



Data to Insight: Early Help Data Partnership Quarterly Review – Q1 24/25

*Led by local authorities with support from the ADCS, DfE, Ofsted, and DLUHC,
we're working to help LAs make better use of data in children's services*



About Data to Insight

- Data to Insight (D2I) is **the sector-led service for local authority children's data professionals**
- D2I is hosted by East Sussex County Council, led by local authorities, and supported by the ADCS, DfE, DLUHC and Ofsted, helping local authorities make **better use of data**
- D2I supports a **national community** of data professionals in designing, developing and maintaining useful data tools, connecting like-minded people, and helping good practice spread across regional boundaries
- D2I enhances a **proven partnership of LAs** working together for the sector – our depth and breadth of expertise and community reach gives data projects the best chance possible of succeeding in producing **meaningful insight**
- Tools and datasets we've helped to develop include:
 - ChAT – Children's Analysis Tool
 - BmT – Children's Services Benchmarking Tool
 - Demand Modelling Tool for CLA Placements
 - Statutory Returns Validation Tools
 - National RIIA Quarterly Data Collection
 - National Early Help Quarterly Data Collection

How to submit data (if your LA hasn't already)

- Check with your regional performance group whether a regional return is being completed.
- If not, you can submit as an individual LA by:
- Go to our website (<https://www.datatoinsight.org/>) and sign up as a member
- Download the collection sheet ([Early Help Quarterly Collection Sheet | Data to Insight](#)) and follow the submission instructions
- From this quarter, we're extending the deadline to 8 weeks after quarter close to align with the RIIA
- Around two weeks after that we publish the benchmarking tool: [Early Help benchmarking tool | Data to Insight](#)
- Only LAs who submit data can get access, and access is stopped if you don't submit for 2 quarters

Early Help Data Partnership Quarterly Review – Q1 24/25:

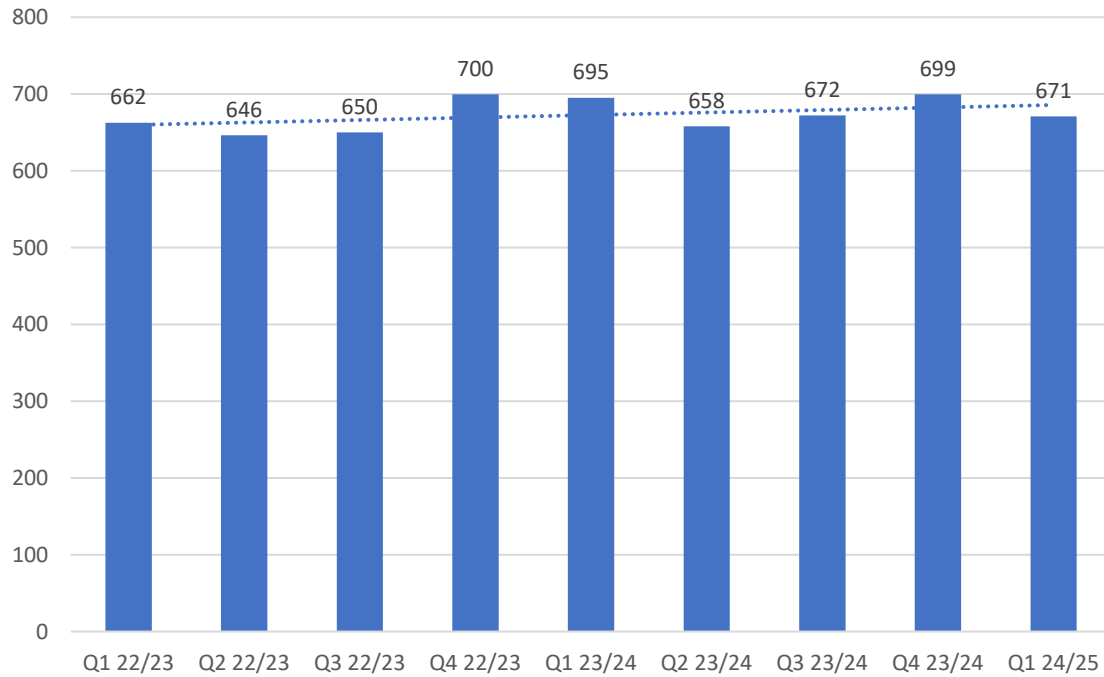
- Contacts data – Liam Skinner (Medway)
- Quarterly analysis and discussion (including demo of benchmarking tool)
- Open discussions or questions
 - Shropshire – question re: definition of Early Help Episode
- Upcoming schedule

Update from RIIA CSC collection:

