

	<p style="text-align: center;">CHILDREN, EDUCATION and SAFEGUARDING COMMITTEE</p> <p style="text-align: center;">12 September 2018</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Title</p>	<p>Update report on the progress of Barnet Children's Services Improvement Action Plan and other CES Committee Priorities, including Quarterly Performance Report updates for Q1 2018-19</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Report of</p>	<p>Chairman of the Committee, Councillor David Longstaff</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Wards</p>	<p>All</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Status</p>	<p>Public</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Urgent</p>	<p>No</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Key</p>	<p>No</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Enclosures</p>	<p>Appendix 1: Statutory Direction to Barnet Council Appendix 2: Ofsted Monitoring visit letter Appendix 3: Family Services Performance Report</p>
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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.

A third Direction was issued to Barnet Council in June 2018. The Direction has been included in Appendix 1.

In July 2018, Ofsted conducted the fourth monitoring visit of Children's Services, which focussed on children in care. 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 2.

The Ofsted Improvement Plan is a corporate and committee priority; 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 in need and caring for children and young people as a corporate parent. This is the sixth update report to be received by Committee and the reporting period for progress is May to August 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 3.

The report presents the Q1 2018/19 Quarterly Performance Report, which includes budget forecasts for revenue and capital, an update on key activities, performance of key indicators and high-level service/joint risks. An overall status and direction of travel is presented for each of the Children, Education and Safeguarding Committee's priorities, as per the Corporate Plan 2018/19 Addendum.

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 1.58.**
- 2. That the Committee note the content of the Secretary of State's third direction to Barnet Council outlined in paragraphs 1.21-1.22 and included in Appendix 1.**
- 3. That the Committee note details of Ofsted's monitoring visit set out in paragraphs 1.11 to 1.18 and the monitoring visit feedback letter received from Ofsted attached in Appendix 2.**
- 4. That the Committee note and scrutinise the performance information provided in Appendix 3.**
- 5. The Committee is asked to review the budget, activity, performance and risk information in relation to Children, Education and Safeguarding.**

- 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 update on key activities

- 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 sixth update report to be received by Committee and the reporting period for progress is May to August 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.

Turnaround priority 1: 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.

Ofsted monitoring visit and report

- 1.11 Ofsted undertook a Monitoring Visit on 31 July and 1 August 2018. This was the fourth monitoring visit since Barnet Children's Services were judged inadequate in July 2017. The monitoring visit focussed on children in care, and focussed on:
- The quality of assessment and care planning for children looked after
 - the quality of case recording, management oversight and supervision, including the oversight of independent reviewing officers
 - the use and effectiveness of performance management and quality assurance information
 - placement sufficiency and stability and the quality and timeliness of assessments for connected carers
 - the timeliness and effectiveness of plans for permanence
- 1.12 The visit considered a range of evidence, including electronic case records, supervision notes, case management records, performance data, audits, and progress reports. In addition, inspectors spoke to a range of staff including managers and social workers.
- 1.13 Inspectors noted that in the areas of practice considered during the visit, senior leaders, managers and the local authority improvement partner have maintained a consistent and strong focus on improving services and the quality of social work practice. The scope and pace of this work has been appropriate, the workforce is now more stable, caseloads are manageable and staff morale is good, with new social workers joining Barnet as a positive choice.

- 1.14 Inspectors noted that quality assurance processes are a strength with the use of auditing well established. The improvements made to the quality assurance framework have tightened management oversight and decision making for children who need permanence, and inspectors found that audits accurately identify practice improvements and determine appropriate actions for staff. Staff are open to learning from audits to improve practice.
- 1.15 Direct work with children is improving, and child centred practice is beginning to embed which is making a positive difference in the quality of social work practice. Practice Development workers are supporting social workers to improve their practice, and this work is leading to stronger practice. This means that some plans are informed by the child's voice however there is variability of practice which means that some plans are made without the child's full involvement. The independent reviewing officers provide regular and timely reviews, and there is evidence of their involvement on children's files, however their challenge is inconsistent and not always effective in achieving improved practice or timely progression of children's plans.
- 1.16 Inspectors saw evidence that the permanence tracker panel and regular permanence planning meetings are enabling managers to have a tighter oversight and grip on children's plans for permanence and ensure decision making is timely and effective. Placement stability and choices of placements for children are improving with significantly more approved 'in house' carers – those employed directly by the council - and some foster carers who have transferred from independent fostering agencies to benefit from the support packages on offer in Barnet.
- 1.17 There is more work to do to in ensuring consistency in the quality of assessments of children in care. Assessments do not always provide the detail or analysis to cover all areas of the child's needs. In the case of connected carers, the inspectors found that not all family members are identified as early as possible which has contributed to delay for children in being able to plan and approve permanent moves into the care of connected carers. Care plans were also not of a consistent quality, with not all being thorough, regularly updated or a record of specific actions.
- 1.18 The pace of change within Barnet over the last year has begun to establish improved social work practice for children looked after. The inspector's letter received following this monitoring visit can be found in Appendix 1.
- 1.19 **Overall status and Direction of Travel**
- 1.20 The current Improvement Plan takes us to September 2018, so a new plan is in Development and will be taken to the September Improvement Board for approval. The plan will reflect the rigorous focus on assessment and care planning across Family Services.
- Statutory Direction to Barnet Council**
- 1.21 The Secretary of State issued Barnet Council with a second Statutory Direction in January 2018, following the Commissioner's report in December 2017.

