

	<p align="center">CHILDREN, EDUCATION and SAFEGUARDING COMMITTEE</p> <p align="center">6 June 2018</p>
Title	Update report on progress of Barnet Children's Services Improvement Action Plan
Report of	Chairman of the Committee, Councillor David Longstaff
Wards	All
Status	Public
Urgent	No
Key	No
Enclosures	Appendix 1: Ofsted Monitoring visit letter Appendix 2: Family Services Performance Report
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Summary

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.

In April 2018, Ofsted conducted the third monitoring visit of Children's Services, which focussed on vulnerable adolescents across a range of teams including children in need, children subject to child protection and children looked after. 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.

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 fifth update report to be received by Committee and the reporting period for progress is March and April 2018. The update on progress is structured according to the seven improvement themes in the action

plan, and Family Services Performance Report 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 1.56.
2. That the Committee note details of Ofsted's monitoring visit set out in paragraphs 1.11 to 1.20 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 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 2017 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 2017 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 fifth update report to be received by Committee and the reporting period for progress is March and April 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 25 and 26 April 2018. This was the third monitoring visit since Barnet Children's Services were judged inadequate in July 2017. The monitoring visit focussed on vulnerable adolescents across a range of teams including children in need, children subject to child protection and children looked after, looking at:

- the effectiveness of partnership working for vulnerable adolescents
- the effectiveness of management oversight and supervision
- the quality of assessments and planning

1.12 All the children's cases reviewed had been considered at the multi-agency sexual exploitation (MASE) panel or were deemed to be at high risk of being missing, gang affiliation or criminal exploitation. The visit considered a range of evidence, including electronic case records, supervision files and notes, case management records, performance data, audits and progress reports.

1.13 Inspectors noted that there was continued progress and consolidation of recent improvements seen in the first and second 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:

- Better establishment of improved quality assurance processes and an increase in permanent staffing;
- Expertise and support being provided to senior leaders by the improvement board and local authority partner to appropriately monitor the implementation of improvements to services;
- Practice for children at risk of child sexual exploitation (CSE) and missing as well embedded operationally and strategically;
- Improvements in practice and more effective oversight of gang affiliation, radicalisation and criminal exploitation since development of the strategic scope of these areas took place in October 2017;
- Less case work was of an inadequate standard than on previous monitoring visits, and most children were being appropriately safeguarded.

1.14 Inspectors noted staff morale was good, and that staff stated that they enjoyed working in Barnet. It was recognised that workforce development activities are effective and wide ranging, and social workers have manageable caseloads, although a very small number of staff in one team reported case work pressures. New staff are being recruited to vacancies and permanent staffing is continuing to stabilise.

1.15 For vulnerable adolescents at high risk of exploitation, Ofsted found that the strategic and operational processes in place are providing effective scrutiny, advice and guidance to multi-agency partners and social workers; leading to improved safeguarding practice.

- 1.16 Inspectors saw evidence that social workers are routinely attending multi-agency strategy meetings for the cohort of young people considered during the visit, however, noted gaps in health and police attendance, thus limiting the effectiveness of the meetings. Return Home Interview (RHI) take up is low and is not effectively engaging all children, however, information from RHIs is informing safeguarding action.
- 1.17 There is more work to do to improve the identification of risk, and use of risk assessments within case recording to ensure all risks for children are fully addressed, children do not become looked after in reactive or emergency situations and professionals are not over optimistic about the nature of risks faced by adolescents.
- 1.18 Practice was found to be variable standards of practice in several other areas, including:
- Quality of assessments
 - Plans for children
 - Supervision quality and frequency
- 1.19 The pace of change within Barnet has remained consistent and focussed, with inspectors noting that it is beginning to raise practice standards. It was recognised that senior leaders are aware that there are still areas of considerable challenge before practice is of an overall good standard. The inspector's letter received following this monitoring visit can be found in Appendix 1.
- 1.20 The next monitoring visit will take place on 31 July and 1 August 2018 focussing on children in care and care leavers.

