

	<p style="text-align: center;">CHILDREN, EDUCATION, LIBRARIES & SAFEGUARDING COMMITTEE</p> <p style="text-align: center;">7 March 2018</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Title</p>	<p>Update report on progress of Barnet Children's Services Improvement Action Plan</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Report of</p>	<p>Chairman of the Committee, Councillor Reuben Thompstone</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Wards</p>	<p>All</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Status</p>	<p>Public</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Urgent</p>	<p>No</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Key</p>	<p>No</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Enclosures</p>	<p>Appendix 1: Ofsted Monitoring visit letter Appendix 2: Improvement plan data dashboard (to follow)</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Officer Contact Details</p>	<p>Chris Munday Strategic Director for Children and Young People Chris.Munday@barnet.gov.uk</p>

Summary
<p>Children's services in Barnet were judged by Ofsted to be inadequate when Ofsted undertook a Single Inspection Framework (SIF) during April and May 2017. The Council fully accepted the findings of the report and is working collectively with the partnership to drive the improvements needed to transform social care services for children, young people and their families from inadequate to good rapidly. In response to the recommendations and areas for improvement identified by Ofsted, the Barnet Children Services Improvement Action Plan was developed and a final version presented to Committee in November 2017.</p> <p>In January 2018, Ofsted conducted the second monitoring visit of Children's Services, which focussed on the 'front door' arrangements in the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH), the Duty & Assessment Teams and Intervention and Planning Teams. The update on Barnet Children's Services Improvement Action Plan includes reference to this monitoring visit. The Monitoring Visit feedback letter has been included in Appendix 1.</p> <p>This report provides an update on progress of Barnet Children's Services Improvement Action Plan to ensure scrutiny by elected members in improving the effectiveness of the local authority in protecting and caring for children and young people as a corporate parent. This is the fourth update report to be received by Committee and the reporting period for progress is January and February 2018. The update on progress is structured according to the seven improvement themes in the</p>

action plan, and the improvement plan data dashboard has been included in Appendix 2.

Recommendations
1. That the Committee note the progress of the Barnet Children's Services Improvement Action Plan as set out in paragraphs 1.4 to 1.50.
2. That the Committee note details of Ofsted's monitoring visit set out in paragraphs 1.11 to 1.19 and the monitoring visit feedback letter received from Ofsted attached in Appendix 1.
3. That the Committee note and scrutinise the performance information provided in paragraphs 1.51 to 1.61 and Barnet Children's Services Improvement Plan Data Dashboard attached in Appendix 2.

- 1.1 Children's services in Barnet were judged by Ofsted to be inadequate when Ofsted undertook a Single Inspection Framework (SIF) of these services in April and May 2017.
- 1.2 The Council fully accepted the findings of the report and is working collectively with the partnership to drive the improvements needed to transform social care services for children, young people and their families from inadequate to good rapidly.
- 1.3 To enhance scrutiny by elected members to support and challenge this continuous improvement, it was agreed at Children, Education, Libraries and Safeguarding (CELS) Committee in July that an update on the progress of implementing improvements will be a standing item on committee agendas. This is to ensure the local authority is effective in protecting children in need and caring for children and young people as a corporate parent.

Barnet Children's Services Improvement Action Plan

- 1.4 In July 2017 CELS Committee was presented with the recommendations and areas for improvement highlighted by Ofsted along with a draft Improvement Action Plan developed in response to these, which Committee approved for consultation. Committee also delegated authorisation to complete and submit the plan to the Strategic Director for Children and Young People in consultation with the Chief Executive and Lead Member.
- 1.5 The action plan was finalised as *Barnet Children's Services Improvement Action Plan* and submitted to Ofsted and the Department for Education. The Strategic Director received confirmation from Ofsted on 31 October that *"the plan satisfactorily reflects the recommendations and priorities of the inspection report"*.
- 1.6 The action plan sets out the improvement journey and gives focus to transform services, especially social care, from inadequate to good rapidly. The action plan is in line with the three core strategic objectives that cut across all our plans for children, young people and families and underpin the systemic and cultural change needed to drive improvement within the borough:

- Empowering and equipping our workforce to understand the importance and meaning of purposeful social work assessments and interventions with families
- Ensuring our involvement with the most vulnerable children in the borough positively impacts on their outcomes
- 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 curious and focused