- 1.22 A third Direction was issued to Barnet Council in June 2018 following a review of the effectiveness of the intervention approach undertaken in May 2018 by the Commissioner for Children's Services in Barnet. A copy of this document is included as appendix 1.

Improvement theme 2: Governance Leadership, and Partnership

- 1.23 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.
- 1.24 A new recruitment campaign for Social Workers is due to launch in Community Care during September, and will include information about our systemic training offer, and we will also be attending the Community Care live job fair in the same month. We have successfully appointed 6 Team Managers and 10 Social Workers this quarter, and to support our 'grow your own' ethos, we have appointed 9 Newly Qualified Social Workers. Establishment work is ongoing and in collaboration with Finance colleagues we are also working on budget realignment. This will facilitate flexible business management and allocation of resource that meets Delivery Unit's requirements. This is being led by the Strategic Director for Children and Young People, working with the Senior Leadership Team.
- 1.25 The Children's Partnership Board has been reviewed as part of an overall drive to deliver better outcomes for children and young people. The membership has been increased to strengthen effectiveness and to make it more inclusive. Additional representatives now include the chair of the Children, Education and Safeguarding committee, Housing, Special Education Needs and Disability, Parent/Carers group, and the Multi-faith forum as well as supplementing the Voluntary Sector. Terms of reference has been updated to reflect the changes and to enhance collaborative partnership working. There has been further clarity of roles and responsibilities emphasising the duty of the Board to hear the voice of the children and young people and improve outcomes. The Partnership are developing a new Children and Young Peoples Plan which will be brought for the consideration of Members at a future CES meeting

Care Quality Commission (CQC) inspection

- 1.26 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.

1.27 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.

1.28 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.

1.29 On 7 June 2018, the CQC published the findings of the health services review. The review makes 43 recommendations across both the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and Provider organisations.

1.30 An action plan has been developed by the CCG with the support of Barnet Council to address the recommendations and common themes highlighted, such as:

- The embedding of Safeguarding supervision across organisations;
- Improving risk assessment and ensuring that there are mechanisms in place to identify issues such as bruising in non-mobile children;
- Training within front line organisations demonstrating that they address issues such as CSE, suicide and self-harm;
- The Designated Nurse for Looked after Children and Doctors that deliver Initial Health Assessments for Children in Care to be aware of the needs of asylum seeking young people;
- Ensuring that MASH referrals are uploaded onto records of children and young people.

1.31 The Action plan developed co-ordinates actions under the themes of:

- Governance, Leadership and Partnership.
- Embedding Practice Leadership.
- Right intervention, right time/ Thresholds.
- Improving Planning.
- Effective communication.

- 1.32 The complete and detailed action plan for each provider organisation was added as an appendix and submitted to CQC on 4 July 2018. Rag ratings for the action plan will be progressed at the Safeguarding Forum on 26 July 2018.
- 1.33 Inspectors responded to the submitted action plan on 11 July 2018, and considered the plan to be in a format which provided clarity on how the recommendations will be taken forward across the health economy.
- 1.34 NHS Barnet CCG will work with the London Borough of Barnet Public Health Team to monitor the focus and pace of this plan. The Health Service Improvement Plan will be driven and directed jointly through both NHSB CCG's Safeguarding and Contractual Governance processes for the services it commissions and also London Borough of Barnet Contractual arrangements with commissioned providers of health services.
- 1.35 Reports on progress will be received by the NHSB CCG Clinical Quality and Risk Committee, Barnet Multi-agency Safeguarding Children Executive Board and the London Borough of Barnet Children's Services Improvement Board as part of the assurance and reporting cycle across the themes. Reports will also be made to the Health and Well-being Board