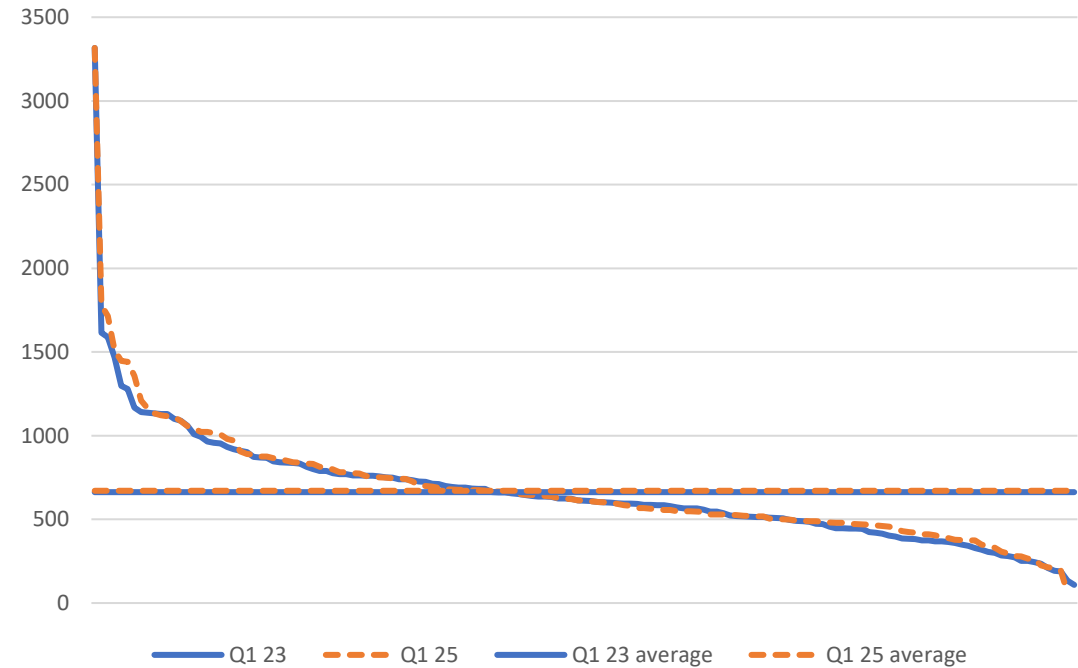
The following four slides are from our RIIA analysis workshop and focus on contacts and referrals to Children's Social Care. They provide useful context for understanding our Early Help data.

RIIA data - Initial contacts to CSC received in period – rate per 10k 0-17

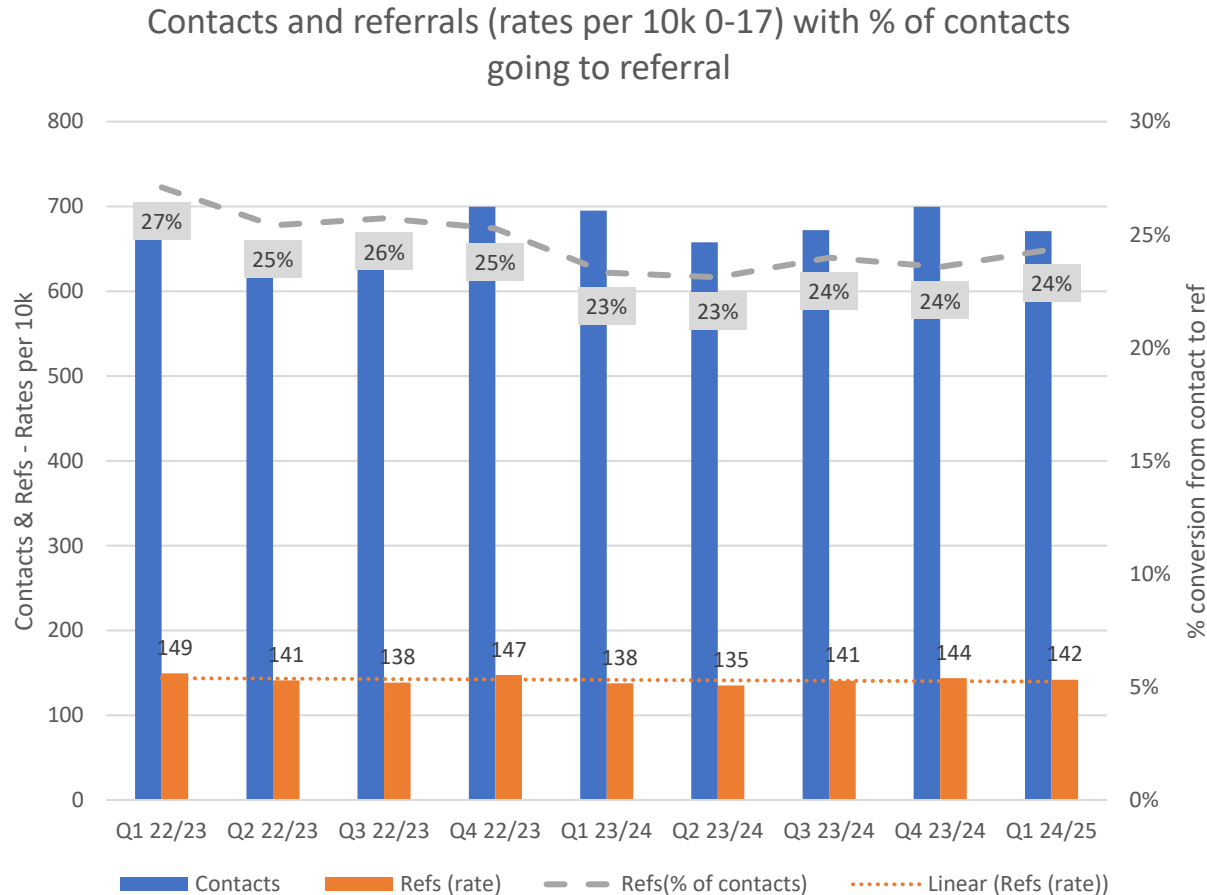
Initial contacts in period - rate per 10,000 0-17 (National average)