1.7 The action plan has two elements of improvement planning which are complementary. The first being the turnaround priority that has a forensic focus on social work practice driving our capacity and capability to transform at pace and the second being a series of improvement themes:

1. Turnaround priority: To drive sustainable Practice Improvement at pace
- Improvement themes*
2. Governance Leadership, and Partnership
3. Embedding Practice Leadership
4. Right interventions, right time (Thresholds)
5. Improving Assessment for children
6. Improving Planning for children
7. Effective Communications and Engagement to drive culture change that will improve children's lives.

Update on progress since the last report:

1.8 This is the fourth update report to be received by Committee and the reporting period for progress is January and February 2018.

1.9 The update on progress is structured according to the seven improvement themes in the action plan. Under each improvement theme there is a description of the theme and an update on key activities since the previous update report. There is a detailed update on the turnaround priority to drive sustainable practice improvement at pace.

1. Turnaround priority: To drive sustainable Practice Improvement at pace

1.10 This theme is driving the quality of social work practice to turn around at pace to ensure children's outcomes are improved.

1.11 Ofsted monitoring visit and report

Ofsted undertook a Monitoring Visit on 30 and 31 January 2018. This was the second monitoring visit since Barnet Children's Services were judged inadequate in July 2017. The first visit took place on 14 and 15 November 2017 and was reported to Committee on 16 January 2018.

The monitoring visit focussed on the 'front door' arrangements in the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH), the Duty & Assessment Teams and Intervention and Planning Teams, including:

- The effectiveness of the MASH in responding to concerns for children; the application of thresholds for statutory intervention and early help;
- The quality and effectiveness of strategy discussions and section 47 enquiries leading to Initial child protection conferences (ICPC's);
- The quality and timeliness of assessments leading to child protection and child in need work and plans;
- The quality and effectiveness of practice for children subject to children in need and child protection plans;
- The quality and timeliness of management oversight and decision making of case work including compliance with statutory guidance.

1.12 Inspectors noted that there was continued progress and consolidation of recent improvements seen in the first monitoring visit and reported that senior leaders and managers are appropriately focussed on embedding the cultural change required to improve and embed good social work practice. Inspectors found:

- Strengthened practice within the multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH);
- More consistent approach to the application of thresholds, information sharing and improvements to the timeliness of decision making;
- More timely identification of risk and appropriate immediate actions to protect children in MASH and DATs.

1.13 Inspectors noted staff morale was good, and that staff stated that they enjoyed working in Barnet. It was recognised that workforce development activities are relevant and helpful and social workers have manageable caseloads which are better supported through permanent recruitment of managers and staff. The Quality Assurance process was noted to have been further strengthened and assisting focus on areas for improvement.

1.14 Ofsted found that strategy discussions and section 47 child protection enquiries were timely although the quality of strategy discussions remains variable as social workers are not consistently inviting health professionals to participate; there is further work to do to improve this area of practice. However, s47 enquiries demonstrated application of consistent thresholds which are appropriate to risk. Ofsted noted that children were being seen quickly and effective safety plans were being made. Decision making at Initial Child Protection Conferences was also seen to be appropriate.

1.15 Inspectors found variable standards of case recording, although acknowledged staff knew children and families well. The quality of assessment is still mostly weak as they do not yet effectively analyse relationships, parental capacity or risk. It was also found that the diversity of children and families is not yet considered fully and the views of children and family members are not always clearly represented.

- 1.16 There is more work to do to improve child in need planning and achieve consistency in child protection planning to ensure plans are purposeful and achievable. There was some evidence of drift, delay and ineffective decision making for children, particularly where parents were failing to engage in Public Law Outline, pre-proceedings processes.
- 1.17 Supervision was not consistently found to be regular, evident on children's records or being used to provide challenge, reflection and accountability to address practice shortfalls.
- 1.18 The pace of change within Barnet has remained consistent and focussed, with inspectors noting that it is beginning to raise practice standards. The process of changing the culture of acceptable practice is continuing, and as per the last monitoring visit, remains a significant challenge. Overall, social work practice remains inadequate in some areas considered during the visit; however, several improvements were seen. The inspector's letter received following this monitoring visit can be found in Appendix 1.
- 1.19 The next monitoring visit will take place on 25 and 26 April 2018 focussing on vulnerable adolescents (child sexual and criminal exploitation and missing children).