2. Governance Leadership, and Partnership

- 1.21 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.
- 1.22 There has been recruitment to all but one Team Manager posts across Children's Social Care; recruitment of Social Workers remains a challenge, as such there has been increased focus on a 'grow your own' approach resulting in a successful round of recruitment for Newly Qualified Social Workers (ASYE) in which 24 applications were received following a brief period of advertisement, of these 22 were shortlisted for assessment and 10 Newly Qualified Social Workers were appointed.
- 1.23 In May 2018 4 Team Managers and 3 Advanced Practitioners were appointed and 2 were offered social work roles with a further 8 agency social workers being onboarded.

- 1.24 There are on-going discussions with a number of agency social workers about permanent employment options. Assessment days were held throughout April and will continue in May 2018.
- 1.25 We continue business as usual advertising and talent searching through recruitment agencies.
- 1.26 Training is underway for newly elected Members; a Safeguarding and Corporate Parenting responsibilities training will take place in May 2018 as part of the new member's induction programme. Further training will be delivered throughout 2018.

Care Quality Commission (CQC) inspection

- 1.27 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.
- 1.28 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 review was conducted under section 48 of the Health and Social Care Act 2008 and focussed on the quality of health services for looked after children, and the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements for all children in the area.
- 1.29 The lines of enquiry for the inspection were:
- 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.
- 1.30 The inspection findings are due to be published imminently. The actions emerging from the inspection will be monitored through the Improvement Board to ensure effective alignment of activity.

3. Embedding Practice Leadership

- 1.31 This improvement theme seeks to strengthen practice leadership through effective management oversight and increased capacity.
- 1.32 Ahead of the April Ofsted monitoring visit, an audit report was prepared which provided overview and analysis of 60 thematic audits undertaken on Vulnerable Adolescents (i.e. at risk of Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE), Gangs, Missing and NEET) between January and April 2018. The report examined the experiences of 23 of these children. There was evidence of management oversight on 17 sampled cases, but individual monthly reflective supervision was less evident. There was additional evidence of good group supervision held on some cases, led by a Practice Development Worker and utilising the 'Signs of Safety' model.
- 1.33 Feedback from the most recent Ofsted monitoring visit aligns with our audit findings, that supervision is still variable in quality, but with evidence that recent management oversight is improving and supervision is providing a better management grip. Managers have all received supervision training and are being supported by the Practice Development workers in applying this learning to how they support staff. Where audits are graded as inadequate, auditors complete '4R' reflective sessions and Ofsted noted that this is providing management oversight whilst supporting social workers to understand what good looks like.
- 1.34 In the period from April 2017 to the end of March 2018, 1329 staff from across Family Services attended 116 courses provided by the Workforce Development Team. Of these, 924 were from Social Care and 315 from Early Years, Early Help or another area in Family Services. Ofsted noted the good availability of training for staff in the feedback from their most recent monitoring visit.
- 1.35 Embedding learning has become a key priority as the year has progressed. Social Work Managers are being supported in their roles to ensure that Social Workers get meaningful reflective supervision, with 26 managers attending training on this in the last 12 months. Over the next year we expect to see learning from the Systemic Leadership and Management training being implemented and having an impact on both managers and social workers

4. Right interventions, right time (Thresholds)

- 1.36 This theme is focused on developing an effective MASH and proportionate, effective and timely decision making across the whole social care system.
- 1.37 There has been regular review of all children passed to Children's Social Care for assessment to ensure that the threshold for statutory assessment is applied correctly. This has provided evidence that thresholds are stronger but there is a need for the early help system to be able to manage lower levels of risk i.e. inappropriate chastisement. The early help system is piloting and embedding practice changes, that are strengthening and realigning multi-agency working, it is expected that this model will facilitate a greater shift of low level risk into the early help system so that families are not coming into the child protection system unnecessarily.

