

	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>CHILDREN, EDUCATION, LIBRARIES &amp; SAFEGUARDING COMMITTEE</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>18 September 2017</b></p>
<p style="text-align: right;"><b>Title</b></p>	<p><b>Update report on the Ofsted Improvement Action Plan implementation progress</b></p>
<p style="text-align: right;"><b>Report of</b></p>	<p>Strategic Director for Children and Young People</p>
<p style="text-align: right;"><b>Wards</b></p>	<p>All</p>
<p style="text-align: right;"><b>Status</b></p>	<p>Public</p>
<p style="text-align: right;"><b>Urgent</b></p>	<p>No</p>
<p style="text-align: right;"><b>Key</b></p>	<p>Yes</p>
<p style="text-align: right;"><b>Enclosures</b></p>	<p><b>Appendix 1: Draft Finance Policy for Care Leavers</b>  <b>Appendix 2: Joint Housing and CSC Protocol for Homeless 16 and 17 year olds</b>  <b>Appendix 3: Children in care visit data</b>  <b>Appendix 4: Draft Private Fostering marketing poster</b></p>
<p style="text-align: right;"><b>Officer Contact Details</b></p>	<p>Chris Munday                  Strategic Director for Children and Young People  <a href="mailto:Chris.Munday@barnet.gov.uk">Chris.Munday@barnet.gov.uk</a></p>

<b>Summary</b>
<p>Ofsted inspected the Council's services for children in need of help and protection and children looked after between 25 April and 18 May 2017, the Barnet Safeguarding Children Board (BSCB) was also inspected. The full Ofsted Inspection Report was published on 7 July 2017; Ofsted gave Barnet Children's Services an overall judgement of 'Inadequate' and the BSCB was also judged to be 'Inadequate'.</p> <p>A draft Action Plan setting out the inspection findings, recommendations and improvement plan was submitted and approved at CELS Committee on 18th July 2017.</p> <p>The authority is subject to intervention by the Department for Education (DfE) until services are improved. This report provides details of the Commissioner appointed by the DfE to review Barnet and its capacity to drive improvement at pace following the Ofsted inspection, for an initial period of three months. The Commissioner is required to update the Secretary of State as to the level of improvement, and make recommendations regarding delivery arrangements with the presumption that services will be removed from the Council's control.</p>

This report provides an update on the progress made and key priorities for improvement. It sets out how the draft Improvement Action Plan is driving activity to address the inspection recommendations, and provides details of the new draft Finance Policy for Care Leavers, developed in response to feedback from young people in relation to wanting to be clear on their entitlements.

### **Recommendations**

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| <b>1. That the Committee note the Commissioner for Children’s Services appointment for an initial three-month period following the Ofsted Single Inspection Framework (SIF) judgement of inadequate as set out in paragraphs 1.4 to 1.6.</b>  |
| <b>2. That the Committee note the actions that have been taken to respond to recommendations within the Ofsted report as set out in paragraphs 1.20 to 1.31.</b>  |
| <b>3. That the committee note and scrutinise the performance information provided in paragraph 1.32 to 1.63 and Appendix 3.</b>   |
| <b>4. That the Committee agree the draft Finance Policy for Care Leavers set out in Appendix 1 and delegate to the Strategic Director for Children and Young People authorisation to agree minor amendments and approve the final version of the policy.</b>  |
| <b>5. That the Committee agree Barnet’s draft Joint Housing and Children’s Social Care Protocol for homeless 16 and 17 year olds included in Appendix 2, and delegate to the Strategic Director for Children and Young People for authorisation to agree further expansions to reflect best practice and feedback at the next CELS committee.</b> |
| <b>6. That the Committee agree the draft Private Fostering poster set out in Appendix 4.</b>  |

## **1. WHY THIS REPORT IS NEEDED**

- 1.1 Between 25 April and 18 May 2017 Ofsted inspected Barnet’s Children’s Services under the Single Inspection Framework (SIF). Overall, Ofsted judged the quality of services provided to children to be Inadequate.
- 1.2 The Council developed a draft Improvement Action Plan for consultation based on inspection findings and recommendations. This Action Plan for consultation was approved at CELS Committee on 18 July 2017.
- 1.3 To enhance scrutiny by elected members and improve the effectiveness of the local authority in protecting children in need and caring for children and young people as a corporate parent, it was agreed at the CELS Committee on 18 July 2017 that an update on the progress of implementing the Improvement Action Plan will be a standing item on future committee agendas.
- 1.4 On 18 August 2017, the Strategic Director for Children & Young People received notification from the DfE about the appointment of the Commissioner appointed to Barnet following the Inadequate Ofsted inspection in line with DfE policy and reported to members on 18th July.
- 1.5 The DfE appointed Frankie Sulke CBE to review Barnet and its capacity to drive improvement at pace following the Ofsted inspection over the next three months. Ms Sulke will make recommendations to the Secretary of State about whether Children’s

Services should remain within the control of the Council. The presumption from the DfE is that services should be externalised when there is systemic failure. Ms Sulke has extensive experience in children and young people's services, having been Executive Director for Children and Young People in Lewisham for 14 years, and more recently, working with the London Borough of Bromley as the Commissioner following the Inadequate Ofsted Inspection in 2016.

- 1.6 Ofsted has confirmed the first monitoring visit will take place on 14 and 15 November 2017. The first monitoring report will not be published in line with OFSTED guidance.
- 1.7 Transforming services for children from inadequate to good or better is a major task and requires the commitment of the whole Council and partnership. The pace of change must be swift and we need to ensure that there is a relentless focus on improvement activity.