2. Governance Leadership, and Partnership

- 1.20 This theme focuses on strengthening systems leadership for children with sufficient capacity and capability at all levels and governance arrangements that prioritise children and add value to improvements. The theme also seeks to ensure effective corporate support is in place which understands the role of social workers and reflects a collective ambition for children in the borough.
- 1.21 Recruitment was highlighted as a challenge in the Ofsted update report presented at CELS in November 2017. Another round of advertising began in January 2018. Despite the challenges social worker recruitment presents in London and nationally, we have been successful in recruiting four permanent employees in January 2018 and we are in discussions with 6 agency social workers to apply for permanent roles; assessment and recruitment commences first week of March 2018. We continue business as usual advertising and headhunting through recruitment agencies.
- 1.22 Training is underway for Members; a Safeguarding training session was delivered in early February 2018 and Corporate Parenting responsibilities training in January 2018 as outlined in 1.23. An induction for new elected Members is being developed and will be implemented after the local election on 3 May 2018, which will include a wider review of governance. For now, ensuring reporting is self-critical and focussed is managed via Children's Service's Improvement Board and CELs through improved reporting.

- 1.23 The follow up Corporate Parenting Responsibilities training for members was delivered in January 2018. The condensed training introduced the statutory responsibilities of members in their role as Corporate Parents to members who were unable to attend the first session delivered in December 2017. The training aimed to provide members with a high-level understanding of how they can engage the voice of Barnet's children and young people in their work and explore the methods by which they can hold services to account. A total of 19 members attended the training, and verbal feedback received after the event indicated that members found it to be useful and reflective of its aims. In total, 51 members attended the training on Corporate Parenting Responsibilities.

Care Quality Commission (CQC) inspection

- 1.24 The CQC is the independent regulator of health and social care services in England. Their role is to make sure that health and social care services provide people with safe, effective, compassionate and high-quality care, and encourage them to make improvements.
- 1.25 On 15 February 2018, Barnet Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) received notification of review of services for looked after children and safeguarding commencing 19 February and ending on 23 February. The reviews will be conducted under section 48 of the Health and Social Care Act 2008 and will focus on the quality of health services for looked after children, and the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements for all children in the area.
- 1.26 The lines of enquiry for the inspection are:
- The experiences and views of children and their families.
 - The quality and effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements in health including:
 - Assessing need and providing early help.
 - Identifying and supporting children in need.
 - The quality and impact of child protection arrangements.
 - The quality of health services and outcomes for children who are looked after and care leavers.
 - Health leadership and assurance of local safeguarding and looked after children arrangements including:
 - Leadership and management.
 - Governance.
 - Training and supervision.

- 1.27 Following the inspection, the CQC will write a report about their key findings across the local health economy, and if necessary, make recommendations for improvement.

3. Embedding Practice Leadership

- 1.28 This improvement theme seeks to strengthen practice leadership through effective management oversight and increased capacity.

- 1.29 Support for Team Managers is available through Practice Development Workers, who work alongside the Social Worker and Team Manager in drawing up agreements for support plans. Where there remains a performance issue with these staff, a framework for feeding this work into a more formal process of capability management is being developed.
- 1.30 Reporting is available for case supervision frequency; however, this needs to be embedded into the reporting framework and made available regularly at worker level. Improvements have been identified in the HR Core system that will enable reporting on professional supervision. A 2-day supervision training has been provided to all social work managers and further training is available via the teaching partnership with Middlesex University. Improving and recording case supervision is a high priority for action across the service.
- 1.31 The *Child's Journey* Panel has been established by the Head of Service for Corporate Parenting and Permanence. This Forum will provide practice leadership on care planning for children in care to ensure no delay or drift in permanency planning.
- 1.32 There is currently a staff consultation underway within Family Services regarding new Practice Standards. This consultation will close on Friday 23 February 2018; responses will be discussed by the Senior Management Team in early March 2018 and we will seek to implement it by 30 March 2018.