Initial contacts - rate per 10,000 0-17 (comparing 22/23 against 24/25)



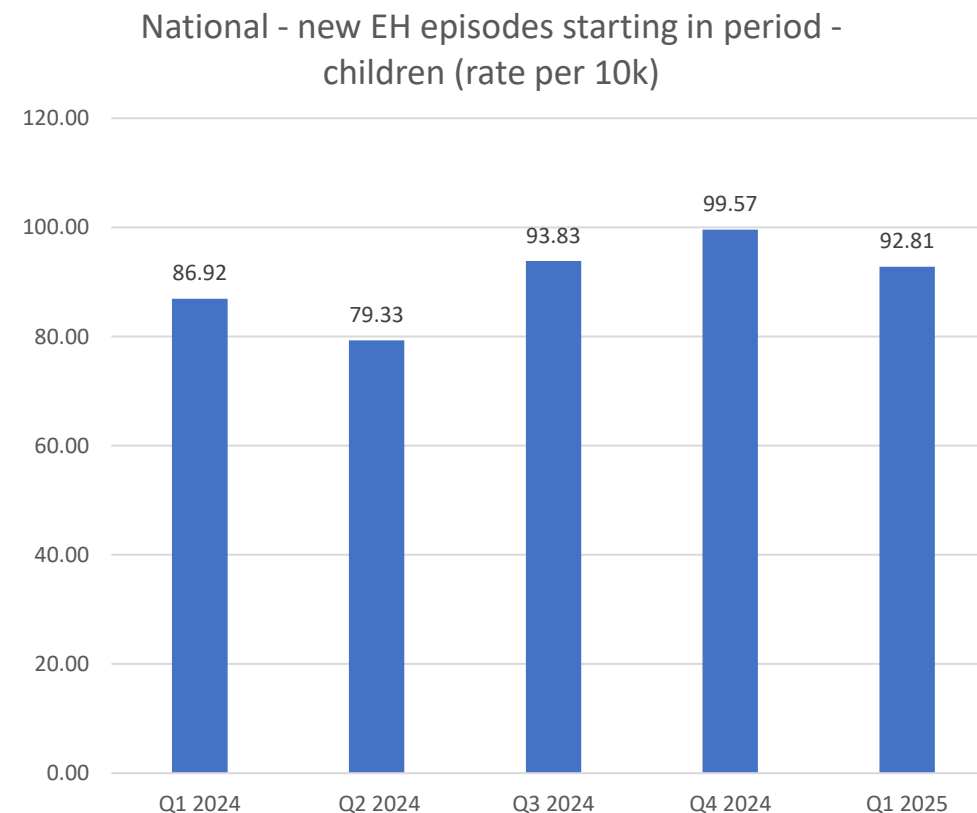
RIIA Data – CSC Contacts and referrals



- At the last session, we noted that contacts made to children’s social care appeared to increase in 23/24 from the previous year, and there continues to be a small upward trend looking over the last two years.
- However, when we compare Q1 22/23 against Q1 24/25, we can see the difference year on year is not great. Data suggests most LAs are seeing comparable levels of demand.
- Many LAs are submitting all contacts, while around 10% are submitting social care only and have a separate reporting mechanism for their early help contacts.
- Historical data on contacts is difficult to find, however in the Safeguarding Pressures 8 report, the ADCS reported an (annual) rate of 1555 contacts (per 10k 0-17) in 2009/10, rising to 2286 in 21/22. This RIIA data suggests a current rate of 2500+. This represents a 60% increase. This means in real terms LAs are now fielding 10s of thousands of contacts per annum.
- In contrast the referral rate over this period has remained relatively static – in 12/13 the national average rate was 520 per 10k, and in 22/23 it was 544.5, a change of c.7%.