### **Recommendations from the Ofsted Inspection**

- 1.8 There were 19 recommendations for improvement made by OFSTED. At the centre of all 19 recommendations is the need to ensure that children's needs are well understood and responded to effectively so that their outcomes are improved. Two core themes arise from the recommendations which are, the need to:
  - improve practice leadership and management, and
  - improve core social work skills
- 1.9 Other areas to improve relate to recommendations for specific groups of children and are outlined below:
  - Improving our response to homeless young people to ensure they are provided with the support that they need
  - Raising awareness of Private Fostering and improving the assessment processes for this group of children
  - Expanding and improving our life-story work to ensure all children in permanent placements have an understanding of their past.
  - Establishing more workshops for Care Leavers on areas like money management helping them to prepare for independence.
  - Improving our approach to connected carers
- 1.10 A draft Improvement Action Plan was developed in response to the recommendations and areas for improvement highlighted by Ofsted, which was approved for consultation by the CELS Committee in July 2017.
- 1.11 The Council had been working to improve the quality of services provided to children over the past year in a collegiate partnership with Essex County Council. This work has focused on achieving 'conditions for success' by securing investment to reduce caseloads, improve systems and tools for staff and to strengthen practice-focused leadership across children's services.

- 1.12 In the light of the OFSTED judgement there is a clear imperative to re-focus our activity on ensuring high quality social work practice.
- 1.13 There are, therefore, three core strategic objectives that cut across our Plans for Children, Young People and Families including the draft Improvement Action Plan. The objectives underpin the systemic and cultural change needed to drive improvement at pace within the borough and align with our corporate commitment to develop services to achieve Barnet's Family Friendly vision and implement a resilience-based practice model:
- Empowering and equipping our workforce to understand the importance and meaning of purposeful social work assessments and interventions with families
  - Providing Practice Leadership and management throughout the system to ensure progress is made for children within timescales that are appropriate and proportionate to their needs and that practitioners are well supported, child focused, curious and inquisitive about what they are seeing and assessing
  - Ensuring our involvement with the most vulnerable children in the borough positively impacts on their outcomes
- 1.14 In order to maintain focus on where pace and resource are applied, five key themes have been identified initially and are in the process of being communicated to managers, staff and key partners so our efforts are coherent and focused in this period; the three priorities are:
- Leadership, Governance and Partnership (including strengthening the Local Children's Safeguarding Board)
  - Practice Leadership and Management
  - Core Practice Skills:
    - Thresholds
    - Risk Assessments
    - Planning
- 1.15 To achieve improvement in these areas, resource is being directed to scrutinise, challenge and support practice to ensure that:
- Improving outcomes for children is at the heart of what we do across the partnership and Council
  - children receive timely interventions at the right level for their needs across the system,
  - risk is identified and responded to swiftly, and
  - children's plans are outcome focused and robustly monitored, to ensure that when change is not being achieved, action is taken to improve their circumstances.
- 1.16 Feedback from staff and partners will be incorporated into the draft Action Plan ahead of the final submission to Ofsted in October 2017.
- 1.17 An important step in achieving the change we want to see for children has been ensuring that the senior leadership and management team have a clear

understanding of what 'good' looks like and ensuring that they have the capacity to drive change in the system and improvements in practice through a combination of high support and high challenge. The Council needs to turnaround the services rapidly and will work with Essex County Council to drive the change.

- 1.18 At the heart of our improvement approach is the strengthened Quality Assurance and Workforce Development activities which have been aligned to ensure that there is sufficient oversight and scrutiny of practice quality, but to also ensure that when gaps in skills and knowledge are identified the workforce development offer is rapid and responsive; to give practitioners the support they need to improve the quality of their work with children and families.
- 1.19 Practice Development roles have been created to get alongside practitioners and managers by sitting with them, joining in assessments, planning meetings, home visits and direct work activities so that there is practical 'hands on' support available where it is needed most. Skills are therefore developed through modelling and practice is enhanced through reflective supervision and robust case management directions.
- 1.20 **Changes since the Inspection:**

#### Structural changes

There have been some immediate improvements made within the MASH following a change of Senior Management arrangements which has enabled the facilitation of coordinated activity within the service to improve information sharing opportunities, timeliness of decisions and threshold conversations through daily MASH meetings.

Similarly, in the Intervention & Planning Service where children in need of longer term social work support are managed the changes made in Senior Management roles has introduced practice leadership that is evidencing a tighter grip on care planning for children, particularly those that require legal proceedings to ensure their safety. This progress, whilst positive is not yet consistent and focused activity in this area will continue.

#### Staffing Changes

In line with the decision from General Function Committee there have been a number of changes in the senior leadership and management team since the Ofsted inspection, with the deletion of the previous Assistant Director roles, and creation of two new Operational Director roles which have both been recruited to. The Head of Service roles in Intake and Assessment and Intervention & Planning have been filled by experienced practice leaders, who have capacity to drive change in the system and workforce.

A new Practice Development, Innovation and Programmes Manager has been appointed to lead Quality Assurance and Workforce Development activity and to manage the new Practice Development Workers, Quality Assurance Manager and Quality Assurance Officer roles. This appointment has led to a stronger focus on reflective learning opportunities for staff and practitioners and the roll out of a new Appreciative Inquiry approach to quality assurance. This approach consists of

creating and sustaining organisation change which focuses on what is working well and builds on this, instead of focusing on problems and issues.