4. Right interventions, right time (Thresholds)

- 1.33 This theme is focused on developing an effective MASH and proportionate, effective and timely decision making across the whole social care system.
- 1.34 The partnership threshold document *Continuum of health and support* has now been signed off, and a schedule of training will be taking place over the next month for partners.
- 1.35 Headteachers and General Practitioners (GPs) have been visiting the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH), and the new Children's Services School Liaison Officer is working with managers in educating Headteachers about how the MASH functions and in making appropriate referrals. Heads of Service from the MASH and Corporate Parenting, along with the Child Sexual Exploitation and Missing Lead, have delivered training to the Police and will be offering more sessions to uniformed officers over the coming months. GPs have received training from the MASH team.

5. Improving Assessment for children

- 1.36 This theme focuses on strengthening risk assessments and ensuring child focussed assessments to ensure that plans are robust and focused on timely improvements for children and families.
- 1.37 Additional capacity in Duty and Assessment is allowing the 'double lock' of assessments, which is feeding into the Quality Assurance framework, targeting Social Workers who would benefit from working with a Practice Development Worker.

- 1.38 Key areas for development in assessment were identified through internal audit activity and echoed by Ofsted during the November 2017 and January 2018 monitoring visit. Recent audit analysis depicts an improvement in positive engagement with partner agencies, greater consideration of diversity in planning and increased professional curiosity; the recent round of audits found no inadequate audits in the Duty and Assessment Teams. This remains a focus for improvement activity.

6. Improving Planning for children

- 1.39 This improvement theme seeks to ensure planning is child centred and that these plans achieve the best outcomes.
- 1.40 The Head of Service for Corporate Parenting and Permanence now chairs a fortnightly Care Planning Forum meeting where cohorts of children, include those subject to Child Protection Plans, are tracked and potential permanence options are identified to begin parallel planning. Where necessary, the meeting also considers children that have been in care for more than two years or are exiting care via Private Law Orders.
- 1.41 There is a weekly permanency planning meeting that takes place to consider matching for children in care aged 13 years old and above and all new pre-admissions to care, to ensure that the right support is in place for children and young people. Care Plans in proceedings and pre-proceedings are further tracked and discussed with Barnet's legal team, Social Workers and Team managers to ensure the timeliness of Child Permanency Reports and viability assessments of extended family members to consider more detailed requirements for children coming into care.
- 1.42 The Foster Carer Recruitment and Assessment team will be promoting the current *#MoreToGive* recruitment campaign at the council's International Women's Day celebration and Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy launch on 8 March 2018. The team will be speaking to visitors about foster care and taking expressions of interest.
- 1.43 Monthly meetings of the multi-agency Corporate Parenting Officers Group (CPOG) review and track the priorities set out to ensure the joint planning for children in care and care leavers to improve their outcomes.
- 1.44 The Corporate Parenting Pledge theme of *Staying Safe* was the focus of the CPOG in January 2018. This theme's outcomes relate to practitioner's ability to build on strengths of young people and manage risk, care leaver's access to services and a joined-up approach to children in care with multiple risk factors. Most of actions are currently BARG rated as amber, which indicates that there are plans in place to deliver, although this may fall outside of timescales. Updates from this reporting period include:
- Increased use of Signs of safety planning tool through group supervision and individual work in Onwards and Upwards, to enhance the identification and response to risks experienced by care leavers;

- Practice Development Worker working with the Placements Team around the use of case recording and case notes to ensure appropriate information sharing relating to risk within placements;
- Further development of the new #BOP website, in conjunction with care leavers. The website will include links to services such as health and police, as well as the promotion of key information such as staying put (where a young person continues to live with their former foster carer beyond the age of 18), to enable service and information access in ways and at times convenient to children in care and care leavers.

1.45 Additional work progress from CPOG during this period includes:

- A briefing paper on council tax reduction for Barnet care leavers was finalised and presented to Corporate Parenting Advisory Panel on 3 February 2018. This is part of the work to improve outcomes for care leavers and ensure they are adequately prepared for independent living.
- The proposal was approved at Policy & Resources Committee on 13 February 2018 to authorise the Deputy Chief Executive to consult on a policy for offering council tax relief to care leavers on the basis of guaranteed relief for their first two years of independent living, and a presumption in favour of granting relief should it be required after that up to age 25; and instruct the Deputy Chief Executive to bring the policy to a future meeting of the committee for approval.