The role of Early Help:

- Our EH collection only started in 2023, and finding historical data to understand whether we can quantify a growth of Early Help support is challenging. We can get some idea of the growth in Early Help. However, again using the ADCS Safeguarding Pressures 8 Report, we see a table showing rates of open EH (children were asked for, but some LAs could only report families so the author does warn there may be an undercount). In 2017/8 LAs reported a rate of 139 per 10k 0-17 years olds) in the latest EH Benchmarking report, we have reported an average rate of 200 children and increases in the rate of children starting episodes.
- Obviously drawing definitive conclusions on that limited (and by the authors admission, potentially flawed) data is not possible, but an increase in the provision of early help is suggested.
- LAs themselves report a similar picture:
 - “On the back of austerity, Covid-19 and a cost-of-living crisis, our early help offer has been a main vehicle in supporting families and combatting reactive and expensive statutory interventions. While relying on often small pots of funding, widespread and positive differences to our families and with our community partners have been achieved.”
Pauline Turner, DCS Hull – ADCS Blog August 2024
- The picture here is complex, with the interplay between statutory services and wider Early Help provision difficult to confidently evidence. However, broadly we can see a large increase in contacts – this is resulting in a slight increase in the number of children accessing statutory services, with a much larger increase in the number of children accessing Early Help. What seems clear is that Early Help is an utterly integral part of the social care system and a critical part of how LAs manage need in their communities.
- There are clearly risks with this dynamic – how can we be assured that provision is equitable when LAs’ offers differ, and understanding the effectiveness of interventions is difficult when our data is not comparable. Further, EH funding is not statutory and likely more vulnerable than social care.



Possible drivers of increased demand:

Understanding this in our LAs through our regular performance monitoring is difficult, as the nature of a child's need only appears in a few places; CiN Primary need codes and assessment risk factors. We might see the numbers increasing, but not easily the drivers behind this. Some examples of reasons for increased demand might be:

- Changes in reporting around contacts and EH
- Troubled families/supporting families/family hubs, and the resulting widening of EH offer
- LA funding restrictions
- Covid pandemic
- Increase in poverty and the cost-of-living crisis
- Increased numbers of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC)
- Increase in extra-familial harm
- Increased number of children with an EHCP
- Inequality between LAs

What else?

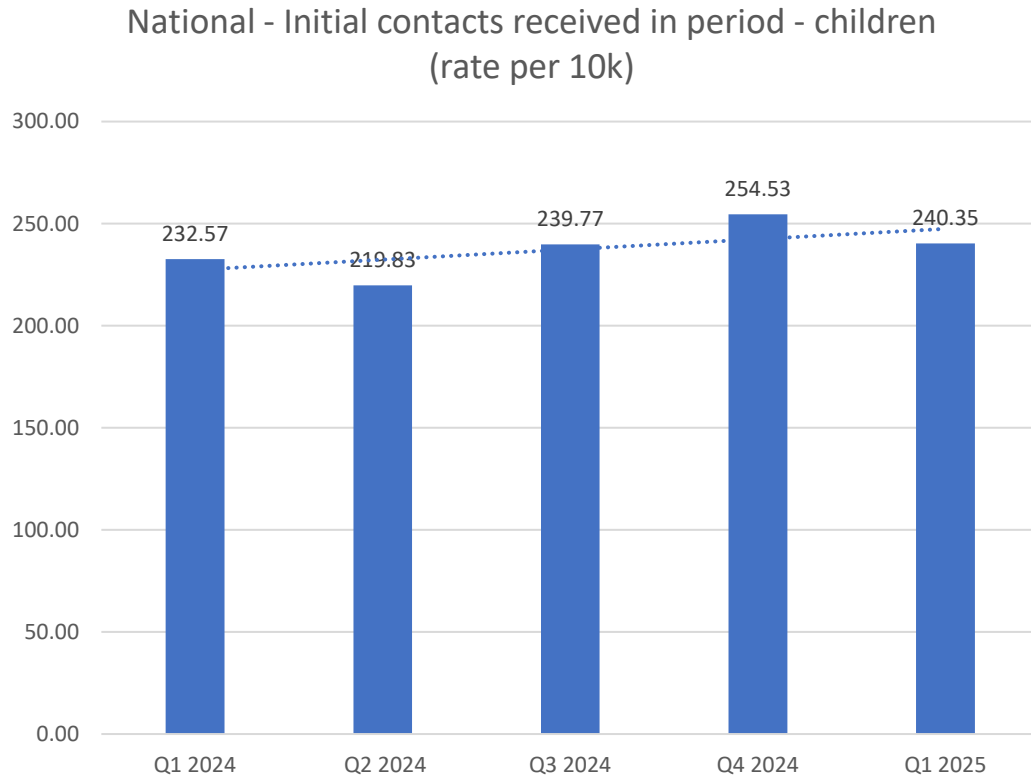
Early Help:

Early Help System



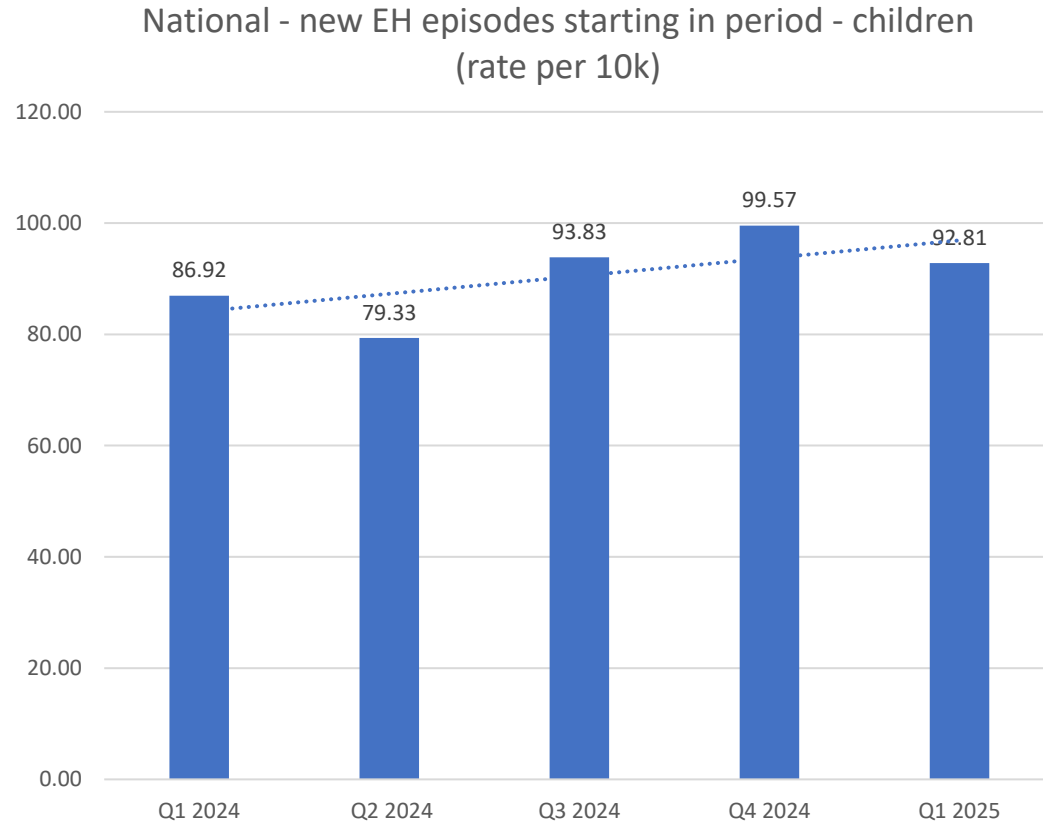
- This slide, taken from the EH systems guide (DLUHC) illustrates the breadth of services that are considered to offer EH in some form.
- The troubled families/supporting families framework encouraged multi-agency working and helping families overcome a wide range of problems.
- In some cases, partner agencies may act as lead professional while supporting a family.
- In others, the partner agency will contact the local authority with their concerns.

EH 101 - Initial contacts received in period - children:



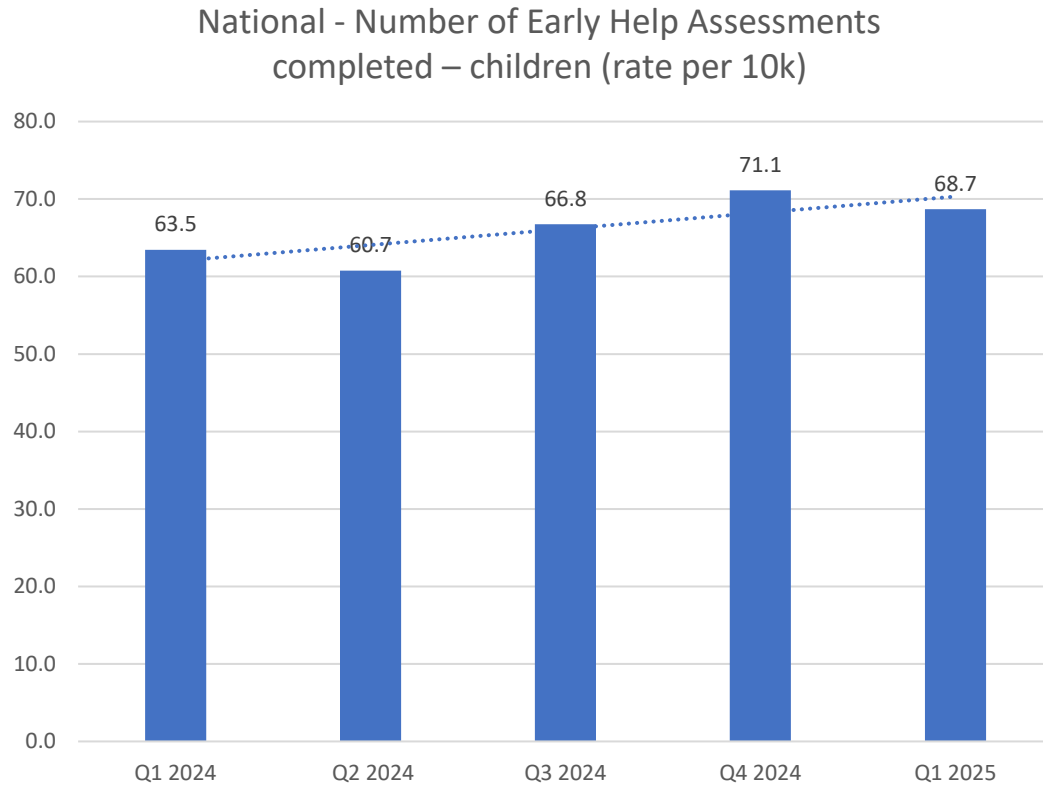
- Over the 5 periods of data, we see a small upward trend in EH contacts.
- EH contact = either a contact that has been to combined front door and has EH outcome or specific EH contacts where there is a discrete front door.
- As mentioned earlier – in RIIA data around 10% of LAs are submitting with a separate EH front door, in this collection it's around 30% but X-codes are filled in less often