A Life Story Worker has been recruited to work alongside social workers in Children In Care and Onwards and Upwards, to complete later life letters and support social workers to write in a sensitive, in a child focused way. Improved practice in this area is essential, and is an Ofsted recommendation, as Social Workers use later life letters to complete life story work with individual children, to help them understand their histories.

There is also a newly strengthened BSCB (Barnet Safeguarding Children's Board) Business Unit which includes a Transformation Manager, Project Coordinator and Administrator. Recruitment of a Data Analyst and Learning and Development Officer is underway.

#### Recruitment Campaign

On 14 September, Barnet will launch a new recruitment campaign to attract experienced practitioners and managers into the borough for a number of new and existing vacancies in key roles across the service. To ensure that there are no gaps in key delivery areas, interim appointments are actively being sought. A total of 19 additional Practice Development posts have been created across Family Services.

Workforce stability remains good; Family Services are continuing to convert more agency social workers to permanent staff, with 10.83% being agency as at 2 August 2017. In addition to this, a turnover rate of 8.13% has been achieved for the 2017/18 financial year to date. This improvement provides the consistency needed to drive systemic and cultural change and embed improved social work practice within Family Services.

#### Embedding Workforce Development

A programme of training to equip the workforce with evidence based practice tools such as Signs of Safety and Motivational Interviewing are being delivered and embedded across the service. There is a detailed programme of learning sourced through internal and external providers and this is supported through Barnet's partnership with Research in Practice, Middlesex University and the recently launched Practice Academy.

#### Resource Allocation

In June 2017, the Policy and Resources committee approved an additional £5.7million for Family services, some of which is being invested to improve practice, as indicated below:

Demand	2017/18
	£'000
<b>Demographics</b>	
• Placements	733
<b>Health Visitors</b>	
• Links to Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH), Signs of Safety (SoS) and Child Protection (CP).	270
<b>UASCs</b>	260
<b>Special Guardianship Orders</b>	173

<b>Children and Social Work Bill</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Additional staffing in the leaving care service</li> </ul>	125
<b>Disability</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff and placement costs from adults social care</li> </ul>	1,556
<b>Improvement</b>	
<b>Increase in gang activity and serious youth crime</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Commissioning of Growing Against Violence and Art against Knives to do prevention work in schools. This will be going out for Single Tender in September 2017.</li> </ul>	117
<b>Youth homelessness</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Spot purchase arrangements for Outreach Support Packages for young people living in supported accommodation in the community.</li> </ul>	100
<b>REACH service</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staffing costs for the service.</li> </ul>	510
<b>Children in Care staffing</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recruitment in progress of 3 Team Managers – a start date has been agreed for 7 October 2017.</li> <li>1 Life Story worker has been recruited and recruitment for 2 more is in progress.</li> </ul>	190
<b>Practice Improvement and Quality staffing</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 Practice Development, Innovations and Programme Manager has been recruited.</li> <li>The recruitment of 4 Practice Development Workers has been completed – 1 is now in post, and the remaining 3 have start dates confirmed for October 2017.</li> <li>Recruitment has commences for 4 interim Quality Assurance Officers.</li> <li>1 Interim Quality Assurance Manager is now in post.</li> </ul>	354
<b>Business Support in Performance Hubs</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>6 Practitioner Support Assistants are being recruited to support Team Managers in practice.</li> </ul>	183
<b>Others</b>	
<b>Pay inflation</b>	195
<b>Contract inflation</b>	400
<b>Benefits package</b>	200
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>5,705</b>

#### Policy and Strategy development

The MASH Protocol has been refreshed with the multi-agency partnership to provide a clear framework for operational delivery.

The Quality Assurance & Workforce Development Strategy is currently being refreshed to ensure that Barnet Family Services evolve into a learning organisation that uses a broad range of opportunities to engage the workforce in reflective and purposeful learning opportunities and to create an environment where challenge is both expected and welcomed.

### Responding to vulnerable children and young people

A new lead for young people who are at risk of Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) and Missing children has been appointed and is having a positive impact on the development of robust tracking systems for children and young people with high levels of vulnerability or risk. This is beginning to lead to improvements in the timeliness and effectiveness of planning to ensure that risk is understood, effectively responded to and escalated when risk does not reduce, or increases.

### Private Fostering Campaign

Within the Children In Care service, there is a dedicated social worker for Private Fostering who, with Barnet's Communications Team, will be leading on a private Fostering awareness raising campaign in Barnet with refreshed leaflets and posters.

### Improving support for care leavers

In July 2017, a Project Lead was confirmed for a Life Skills Project being delivered by The Family Resource Centre, to work closely with Barnet's 16+ cohort and support Pathway Planning and independent living preparation. A targeted independent living skills programme is being developed by the Project Lead, which will be delivered to young people identified as in need of support in areas such as money management and budgeting, understanding risks and cooking.

An advanced practitioner has been identified within the Care Leavers' service and will lead on a review of Barnet's Pathway Plans to improve their quality and ensure the pathway planning process is conducive to the achievement of plan ownership by care leavers.

