practitioner level.
- Ongoing priorities and next steps for Early Help are clearly outlined in the 2018–2020 Action Plan which has now been approved and has active work streams. Successful delivery of the Early Help Action Plan should result in:
 - higher levels of engagement with Early Help, from families and from partner agencies (and better outcomes for children and young people as a result)
 - growing evidence of the impact of Early Help, both during and after targeted support and intervention
 - robust and regular quality assurance of Early Help work
 - meaningful learning from, and co-production with, service users.
- Early Help continues to fit within wider service delivery contexts – with improvement actions identified in the Children’s Social Care Self Evaluation, the Children’s Service Improvement Plan and the SEND Implementation Plan. In this way, there is robust governance and oversight of Early Help from multiple sources.
- The Early Help strategy will be reviewed and updated across 2018/19 and will sit under the new Children and Young People’s Plan. This will provide a framework and direction for the continued development of the Early Help service offer within the City of London.

Jacqui Frisby
Early Help Co-ordinator
June 2018

ⁱ Data sourced from published annual reports or from Early Help contacts including data from Hackney, Islington, Barking & Dagenham, Brent, Lambeth, and Lewisham.

ⁱⁱ Excluding the spikes described in section 2.2.