EH 102 – New EH episodes starting in period - children:



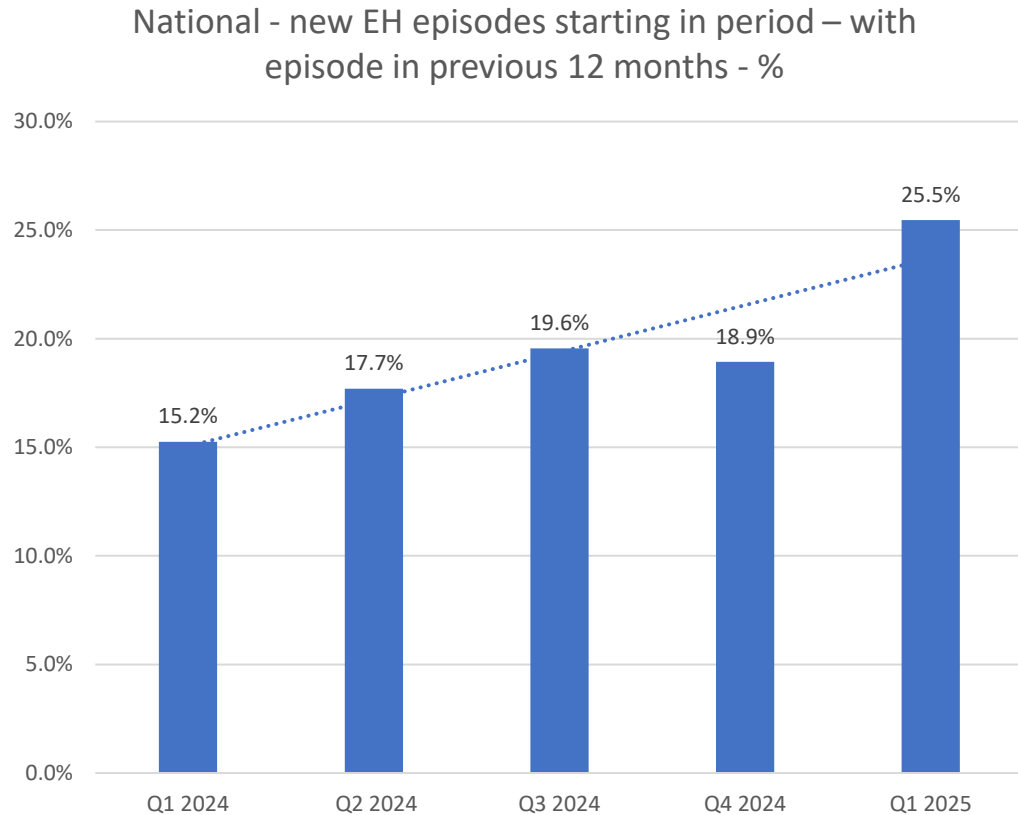
- We can also see a similar increase in children starting EH episodes over the time we've been collecting this data.
- Data suggests that new episodes have also increased over time.
- What is the relationship between contacts, assessments and new episodes?