## **Finance Policy for Care leavers**

- 1.21 Care Leavers need to be fully aware of their entitlements, having greater ownership of their Pathway Plans and possessing tools, such as money management, to cope with life's challenges. The proposed Finance Policy (included in Appendix 1) for Care Leavers has been refreshed to ensure it is up to date, responsive to and able to meet the needs of Care Leavers.
- 1.22 The current financial policy Advice, Support, including Financial Support and allowances, for Care Leavers 2015-2016 provides guidance for leaving care practitioners regarding financial support and allowances available to Barnet's Care Leavers. The policy sets out the type and amount of allowances that young people leaving care are entitled to. The figures outlined within the policy refer to the 2015/16 financial year.
- 1.23 The revision of this policy is one of a number of changes being made to improve the care leaving experience of Barnet young people, in line with Barnet's Care Leavers' Action Plan 2017-2020 and Corporate Parenting Pledge 2017, as well as to deliver progress in line with the draft Improvement Action Plan.
- 1.24 The updated policy provides clarity regarding the allowances payable to Care Leavers that enables allocated workers and Finance Teams to effectively implement the policy, and Care Leavers to understand their financial rights and entitlements.

- 1.25 A series of stakeholder engagement activities were undertaken to develop the new draft financial policy, to understand gaps in financial processes and support, and ensure that the policy effectively addresses inconsistencies in understanding and practice regarding financial support for Care Leavers. Changes to the policy were made on the basis of feedback received throughout the development process, from stakeholders including Onwards and Upwards, the Virtual School, Finance and Children in Care teams.
- 1.26 Some of the key changes to the policy include:
- Clarification on the financial support to be provided to Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children with Appeal Rights Exhausted (ARE)
  - Updated benefit rates for the 2017/18 financial year
  - Clarification regarding of the financial support provided to Care Leavers in Higher Education
  - Extension of the period for which financial support will be provided to Care Leavers awaiting benefits or salary payments
  - Introduction of the provision of financial support for rent and deposit advances and moving costs for Care Leavers moving home
- 1.27 Once the draft version of the policy has been approved, The Onwards and Upwards service will work with Barnet's Communications Team to develop a young person friendly version of the policy, to ensure information regarding financial rights and entitlements is available and accessible for Care Leavers, and aids increased ownership of Pathway Plans.

### **Joint Housing and Children's Social Care Protocol for homeless 16 and 17 year olds**

- 1.28 Homeless 16 and 17 year olds will benefit from a refreshed joint protocol which sets out Barnet's commitment, and responsibility, to ensuring that young people receive a good or better service when they ask for help.
- 1.29 In February 2017, a Task and Finish group was established to develop a new protocol for 16 and 17 year olds that present as homeless, as a review of the quality of service to this vulnerable group had been found to insufficiently safeguard or meet their individual needs. The Ofsted inspection report noted that this was an area that the local authority had already identified as in need of development and which was being re-modelled and made a recommendation to ensure that homeless 16 to 17 year olds are thoroughly assessed and that appropriate ongoing support is offered to them to meet their needs.
- 1.30 The new draft protocol sets out Barnet's commitment and responsibility, to ensuring that young people receive a good or better service when they ask for help. The protocol addresses the need for Barnet to ensure homeless 16- to 17-year-olds are thoroughly assessed and that appropriate ongoing support is offered to them to meet their needs by securing good quality, supported accommodation, and a focused plan for homeless young people to help them manage independence and access training, education and employment.

Some key changes introduced within the new draft protocol include:

- The provision of early help services for young people that are not assessed as homeless and remain at home;
- Ensuring young people who are homeless have access to good quality and supported accommodation or comprehensive outreach support whilst their needs are being assessed;
- Using the Placements Team to source emergency accommodation via an approved provider list both in and out of Borough;
- Recognising that young people are 'Children in Need' when they are in need of accommodation and therefore must be provided with s17 support and a CiN Plan that outlines the support they will receive;
- Ensuring that young people are assisted to make decisions about the services they can receive via use of advocates who can help them to understand their rights and entitlements for services.

1.31 The draft protocol, which can be found in Appendix 2, will be rolled out across Family Services once approved, and will result in positive changes within the service when homeless 16-17 year olds present.

### **Our performance in July 2017**

1.32 In this first report since the inspection we are including both quantitative and qualitative indicators for Members to consider. The improvement plan will establish a range of indicators that will be reported regularly for scrutiny

1.33 The quantitative data reported is based on activity in July 2017. Reporting is solely of underperforming quantitative indicators that are subject to additional focus

### **Quantitative**

1.34 In relation to Children in Need and Children in Need of Protection the levels of repeat referrals is at 18.8%. This figure is too high and may indicate that thresholds may be inconsistently applied or that interventions may not be sufficiently effective at dealing with the presenting problem.

1.35 75.1% of assessments were completed within 45 working days. This may mean that children's needs are not being addressed in a timely fashion.

1.36 Visits to children in need and children in need of protection are not consistently in time with 45% of Children in Need visits and 22.5% of child protection visits late.

1.37 68.2% of visits to Children in Care took place within timescales and similarly 69.5% for those who had left care. Some are still being recorded on some occasions 3-4 weeks after the visit has taken place.

- 1.38 The recording of Children Looked After Reviews is poor, although the review may have taken place within timescales, the recording of minutes and care plan details is lagging which affects this indicator. The system is reporting 82% on time.
- 1.39 Looked After Children Health indicators continue to show a positive direction of travel with Initial Health Assessments increasing month on month. Even though this is still below target, we expect to reach a good level of performance by November 2017.
- 1.40 In July the development checks for under fives had deteriorated to 75% and this has been followed up with the LAC health team and will be at 100% by the end of September 2017.
- 1.41 For children in care the quantitative data was presented to Corporate Parenting Advisory Panel. The full data is attached at Appendix 3.