1.46 Young people have attended CPOG in December and will attend quarterly to inform planning.

1.47 The quality of planning for Children subject to Child in Need and Child Protection Plans remains a key area of focus. Improvements in this area are progressing through several work streams. These include, the co-location of Practice Development Workers in the Duty & Assessment and Intervention & Planning Teams who are supporting the completion of comprehensive and analytical assessments that identify need and risk and from which clear Plans can be developed.

1.48 The establishment of a Child in Need Panel chaired by the Head(s) of Service for Duty & Assessment and Intervention & Planning Teams in which Care Plans are reviewed to ensure that they are driving timely change in children's circumstances. The Panel also ensures that children who no longer need statutory interventions are swiftly progressed back to early help systems.

- 1.49 A programme of activities, in collaboration with Essex County Council, has been developed to strengthen Child Protection Conferences and Looked After Children Reviews. The improvement work aims to ensure that children's Plans are developed in accordance with identified need with clear and measurable outcomes and to ensure that children and families are fully engaged plans in planning and review processes. Child Protection Conference Chairs and Independent Reviewing Officers observed Conferences in Essex County Council during December and January and attended a training day with Essex. There is a forward plan for Essex to observe 8 'mock' multi-agency Child Protection Conferences during February and March to embed learning and support the roll out of a new model of Conferencing in April 2018.
- 1.50 The next monitoring visit will take place on 25 & 26 April 2018 and will focus on vulnerable adolescents which includes children where Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE), missing episodes, criminal involvement or exploitation is present as a risk or vulnerability factor. 233 children and young people have been identified as 'in scope' for this inspection and review and audit of this work is now underway.

7. Effective Communications and Engagement to drive culture change that will improve children's lives

- 1.51 This improvement theme will develop connection via impactful two-way communication and engagement from the top to the bottom of the children's service and strong cross agency engagement and communication from top to bottom. The improvement journey needs to be owned by all. Ofsted reflect in the report from their monitoring visit that the pace of change has been 'consistent and focussed, and has started to raise practice standards' while noting that there are still significant challenges in making the cultural changes required to ensure that children and young people in Barnet are safeguarded effectively. This remains an area of active focus.

Quantitative performance data

- 1.52 Quantitative performance data is based on activity in January 2018. Reporting is of indicators that are subject to additional focus through the Improvement Plan, with information about what needs to change and what is being done about it, as well as what is working well. The full Barnet Children's Services Improvement Plan data dashboard for this reporting period has been included in Appendix 2.

What are the key areas of focus

- 1.53 The number of open Common Assessment Frameworks (CAFs) is lower in comparison to this time last year, although there has been a slight increase in the last month the number of open CAF's is 630, compared with 888 at the same period last year; representing a reduction of 258 over the year. The number of CAFs closed in January was also low at 83, a decrease of 16 on the same period last year. The percentage of CAFs open for more than 12 months has reduced since November and is currently at 6.5% compared to 13% in November. 41% of closed CAFs were due to needs being met, and 16.9% being referred to Children's Social Care.