5. Improving Assessment for children

- 1.38 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.
- 1.39 The Barnet Vulnerable Adolescents Strategy 2018-2020 has now been agreed and published. The scope of this strategy crosses the domains of child sexual exploitation, missing children, gangs and criminal exploitation as the Barnet Safeguarding Children's Partnership (BSCP) recognises that a broader view of safeguarding is required when considering exploitation of children and young people.
- 1.40 The audit report prepared for the Ofsted visit in April 2018 provided information about both Sexual Exploitation and Missing (SEAM) meetings and strategy discussions. For most strategy discussions and SEAM meetings, the reason for convening was clear, thresholds had been appropriately applied and there was evidence of some effective liaison and joint work with involved professionals, particularly between Social Care and the Police.
- 1.41 In the Strategy Discussion domain 48% of sampled cases were graded *Good* and 30% were graded *Requires Improvement*. Cases graded *Requires Improvement* evidenced less robust application of thresholds and short delays in convening the Strategy Meeting. Practice would consistently be strengthened to *Good* by ensuring that, as a minimum, a representative from Social Care, Police and Health attend (or are involved in), all Strategy Meetings or Discussions. In addition, stronger evidence that risk assessment and decision-making is more consistently informed by what is in the best interests of the child, the available evidence, knowledge of child development and research into the impact of harm or abuse. This notable improvement in audit gradings provides evidence of improved compliance with statutory requirements.
- 1.42 Some Child & Adolescent Services previously commissioned from Barnet, Enfield and Haringey Mental Health Trust have been brought in-house. This includes CAMHS in Schools and CAMHS for Looked After Children. The local authority is building on this transfer to create an in-house clinical service that sites CAMHS expertise closer to social work assessment and care planning activities, the impact intends to improve psychological and systemic perspectives, reduce waiting time and referral on to specialist services and ensure children get the help they need promptly.

6. Improving Planning for children

- 1.43 This improvement theme seeks to ensure planning is child centred and that these plans achieve the best outcomes.

- 1.44 The findings from our most recent audit report shows that in the majority of cases children are seen, spoken to alone and encouraged to share their wishes and views, which are reflected in case recordings and care planning. In the sample, there was evidence of some positive direct work, with child focused intervention and appropriate support offered in some cases where, for example, it was clearly recorded that the child had been invited to meetings, encouraged to participate and been offered regular opportunities, and safe spaces, to share their views, wishes and feelings.
- 1.45 48% of sampled cases were graded *Requires Improvement* in the child's voice and engagement domain on the audit tool. In order to achieve a grading of *Good*, practice in some cases would be strengthened by social workers increasing the level of professional curiosity related to the child's lived experience and undertaking more meaningful direct work with them. In the majority of sampled cases there was also clear evidence of efforts made by social workers to build positive relationships with parents/carers, including father's, to involve them in the care and safety planning (where possible) for their child. Parents and carer's views were usually sought and reflected in completed assessments. However, in some cases, practice would be strengthened by social workers ensuring that the views of both parents are sought and recorded, that perceived disguised compliance is more robustly challenged, and observations are undertaken of the parent's relationship with the child.
- 1.46 A Children in Need panel and Permanency Tracking meetings have been established, chaired by Heads of service, to review plan and advise and direct teams in relation to smarter planning for children. This facilitates appropriate and swifter step-down to Early Help from Child in Need Planning and swifter escalation to Child Protection or permanency planning when positive change is not being achieved for the child. The permanency tracking meeting ensures that any drift in planning for children in care or subject to legal processes is avoided and that all permanence options are consider for children
- 1.47 There is a need for independent chairs of both Child Protection Conferences and Children in Care Reviews to provide greater scrutiny and challenge to care planning activity. To achieve progress in this area work is underway to develop the quality of meetings so that they have a greater child and family focus that is fixed on improving outcomes and creating plans that drive meaningful change. This will include children being invited to chair their own reviews
- 1.48 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.
- 1.49 Young people attended the March 2018 CPOG meeting, and are next due to attend the June 2018 meeting as per the quarterly schedule. Updates from the March and April 2018 reporting period include:
- Finalising of the Voice of the Child Strategy 2018/19;
 - Young people feedback on the proposed children in care website and logo;