EH 104 – Number of Early Help Assessments completed – children (rate per 10k):



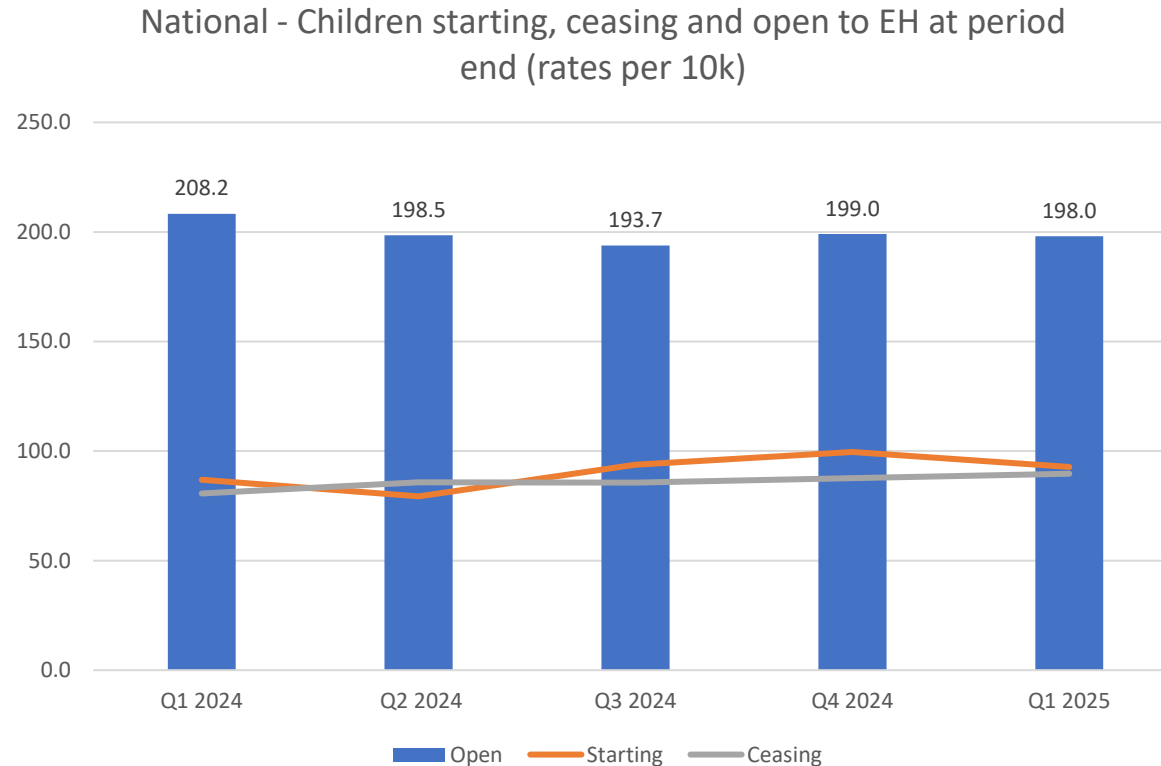
- What is the relationship between contacts, assessments and new episodes?
- I think many analysts coming from CSC might have expected to see contacts>assessments>episodes starting with each stage having decreasing numbers.
- Instead, we see contacts>new episodes>assessments.
- Is this to do with the definition of episodes in EH, i.e. you might have an episode starting before an assessment is carried out?

EH 103 – New EH episodes starting within 12 months of a previous episode ceasing % of new episode:



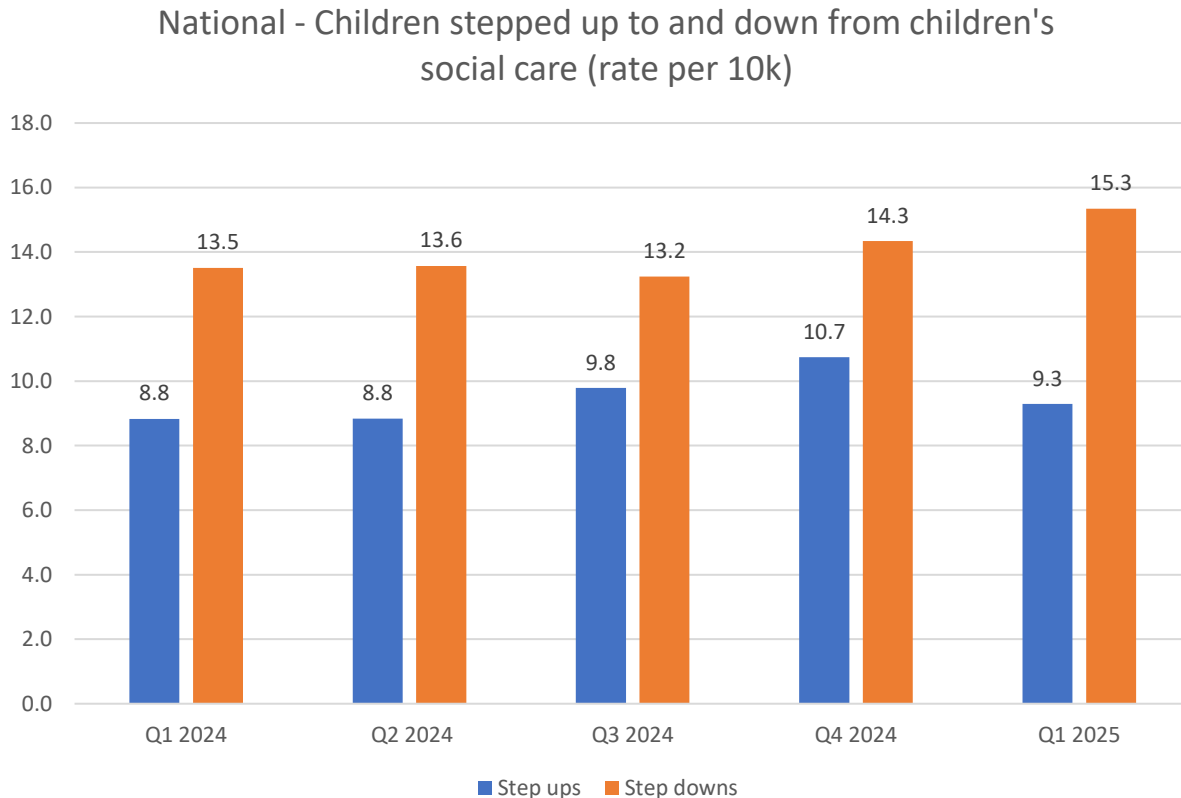
- Over the 5 reporting periods, we have seen an increase in the proportion of episodes that are a repeat within 12 months.
- LAs have been clear that this cannot be used as a measure of efficacy in the same way as CSC data.
- However, there's an interesting question here about how this data relates to the overall increase in demand.