### **Qualitative**

- 1.42 During the reporting period (April – August 2017) a total of 414 audits of children's records were completed, comprising of 108 regular audits and 306 Thematic Audits. The findings from these are detailed below.
- 1.43 There was less than usual regular or thematic audit activity during April/May 2017 due to the Ofsted Inspection. As part of the inspection 20 audited cases were submitted to Ofsted who subsequently downgraded 8 of them advising that the local authority gradings were overly optimistic when considered in context of the child's journey through the system and lived experience.
- 1.44 Family Services developed the Quality Assurance audit tool immediately following the inspection. The new tool brings together the key relevant criteria from Ofsted's Single Inspection Framework evaluation schedule which means it better captures the experiences of children and young people at each key stage of their journey through the system and better supports auditors in recording summative evidence, grading the quality of social work practice and recording clear corrective actions on the child's record. Essex County Council will be scrutinising the accuracy of our audits to triangulate that the cases are being accurately graded.
- 1.45 Between May and July, 31 'Live Audits' were undertaken in which direct observations of practice by auditors i.e observing social workers engaged in home visits and meetings with families. The audits are not graded and are largely focused on the child's plan or process rather than the quality of social work skill in direct work with children and families. The tool is being developed to ensure that observations and feedback are graded and focused on what is observed to ensure workforce development activities are targeted at supporting practitioner skillsets.

### **Inadequate Audits**

- 1.46 The Quality Assurance Team tracked inadequate audits for progress, between April and July 2017, 26 children received audits that were graded as 'Inadequate'. Of

these, 12 were children referred to the local authority as 'Annex H' cases during the inspection.

- 1.47 All 26 children's records have been re-audited on a monthly basis to track and monitor progression for the children towards safe, timely and outcome focussed plans; this level of scrutiny has evidenced that almost half are progressing towards positive outcomes for the children, but the rest are not progressing quickly enough.
- 1.48 To address the lack of progress being made the 4R (Rapid, Responsive, Reflective Review) process is being used as a tool to engage social workers and their managers in reflective discussion to understand why circumstances are not improving for children and further drive activity to achieve positive impact. Three 4R learning sessions have taken in August and a further 13 are planned for September..

### **Annex A Audits**

- 1.49 In June and July, 20 'Annex A' cases were randomly selected for audit by the Quality Assurance Team.
- 1.50 For **children in and out of care**, there is evidence that decisions to accommodate children are starting to show evidence of stronger understanding of thresholds and improved timeliness. There were no cases graded Inadequate in the last 10 children who came in and out of care in both June and July, with 3/10 were graded as Good in June increasing to 6/10 graded as Good in July. There is evidence that decisions are starting to be made earlier in the assessment and intervention process, particularly in respect of unborn babies and that that the Permanency Planning Panel is more effective in monitoring care planning for children at risk of care and/or in need of care proceedings.
- 1.51 10 Open/Closed referrals were audited in July and August of which half were Graded as Good. Three were graded as Requires Improvement and 2 were graded as Inadequate, both of which led to immediate remedial action being taken.
- 1.52 There is emerging evidence that threshold's in MASH are stronger and facilitating more timely progress to assessments of need. There is increasing evidence that managers in Duty & Assessment and Intervention & Planning Teams are increasing their oversight and grip on casework to prevent drift and delay, however, strategy discussions are not being recorded in a timely manner and managers need to improve their rationale for decisions to proceed to child protection investigations with greater rigour.
- 1.53 **Children Missing from Home and Care** audits are not yet consistently demonstrating that the Missing Children Protocol is being followed and Return Home Interviews are not yet supporting robust identification or responses to risk. The Missing Children tracker and Strategic MASE is providing increased oversight of this vulnerable cohort of young people and is prompting timely management review.

- 1.54 **One MASE (multi-agency sexual exploitation) audit** was graded as Requires Improvement owing to an absence of evidence from the MASE minutes to demonstrate the development of a robust multi-agency action plan to address or reduce risk. The Child Sexual Exploitation and Missing Children Lead has developed a new risk assessment tool, SEAM (Sexual Abuse & Missing) which is going live on 18 September and will support practitioners to consider risk and the actions needed to protect children from harm.
- 1.55 **One MARAC (domestic violence) Audit** was undertaken and graded as Inadequate; the audit was subsequently re-graded as Requires Improvement following a discussion with the Team Manager and Social Worker to progress the child's plan.
- 1.56 **No Private Fostering Audits** have been completed in June/July as there have been no Private Fostering referrals or assessments in this period.
- 1.57 In April 95 audits of children who had recently been subject to **Child Protection Plans** were undertaken, the audit found that the decisions to remove the large majority of the children from Child Protection Plans was correct, however, the subsequent Child in Need planning was poor, with little evidence of SMART outcome focused plans or CIN Reviews taking place.
- 1.58 In July, progress for the 95 children was subjected to a further audit and found that almost half the children had been subject of a CiN Meeting, although SMART plans were not evident.
- 1.59 28 children had been safely closed to Children's Social Care with no evidence of new concerns arising through contacts to the MASH. Two children were placed in care and two others had been re-referred progressing to child protection enquiries being undertaken.
- 1.60 18 of the children (which included one sibling group of 5) were escalated to the Head of Service to review practice and to address safeguarding concerns. All have been tracked and subsequently graded as Requires Improvement
- 1.61 Team Managers are now routinely chairing Children in Need Meetings to ensure that Plans are made in accordance with children's needs and focused on achieving positive change for them within agreed timescales.
- 1.62 116 children (66 siblings groups) who were in the pre-proceedings stage of Public Law Outline (PLO) were subject to audit in June. The audits flagged a number of areas for improvement in practice including the need for earlier intervention, improved rigour and oversight of the process, improved thresholds and the need for increased challenge when progress was not being made for children. A re-audit of children in PLO is taking place in September to track progress against the required areas for improvement.