- 1.54 The percentage of assessments completed within 45 working days has decreased slightly since the last reporting period, with 52.5% being completed within time, 37.5% away from the target of 90%. There has been a significant increase in the number of assessments being completed, and is almost 200 more than the number completed in the previous month (December 2017 = 331 and January 2018 = 533). This correlates with an increase in the rate of contacts to referral which is currently at 28.1% compared to the previous month of 25.4%. Since April 2017 93% of referrals lead to assessment. During this period (January 2018) there was an increase in the number of assessments resulting in No Further Action, 56%, although 15% in Section 17 provision and 11% were stepped-down to the Early Help System.
- 1.55 16% of section 47 enquiries progressed to an Initial Child Protection Conference (ICPC) during this period, the number of CiN plans currently open is at 682, a reduction on the previous month but significantly higher than the same period last year when the number of open Child in Need (CiN) Plans was 255, and is at its highest since June 2016 when it was 340. Although the number of open CiN plans has been steadily increasing since the beginning of this year, January was the first month where the number of plans open decreased. The number of new CiN plans during the month was double that of the previous month (150 in January compared to 69 the previous month). The number of plans closed during this period was 116, compared to 20 in December.
- 1.56 The percentage of CiN visits completed within 4 weeks has shown a steady decrease since November 2017 when it peaked at 68.7%, the number of visits within 4-weeks is now at 42.2%, which is the lowest it's been since May 2016. Visits reporting to be out of timescale have been sampled and continue to evidence that most children have been seen in timescale but social workers have not recorded these as 'visits' on the child's record. A CiN visit tracker has been developed and monitors all overdue, pending and future visits detailing children, social workers and team managers. This has enabled increased management oversight for planning and prompting social workers to plan visits in their calendar, re-arrange cancelled and failed visits and record visits that have been undertaken.
- 1.57 The number of children made subject to a Child Protection (CP) Plan has been decreasing over the last three-months, and is lower than the same period last year (150 versus 244 at the same point last year). 184 children have been made subject to a CP Plan between April 2017 to January 2018 compared to 164 in the same period last year. (the majority of these (61%) are under 10-years old and 21% of these are under 1 year's old).

What is working well

- 1.58 Visits to children subject to Child Protection (CP) Plans within 10-days continue showing an improvement and are currently reported at 77.2%, this has been on a steady increase since August 2017. There are currently 53 children under 5 on a CP Plan, and 43 (77%) of these had been seen within 10 days. 50 children under 5 had been seen within 4 weeks (94.3%).

- 1.59 As with the CiN visits that are reporting to be out of timescale, sampling has been undertaken and continue to evidence that the large majority of children have been seen in timescale but social workers have not recorded these as 'visits' on the child's record. Further, the volume of children in sibling groups affects the overall picture. A CP visit tracker has been developed and monitors all overdue, pending and future visits detailing children, social workers and team managers. This enables increased management oversight and interrogation of the data in addition to planning activities to prompt social workers to plan visits in their calendar, re-arrange cancelled and failed visits and record visits that have been undertaken.
- 1.60 The percentage of Children in Care (CiC) visited within timescale has decreased slightly to 87.3%. Although there was a dip in this indicator in September 2017 the percentage of visits in timescale has been on an upward trend since then. This coincides with a greater focus on practice and child centred work along with the implementation of the daily visit tracker to enable team managers to monitor activity in this area. As with the other visit information (CiN and CP) recording visits on the child's file in a timely way remains an area for improvement and the team managers are now able to access information from the visit tracker on their individual staff member's performance which informs supervision and performance management.
- 1.61 Figures for participation in Looked After Child (LAC) reviews continue to be above the target of 95% (97.4%) and continues to increase since April 2017. This indicator has remained above the target of 90% over the last two-years.

2. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 Members are asked to note progress 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.

3. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND NOT RECOMMENDED

- 3.1 The continued monitoring of progress and impact of Barnet Children's Services 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.

4. POST DECISION IMPLEMENTATION

- 4.1 As the primary driver of improvement, the Children's Service Improvement Board will oversee the delivery of the action plan and is ultimately responsible for its delivery. The Children's Services Improvement Board is independently chaired by the lead improvement partner (Essex County Council Executive Director) and will provide scrutiny and challenge as well as measure impact.

- 4.2 Operationally the Improvement Plan is driven and directed by the Operational Improvement Group chaired by the Strategic Director of Children's Services with senior representatives from key partner agencies. The group will oversee the day to day transformation of services and ensure effective communication and engagement with staff, children, young people and their families.
- 4.3 Reports on the progress of the action plan will be received by Children, Education, Libraries and Safeguarding Committee, Health and Well-Being Board and Barnet Safeguarding Children's Board.

5. IMPLICATIONS OF DECISION

5.1 Corporate Priorities and Performance

- The implementation of Barnet Children's Services Improvement Action Plan is a key mechanism through which Barnet Council and its partners will deliver the Family Friendly Barnet vision to be the most family friendly borough in London by 2020.
- This supports the following Council's 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
- The Barnet Children's Services Improvement Action Plan looks to improve children's participation to ensure that all decisions and planning that affects them is influenced by their wishes and feelings. The action plan also includes actions to strengthen how the views and experiences of children, young people and their families influence service design. This feedback will also help monitor the impact of improvement activity.