- Children in Care Council (#BOP) location and timetable changes to accommodate more young people;
- Introduction of focus groups chaired by Head of Service to provide opportunity for children in care and care leavers to feedback on the service they receive;
- Onwards and Upwards (Leaving Care service) beginning a piece of work to understand their experience of transition in Barnet;
- The establishment of a Tash and Finish Group to review savings for children in care;
- Refreshing of the Annual Children in Care Survey questions;
- Addition of #BOP feedback as an item on each CPOG meeting agenda;
- Introduction of a mental health service for care leavers within Onwards and Upwards.

1.50 Additional work progress from CPOG during this period includes a consultation on care leaver's and council tax.

1.51 A facilitated discussion was held with care leavers in response to the consultation on Council Tax on 21st March 2018, during which all care leavers agreed with the proposal. Comments from young people included:

Regarding the two-year exemption period:

- "why can't it be extended for longer? We should get it until [age] 24/25?"
- "If you have a job, depending on how much you get you should pay"

Regarding households with shared liability:

- "Halve it so the care leaver doesn't have to pay"
- "Care leavers shouldn't have to pay it"
- "Is there a way to have two different council tax bills for one house? Otherwise have the whole household at nil"
- "Just nil it by the house"

Additional feedback included:

- Concerns about young people in education not benefitting from the scheme.
- Young people living out of borough still being at risk of debt.
- Out of borough young people being disadvantaged.
- Care leavers being penalised when going in and out of university.

1.52 The Fostering Fortnight, from 14 to 27 May 2018, will be celebrated in Barnet through the following events:

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| 16th May: | A cake Sale facilitated by Recruitment Coordinators and Foster Carers at North London Business Park that will raise money for LIVE UNLIMITED and the Imagination Trust. |
| 18th May: | A stall at Spires Shopping Mall facilitated by Foster Carers and Care Leavers to raise awareness. |
| 20th May: | A 5K Fostering Walk at Golders Hill Park facilitated by Staff, Foster Carers and Care Leavers. |

- 23rd May: A fostering Coffee Morning at Queensway Infant and Nursery School to raise awareness and recruit.
- 24th May: Foster Care Conference.
- 25th May: A Fostering Coffee Morning at Hollickwood School.
- 25th May: A Stall at Spires Shopping Mall facilitated by Foster Carers and Care Leavers.

1.53 From the January 2018 recruitment of foster carers has focussed on carers for sibling groups and adolescents. A total of 70 enquiries has been received. Of these, 8 applicants are currently at stage one, 22 are at stage two and 6 foster cares have been approved.

The improvements made to the Adoption and Fostering Panel is ensuring that there is no delay in approving new carers.

1.54 LIVE UNLIMITED a charity launched five months ago is aimed at helping our looked after children and care leavers follow their dreams and aspirations. The vision is that all looked after children and care leavers in Barnet should have equal chances to lead fulfilling lives. We are the first local authority in London to launch a charity like this and have established the Imagination Trust which is an individual small grants scheme.

Among the successful applicants were an aspiring boxer seeking gym membership, a budding photographer who requested a new camera lens needed for a photography course, and a young person wanting to take a sign language course to help her pursue a career working with hearing impaired children.

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

1.55 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] the quality of social work practice is now slowly improving', while noting that there are still areas of considerable challenge before practice is of a good standard and the need of children are well served. This remains an area of active focus.

Quantitative performance data

1.56 Quantitative performance data is based on activity in April 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 Performance Matters report and Director commentary has been included in Appendix 2.