- 1.63 Overall, the Quality Assurance process has become increasingly robust which is exposing more practice that falls below the raised expectations of the service. The continued cycle of quality assurance, practice development and leadership is driving change. There is a need to improve evidence of management oversight on children's records to demonstrate the rationale for decisions made and actions taken. There is also a continued need to drive the regularity and quality of supervision provided to social workers.

## **2. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 Members are asked to note Ofsted progress updates and actions to ensure scrutiny by elected members and improve the effectiveness of the local authority in protecting and caring for children and young people as a corporate parent.
- 2.2 Authorisation to agree the draft Financial Policy for care leavers is recommended to improve parity and financial support for Care Leavers, and aid the implementation of the Care Leavers' Action Plan 2017 – 2020, Corporate Parenting Action Plan 2017—2020 and ensure the delivery of Barnet's Pledge for Children in Care and Care Leavers.
- 2.3 Members are recommended to agree the Joint Housing and Children's Social Care Protocol for homeless 16 and 17 year olds to ensure Barnet's duty to assess and appropriately support homeless young people is effectively discharged and progress against Barnet's Children and Young People's Plan (2016 - 2019) and the Family Friendly vision is achieved.
- 2.4 Authorisation to agree the draft Private Fostering poster set out in Appendix 4 is recommended to raise awareness of private fostering to increase the number of private fostering notifications received by Family Services, and enable the effective protection and care of privately fostered children and young people.

## **3. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND NOT RECOMMENDED**

- 3.1 The continued monitoring of actions and impact of the draft Improvement Action Plan is integral to driving the continuation of the Family Services' improvement journey to ensure improved outcomes for children and families. The alternative option of maintaining the status quo will not make the desired improvements or improve outcomes at the pace required.
- 3.2 The completion and publication of the draft Finance Policy for Care Leavers is essential to drive outcome and service improvement for Care Leavers. The alternative option of working to the current policy will hinder social care in delivering an improvement in young people's lives, to become resilient and successful adults.
- 3.3 The implementation of the Joint Housing and Children's Social Care Protocol for homeless 16 and 17 year olds is necessary to ensure Barnet's duty under Section 17 of the Children Act is discharged. The alternative option of not consistently assessing

and providing alternative support to all young people in need will not support these young people becoming resilient and successful adults.

- 3.4 The completion and publication of the draft Private Fostering posters and leaflets is needed to ensure public awareness of Private Fostering is promoted within Barnet to ensure that arrangements are recorded and monitored by the Local Authority. The alternative option of not promoting public awareness will result in the welfare of children and young people not being known or checked by the Local Authority, thus potentially leaving children at risk.

#### **4. POST DECISION IMPLEMENTATION**

- 4.1 The delivery of the draft Improvement Action Plan will continue to be overseen by the Family Service's Social Work Improvement Board, chaired by Independent Chair Dave Hill, with regular updates to the Strategic Commissioning Board, CELS and Corporate Parenting Advisory Panel.
- 4.2 The draft Care Leaver's Finance Policy, following approval, will be implemented within Family Services. A young people friendly version of the Finance Policy will be designed and published for Care Leavers by the end of October 2017.
- 4.3 The delivery of the draft Care Leaver's Finance Policy will to be overseen by the Head of Service for Corporate Parenting and Onwards and Upwards Team Manager. Communication promoting the policy will be cascaded via the Family Services newsletter and Heads of Service and Team Managers will share information about the updated policy with their teams. The policy will be updated annually, ahead of the upcoming financial year, with input from key stakeholders such as Finance, Strategy and Insight, Children in Care and Education teams.
- 4.4 The Joint Housing protocol will be overseen by the Operational Director for Early Help, Children in Need of Help and Protection. Communication regarding the approved protocol will be disseminated to key services and agencies by the Operational Director, Heads of Service and Team Managers in Family Services, Housing Service Manager at Barnet Homes and other key stakeholders within the borough, such as commissioned services.
- 4.5 To ensure that young people are able to access information regarding their rights and entitlements when presenting as homeless, the Voice of The Child Team delivered a series of co-production sessions with service users residing at the commissioned service within the Borough, Centrepont. The purpose of these sessions was to establish what information young people would have like included in leaflets, to inform and support them when they presented as homeless.
- 4.6 A draft leaflet has been created and will be signed off by the Operational Director for Early Help, Children in Need of Help and Protection in September 2017. The leaflets will be sent to services within the borough where young people may present when in need, such as Barnet House and Woodhouse Road, once the draft protocol has been agreed.

- 4.7 A Private Fostering awareness raising campaign, with refreshed leaflets and posters, will be launched in September 2017. The campaign will be led by the Children in Care Service and will focus on promotion within Family Services and Community settings.