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

- Policy and Resources Committee of June 2017 agreed to invest an additional £5.7m in Family Services, some of which has been invested to improve practice to ensure improvements are made which result in better outcomes for children, young people and families. The detailed breakdown of this additional £5.7 million is provided in item 7, CELS agenda 18 September 2017.

- MTFS savings for 2018 - 2020 have been reviewed in light of the Family Services improvement journey to consider achievability. The original target for CELS Committee for 2018/19 – 2019/20 was £8.303m, this has been fully reviewed and revised to £5.590m in the 2018/19 CELS Business Planning Report. The report on the Children, Young People and Family Hubs – Outline Business Case, a CELS agenda item for 16 January 2018, outlines the initial proposals and timeline for achieving £2.727m within this target. All the savings proposals, including the additional items totalling £2.863m over and above the Family Hub proposal, can be found in the CELS Business Planning Report 2018/2019 which is provided in item 11, CELS agenda 15 November 2017.
- The ongoing improvement will continue to place pressure on existing resources; the additional directed requirement for two assistant heads of service, 3 Duty assessment Team managers and 8 Duty assessment Team social workers has resulted in an additional £0.390 million pressure in the current financial year, and was reflected in the Quarter 3 monitoring report.

5.3 Social Value

- 5.3.1 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.

5.4 Legal and Constitutional References

- 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, if 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.

- 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. Ofsted will have monitoring visits on a regular basis in local authorities found to be inadequate. A new Ofsted framework will be in place from January 2018, however monitoring visits will still be undertaken for authorities found to be inadequate. In addition to Ofsted's statutory responsibilities, the Secretary of State has the power to direct local authorities. This power of direction includes the power to impose a commissioner, direct the local authority to work with improvement partners and direct alternative delivery options. Subsequent directions can be given if the services are not found to be adequate.
- Article 7 of the council's constitution states that the Children, Education, Libraries and Safeguarding Committee has the responsibility for all matters relating to children, schools, education and libraries. 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.

5.5 Risk Management

- 5.5.1 The nature of services provided to children and families by Family Services manage significant levels of risk. An inappropriate response or poor decision-making around a case could lead to a significant children's safeguarding incident resulting in significant harm. Good quality early intervention and social care services 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 Barnet Children's Services Improvement Action Plan based on inspection findings and recommendations reduce this risk and drive forward improvements towards good quality services.

5.6 Equalities and Diversity

- 5.6.1 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
- 5.6.2 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

- 5.6.3 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. Children and young people from minority ethnic groups account for 52%, compared with 30% in the country. The percentages of children and young people from minority ethnic groups who receive statutory social care services account for 61% of Children in Need cases, 56% of child protection cases and 60% of all Children in Care. The proportion of children and young people with English as an additional language across primary schools is 44% (the national average is 18%).
- 5.6.4 Social workers practice in relation to inequalities and disadvantage is inconsistent. Recent learning from audits and practice week has highlighted attention to diversity and the cultural context in assessments is an area of practice in need of immediate support from management, the Practice Development Workers and targeted training. The action plan addresses the additional work which needs to be done to ensure that children's diversity and identity needs are met; "5b(ii) Strengthen consideration of diversity in assessment so that assessments thoroughly explore and consider family history including the influence of cultural, linguistic and religious beliefs, norms and expectations".

5.7 Corporate Parenting

- 5.7.1 In July 2016, the Government published their Care Leavers' strategy *Keep on Caring* which outlined that the "... [the government] will introduce a set of corporate parenting principles that will require *all departments* within a local authority to recognise their role as corporate parents, encouraging them to look at the services and support that they provide through the lens of what a reasonable parent would do to support their own children.'
- 5.7.2 To ensure that Barnet acts as a good corporate parent to children in care and care leavers, we:
- have committed to supporting children and young people to achieve their best in childhood, adolescence and adulthood as outlined in the Corporate Parenting Pledge for children in care and care leavers as approved by full council on 29 January 2016. Updates on performance against the pledge are provided to Corporate Parenting Panel annually;
 - provide learning and development for elected members and senior officers to understand their duties and responsibilities to children and care and care leavers;
 - ensure elected members, senior officers and partners can monitor and challenge the performance of the council and its partner agencies regarding outcomes for children in care and care leavers through the appropriate channels such as the Children, Education, Libraries and Safeguarding Committee, Corporate Parenting Advisory Panel and Corporate Parenting Officers' Group.