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 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 £4.435m in the 2018/19 Policy & Resource Committee Business Planning Report. The report on the Children, Young People and Family Hubs – Outline Business Case, a CELS agenda item for 6 June 2018, outlines the initial proposals and timeline for achieving £1.471m within this target. All the savings proposals, including the additional items totalling £2.964m over and above the Family Hub proposal, can be found in the Policy & Resource Committee Business Planning Report 2018/2019 which is provided in item 13, Policy & Resource Committee agenda 13 February 2018.
- The ongoing improvement will continue to place pressure on existing resources. The 2017/18 outturn for Family Services includes an overspend of £2.438m, which represents 4.2% of the total Delivery Unit budget (£58.504m). This is an increase of £2.161m from Quarter 3 relating to expenditure on placements and employee costs. There was a £2.300m overspend relating to external high cost specialist placements and associated services and the additional directed requirement for two assistant heads of service, three duty assessment team managers and eight duty assessment team social workers resulted in a £0.400m pressure. The ongoing improvement programme will continue to place pressure on existing resources. These pressures were offset by additional one-off grant funding (£0.416m) and realignment of the additional budget allocated by Policy and Resources Committee in June 2017 to high cost placements (£1.200m).
- In order to deliver safe, high quality practice, the investment in additional resources have seen a significant reduction in caseloads. The caseloads within social care teams have changed from March 2017 to March 2018, with a significant reduction in the Duty and Assessment Team (37.5 to 13.3) and Onwards and Upwards Leaving Care Team (27.5 to 18.1) in particular. There has also been a reduction in ratio of managers to social workers from 1:13 in February 2017 to 1:6 in February 2018.

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

- 5.4.1 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.
- 5.4.2 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.
- 5.4.3 Article 7 of the council's constitution states that the Children, Education and Safeguarding Committee has the responsibility for all matters relating to children, schools and education. 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 The corporate parenting principles set out seven principles that local authorities must have regard to when exercising their functions in relation to looked after children and young people, as follows:

1. to act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and well-being, of those children and young people;
2. to encourage those children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings;
3. to take into account the views, wishes and feelings of those children and young people;
4. to help those children and young people gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners;
5. to promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for those children and young people;
6. for those children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work; and;
7. to prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living.

5.7.3 As part of the Ofsted improvement journey and to ensure that Barnet has due regard to the Principles and improves on the delivery of corporate parenting to children in care and care leavers in Barnet, we:

- will be submitting an annual report on performance against Barnet's Corporate Parenting Pledge to Corporate Parenting Advisory Panel in September 2018. Barnet have committed to supporting children and young people to achieve their best in childhood, adolescence and adulthood within the Corporate Parenting Pledge for children in care and care leavers, as approved by full council on 29 January 2016. The Pledge can be found in section 6.3.
- provide learning and development for elected members and senior officers to understand their duties and responsibilities to children and care and care leavers and ways in which the Principles can be embedded and sufficient challenge provided regarding work and decisions of the council. The next training session is scheduled for 31 May 2018;
- ensure elected members, senior officers and partners can monitor and challenge the performance of the council and its partner agencies pertaining to consideration of the Principles and outcomes for children in care and care leavers through the appropriate channels. This includes the Children, Education, Libraries and Safeguarding Committee (bi-monthly), Corporate Parenting Advisory (quarterly) Panel and Corporate Parenting Officers' Group (monthly).

5.8 Consultation and Engagement

- 5.8.1 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.
- 5.8.2 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.
- 5.8.3 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.
- 5.8.4 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.
- 5.8.5 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.
- 5.8.6 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

5.9 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
- 6.3 Barnet's Corporate Parenting Pledge to Children in Care and Care Leavers (2016)
[https://www.barnet.gov.uk/dam/jcr:c33f12a5-86d9-4215-9c89-a8c82675fba4/Pledge%20for%20Children%20in%20Care%202016%20\(digital\).pdf](https://www.barnet.gov.uk/dam/jcr:c33f12a5-86d9-4215-9c89-a8c82675fba4/Pledge%20for%20Children%20in%20Care%202016%20(digital).pdf)