## **5. IMPLICATIONS OF DECISION**

### **Corporate Priorities and Performance**

- 5.1 The implementation of the draft Care Leaver's Finance Policy and Joint Housing Protocol and finalising of Private Fostering marketing materials are key mechanisms through which Family Services will deliver the Family Friendly Barnet vision.
- 5.2 Both support the following Council corporate priorities as expressed through the Corporate Plan for 2015-20, which sets out the vision and strategy for the next five years based on the core principles of fairness, responsibility and opportunity, to make sure Barnet is a place;
- Of opportunity, where people can further their quality of life
  - Where people are helped to help themselves, recognising that prevention is better than cure
- 5.3 Family Services are working with partners to make Barnet the most family friendly borough to ensure a great start in life for every child and prepare young people well for adulthood. Building resilience through purposeful social work practice, enabled by appropriate tools and a high quality workforce so that families are able to help themselves and prevent problems from escalating.

### **Resources (Finance & Value for Money, Procurement, Staffing, IT, Property, Sustainability)**

- 5.4 In order to meet the housing needs of homeless 16 and 17 year olds, £100,000 was secured through Policy and Resources Committee in June 2017, to pay for supported accommodation and packages for this cohort of young people living in the community. This investment has been added to the base budget in Family Services, and will be reviewed annually as part of the Joint Housing Protocol's refresh.
- 5.5 Policy and Resource Committee agreed to invest an additional £5.7m in Family Services, which has been allocated to ensure improvements are made which result in better outcomes for children, young people and families. Further information can be found in paragraph 1.20.
- 5.6 There was no additional resource provided though Policy and Resource Committee for the new Fostering campaign, however, an increase in in-house foster carers should lead to savings in the Family Services Placements budget, where there is currently a forecasted pressure and the need to meet a £1.9million savings target by 2020. Any additional investment required to deliver the Fostering Campaign will be

taken from the Transformation Budget for Family Services. This will be overseen by the Operational Director for Corporate Parenting, Transitions and Safeguarding.

- 5.7 Financial modelling of the Onwards and Upwards budget was undertaken in August 2017, and provided clarity which will enable consistency of cost centre control and parity in Care Leaver allowances to be delivered.
- 5.8 The service is forecasted to remain in budget, and spend will be kept under regular review against the baseline provided below:

<b>Cost description</b>	<b>Sum of 2017/18 Amount (£)</b>
Accommodation	1,384,100
Birthday Allowance	10,900
Clothing Allowance	13,300
Festival Allowance	5,500
Miscellaneous	9,700
Personal Needs	400
Setting Up Home Allowance	29,900
Start up	200
Subsistence	129,200
Support / outreach	25,000
Travel	13,600
University Bursary	6,200
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>£1,628,000</b>

## **Social Value**

- 5.9 The Public Services (Social Value) Act 2013 requires people who commission public services to think about how they can also secure wider social, economic and environmental benefits. Before commencing a procurement process, commissioners should think about whether the services they are going to buy, or the way they are going to buy them, could secure these benefits for their area or stakeholders.

## **Legal and Constitutional References**

- 5.10 Local Authorities have specific duties in respect of children under various legislation including the Children Act 1989 and Children Act 2004. They have a general duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in need in their area and, provided that this is consistent with the child's safety and welfare, to promote the upbringing of such children by their families by providing services appropriate to the child's needs. They also have a duty to promote the upbringing of such children by their families, by providing services appropriate to the child's needs, provided this is consistent with

the child's safety and welfare. They should do this in partnership with parents, in a way that is sensitive to the child's race, religion, culture and language and that, where practicable, takes account of the child's wishes and feelings. Schedule 8 of the Children Act 1989 places a duty on Local Authorities to promote public awareness in their area of Private Fostering notification requirements.

- 5.11 The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 outlines specific duties of Local Authorities to ensure provision about children and young people who are being, or have been, looked after by a local authority; to replace section 24 of the Children Act 1989. Local Authorities have a general duty to support Care Leavers until the age of 21, or 24 in some instances, by pathway planning, assessing and meeting needs, providing financial support and a Personal Advisor, ensuring accommodation (including for Higher Education) and maintaining contact and support. The support provided should be identified and provided in conjunction with the young person, and recorded in a Pathway Plan. The Act outlines that as most 16 and 17 year olds cannot claim benefits, the Local Authority has a duty to provide financial support to these young people.
- 5.12 Part 8 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 provides the statutory framework for Ofsted inspections. Section 136 and 137 provide the power for Ofsted to inspect on behalf of the Secretary of State and requires the Chief Inspector to produce a report following such an inspection. Following receipt of the report, the local authority must prepare a written statement of (1) action which they propose to take in light of the report and (2) the period within which they propose to take that action.
- 5.13 Responsibility for Functions, Annex A, in the council's constitution states that the Children, Education, Libraries and Safeguarding Committee has the responsibility for powers, duties and functions relating to Children's Services. In addition to this, the committee has responsibility for overseeing the support for young people in care and enhancing the council's corporate parenting role.