5.8 Consultation and Engagement

- Consultation and engagement with children and young people is central to social work practice and service improvement across the Safeguarding Partnership. A service user experience strategy has been developed and was launched on 19th February 2018. The strategy ensures that how we work with children and young people is child centred, that we know, understand and can capture the lived experience of children and feed lessons learnt into service improvement. We have nominated Voice of the child champions across partner agencies and within Family Services to promote and lead on the Service User Engagement agenda within their respective areas.
- Our Voice of the Child Strategy Group enables the wider engagement of children and young people in service design and commissioning of provision across the partnership. This includes youth forums such as Barnet Youth Board and Youth Assembly, the SEN forum (to co-design services) and Children in Care Council (to improve the support children in care receive). The team have been working closely with UNICEF UK to deliver the Child Friendly Communities and Cities initiative. This is a global programme that aims to advance children's rights and well-being at the local level. More recently the team have had a change in staff with a newly appointed Voice of the Child Coordinator and Child's Rights Lead. The team are reviewing the current Youth Voice Offer to develop a structured action plan to focus on increasing reach and impact for children and young people in Barnet.
- The Barnet Children's Services Improvement Action Plan looks to improve children's participation to ensure that all decisions and planning that affects them is influenced by their wishes and feelings. The action plan also includes actions to strengthen how the views and experiences of children, young people and their families influence service design. This feedback will also help monitor the impact of improvement activity.
- Improving the quality of services to children is a key partnership and corporate priority and collective work is needed across the partnership and the council to drive improvements. The action plan was completed in consultation with various stakeholders. Staff engagement activities have included monthly staff briefings, team meetings, staff conference. Partners have been engaged through the safeguarding partnership board. Senior leaders are members of the Improvement Board and their continued engagement is assured through core multiagency groups and specific forums such as head teacher's forums.
- There is much more work to do to create the culture needed within services for children, young people and families in Barnet, albeit some positive progress is being made. In January 2018, a second social worker survey was undertaken, based on the social work survey developed by Eileen Munro in 2014.

- This was the first survey completed since the Ofsted Single Inspection Framework in May 2017; the one prior to this was completed in January 2017 and received a good response. The survey aims to hear social worker views on how they see the workplace, their workload and the support they receive to do their jobs well, to inform Family Service's Workforce Development Strategy.
- There was a 6% (n=9) decrease in response rate this year, however, the workforce has changed since the survey was completed last year, at a time when Barnet still Ofsted rated 'Good'.
- Some clear themes emerged from the recent survey; workers outlined "*one thing that would help you implement resilience based practice*", these are:
 - More time (to embed, reflect and develop)
 - More training
 - Better communication between teams and across the service
 - More support from leaders and managers
 - Lower caseloads
 - More efficient processes
 - A simpler, more efficient and less bureaucratic IT system
- Over the next month, the Family Services Engagement Lead will be attending team meetings of each team over the next month to drill down into the responses and trends; this will enable practical steps that can be taken to be identified. Benchmarking with other Local Authorities will also be undertaken concurrently, to provide insight into how Barnet can maximise engagement, and how we perform in relation to other authorities. Following this process, the engagement lead will develop a plan to next steps forward within the service.

5.8 Insight

- 5.8.1 Insight data will continue to be regularly collected and used in monitoring the progress and impact of Barnet's Children's Services Improvement Action Plan and to shape ongoing improvement activity.

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 6.1 Single Inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers and Review of the effectiveness of the Local Safeguarding Children Board report, Ofsted, 7 July 2017
https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/local_authority_reports/barnet/051_Single%20inspection%20of%20LA%20children%27s%20services%20as%20pdf.pdf
- 6.2 Statutory Direction to Barnet Borough Council in relation to children's services under section 497A(4B) of the Education Act 1996, Secretary of State for Education, 12 September 2017
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/643791/Barnet_Stat_Direction_Sept-2017.pdf