EH 105 – Number of children open to Early Help at period end (rate per 10k) (inc. EH102 – new episodes & EH108 – children ceasing)



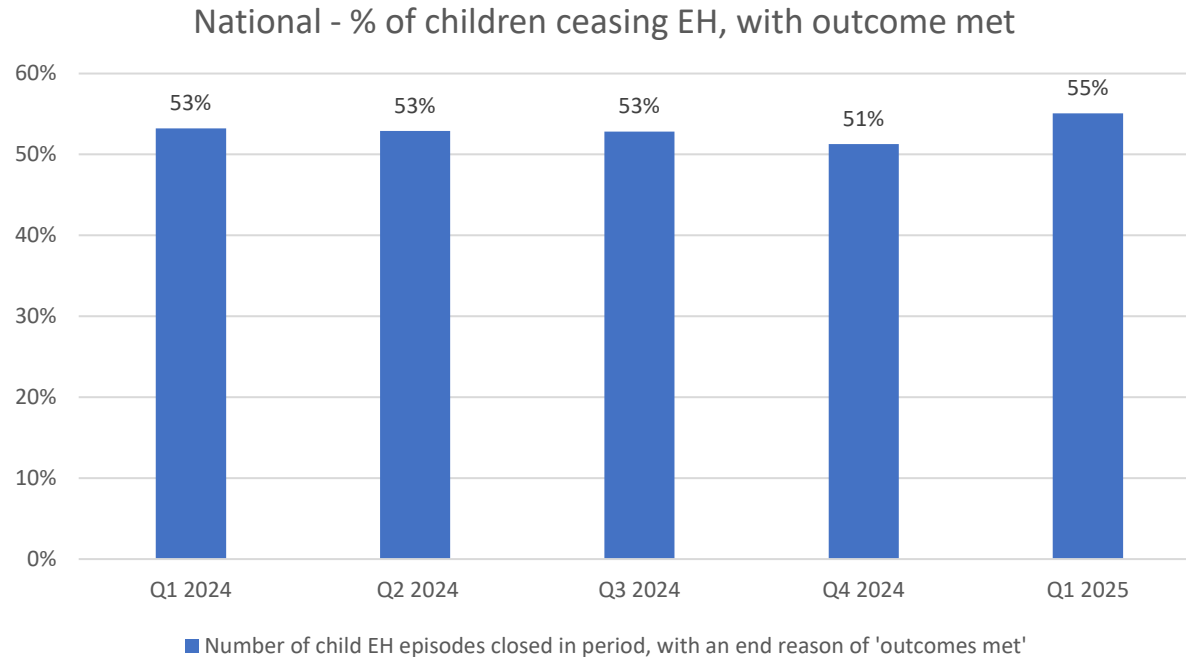
- Starting and ceasing rates are very close
- Please note that there was an error in last quarter's chart that indicated a greater distance between the two series.

EH 106/7 – Step ups/downs



- More children are stepping down from CSC to EH than the other way around.
- Step downs have increased over the last 2 reporting periods.
- It's not clear from our data whether this increased demand is additional to that seen in contacts, or included in that data.

EH 109 – children ceasing with outcomes met



- There has been discussion in workshops about what this measure means – outcomes fully met or also including partially met.
- For Q1 we added a new X-code – about Outcomes met/outcomes partially met. We had 15 LAs complete this and so far just over half were including outcomes partially met.
- Collection is designed to be flexible, but if your LA is low on this measure this might be why. The range on this measure is large.

Upcoming:

- Next collection deadline (Q2 24/25) **30th November 2024**
- Next session **18th December 2024 12:30 – 14:00**
- Email: john.foster@eastsussex.gov.uk for an invitation