## **Risk Management**

- 5.14 The work of Family Services to support Care Leavers entails the management of high levels of risk. Inadequate financial support or poor pathway planning for a young person could lead to a safeguarding incident or their needs not being met, resulting in significant harm. Good quality leaving care services reduce the likelihood of young people being unprepared for independence and unable to cope with life's challenges; instead they improve lives and transitions to adulthood. The implementation of the draft Financial Policy for Care Leavers based on Barnet's Care Leaver and Corporate Parent Strategies and Ofsted's inspection findings and recommendations reduce this risk, and accelerate progress towards a good quality leaving care service.
- 5.15 The nature of services provided to children and families by Family Services includes the management of significant levels of risk. A lack of awareness regarding fostering arrangements or poor decision-making around a child that is in need could lead to a significant children's safeguarding incident resulting in significant harm. Good quality early intervention and social care services, including public awareness promotion of

Private Fostering requirements, reduce the likelihood of children suffering harm and increase the likelihood of children developing into successful adults and achieving and succeeding. The implementation of the Joint Housing Protocol and launch of the Private Fostering marketing campaign based on internal investigations and Ofsted inspection findings and recommendations reduce this risk and drive forward improvements towards good quality services.

## **Equalities and Diversity**

- 5.16 The 2010 Equality Act outlines the provisions of the Public Sector Equalities Duty which requires Public Bodies **to have due regard** to the need to:
- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010
  - advance equality of opportunity between people from different groups
  - foster good relations between people from different groups
- 5.17 The broad purpose of this duty is to integrate considerations of equality into day business and keep them under review in decision making, the design of policies and the delivery of services
- 5.18 Equalities and diversity considerations are a key element of social work practice. It is imperative that help and protection services for children and young are sensitive and responsive to age, disability, ethnicity, faith or belief, gender, gender, identity, language, race and sexual orientation. Barnet has a diverse population of children and young people. 25% of the borough's population is aged under 19 years old. Of all children and young people in this age group, 14% are aged 16 – 17 years old. Despite the small population, 36% of our children in care are 16 -17 years old, the majority of whom have come into care due to family breakdown.
- 5.19 The average age at which children come into care in Barnet has increased over the past few years, to average age being 16 years old over the past year. There has been an increase in the numbers of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) and Former UASC in Barnet's care, currently making up 35% of Care Leavers. With this change in demographic of the Care Leaver population, there is an increased need for financial support for Care Leavers who often have higher levels of need due to coming into care during their teenage years, and for some, having no recourse to public funds.
- 5.20 The current Financial Policy for Care Leavers causes disparity in the provision of support to young people, especially 16 and 17 years olds in semi-independent accommodation; the revised policy serves to deliver fairness and equality to all of Barnet's Care Leavers and ensures their individual circumstances are acknowledged and appropriately supported.
- 5.21 To ensure equality of opportunity for all Care Leavers, further assessment of allowances payable to Care Leavers will be undertaken in the coming months in response to points raised by stakeholders regarding draft policy. Feedback regarding

disparities in pocket money and savings for Care Leavers in residential and foster care compared to those in semi-independent provision was received and has been shared with the Operational Director for Corporate Parenting, Safeguarding and 0 – 25 for consideration.

- 5.22 To ensure fairness and equality for 16 and 17 year old young people that present as homeless, the draft Joint Homeless Protocol will be amended by the end of October 2017 to include specific sections on UASC, pregnant and teenage parents and children arriving out of area. To confirm that the protocol reflects best practice, further development will be overseen by the Strategic Director for children and young people who will feedback to a future CELS committee.

## **Consultation and Engagement**

- 5.23 Consultation and engagement with children and young people is central to social work practice and service improvement. Barnet has a range of mechanisms to engage and consult with children, young and their families. This includes Pathway Plan meetings, youth forums such as Barnet Youth Board and Youth Assembly; young commissioners to co-design services and Children in Care Council to improve the support children in care receive.
- 5.24 The draft Finance Policy includes information on how children and young people can share feedback, including if they wish to complain. The Policy reinforces that young people will not be penalised should they wish to complain, and provides links and contact details to services that can support a young person that wishes to do so, such as the advocacy service and complaints team. Such feedback will help monitor the impact of the Finance Policy in achieving positive outcomes for Barnet's Care Leavers. There was also engagement, consultation and communication with key stakeholders as part of the development of the draft Finance Policy, including the Finance Team, Virtual School, Children in Care Team, Fostering service and Legal Team to ensure the Policy is fit for purpose and fair for Care Leavers. The draft Finance Policy will need to be noted by all Family Services teams that support Care Leavers, to ensure entitlements and allowances are delivered in a consistent way.
- 5.25 The Joint Housing Protocol for Homeless 16 and 17 year olds was developed in partnership with Housing Options, Children's Social Care, Youth Services and Early Help Services. Young people were also met and their views noted and incorporated within the new protocol, which sets out Barnet's commitment, and responsibility, to ensure all young people receive a good or better service when they ask for our help.

## **Insight**

- 5.26 A large amount of insight was collected and used to develop the Care Leaver Finance Policy and Joint Housing Protocol for Homeless 16 and 17 year olds. This data has been used to develop the documents, and work has been undertaken to ensure Barnet's offer aligns with the [Children and Young People Plan 2016-2020](#), [Care Leavers' Strategy 2017-2020](#) and [Corporate Parenting Pledge 2017](#), as well as entitlements and allowances of other Children's Services.

5.27 Insight data will continue to be regularly collected and used in monitoring the progress and impact of the Ofsted Improvement Action Plan and shaping ongoing improvement activity.

## **6. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

6.1 Family Services Improvement Action Plan

<http://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=692&MId=8736&Ver=4>

6.2 Item 7, Ofsted Report and Action Plan, Children Education, Libraries & Safeguarding Committee, 18 July 2017

[http://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s40996/Ofsted%20Committee%20Report\\_FINAL.pdf](http://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s40996/Ofsted%20Committee%20Report_FINAL.pdf)