Improvement theme 3: Embedding Practice Leadership

- 1.36 This improvement theme seeks to strengthen practice leadership through effective management oversight and increased capacity.
- 1.37 The audit programme is embedded and providing clear insights into practice and management arrangements, and the recent Ofsted report found evidence of this strengthening practice for children looked after. A monthly report has been developed for Heads of Service which includes a breakdown of audit outcomes against practice domains, including quality of assessment, voice of the child and management oversight. Practice Development Workers are mobilised to provide training and support to address areas of practice that require focused improvement as identified in audits, for example there has been an ongoing programme of diversity training for social workers and this is improving audit grades against this domain of practice.
- 1.38 Ofsted inspectors found that supervision and management oversight is evident of case files but that supervision was not always regular, and lacked reflection and challenge. Audit reports are now able to extrapolate information about the quality of supervision. This is being included in the monthly reports to Heads of Services. As we collect this data over the coming months we will have a better picture of improvement, and areas to focus resources. Supervision mentoring and support is now offered as a 6-week programme by Practice Development Workers.

Improvement theme 4: Right interventions, right time (Thresholds)

- 1.39 This theme is focused on developing an effective MASH and proportionate, effective and timely decision making across the whole social care system.

- 1.40 The partnership continuum of Help and Support document has been approved and shared with the partnership. All partners, including schools, GP surgeries and children's centres have received a poster and letter informing them of the new guidance. A training programme is in place and being rolled out, and a newsletter informing of the refreshed website, guide and continuum of need has been completed and circulated through the safeguarding partnership.

Improvement theme 5: Improving Assessment for children

- 1.41 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.
- 1.42 The audit report prepared for the Ofsted visit in July 2018 provided a summary of quality assurance activity related to children in the care of Barnet between October 2017 - June 2018. The report further considers the experiences of a sample of 20 children, audited with the period, to more closely examine practice strengths and areas for development. The deep dive considers key themes, organizational and practice learning and the steps required to ensure a continued drive towards improving the quality of services to be consistently good and enabling positive outcomes for children in care.
- 1.43 The findings demonstrate some improvement in the quality of child and family assessments which increasingly demonstrate a more comprehensive analysis of children's lived experiences and needs, alongside parental context, life experiences and capacity to change. There is a slight decrease in both the Good and Inadequate grades alongside a solid core of Requires Improvement grades. This area of practice would be strengthened to Good when there is more consistent and greater evidence of critical analysis of children's circumstances and complex needs to inform care planning.
- 1.44 Ofsted inspectors found that assessments for children in care are of variable quality, and do not always address issues of diversity and do not provide the detail for those with complex family histories. The inspectors found evidence of tightened management oversight of assessment and support for connected carers, however there is some drift in the early stages of assessments.

Improvement theme 6: Improving Planning for children

- 1.45 This improvement theme seeks to ensure planning is child centred and that these plans achieve the best outcomes
- 1.46 The July 2018 audit report on children in care found that Social work practice is of a standard which ensures children in care have their needs met and that timely action is taken to keep them safe. Children are seen, mostly spoken to alone and audits identified some good case recordings of observations on children captured in placement, social workers demonstrating a better understanding of diversity and identity needs, and offering regular opportunities enabling the voice of the child and positive engagement in assessments, decision-making and care planning.

- 1.47 In most cases audited, decision making and permanence and placement planning is timely but some delay is identified in the implementation of agreed actions and plans are not always focused on expediting the actions to achieve positive change for the child. For some children, increased attendance by partner agencies at Review meetings, with SMART care plans being agreed and progressed by the professionals and family, was indicated. Timely completion by social workers of supporting paperwork for reviews, alongside improvement in IRO tracking across all children in care, would further strengthen practice.

Care leavers Council Tax Reduction Scheme

- 1.48 The Children's Services Improvement Action Plan recognises the need to improve outcomes for care leavers, in particular, to ensure that they have access to appropriate discretionary funds and reliefs and ensure that they are adequately prepared for independent living through the provision of appropriate support and pathway planning.
- 1.49 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 was agreed at Full Council on 31 July 2018; a Council Tax Policy and Joint Protocol between Revenue and Benefits and Onwards and Upwards has now been implemented and will support care leavers in their journey to independence.

TACKLING GANG ACTIVITY

- 1.50 This is a CES Committee priority within the Corporate Plan Addendum 2018/19.
- 1.51 MAC- UK have been working with REACH as a co-located partner since April 2017. MAC-UK has used INTEGRATE approach to promote REACH staff to use psychologically informed approaches towards engaging young people who are gang-involved or at risk of becoming gang-involved. HEE funding ended in March 2018 and a further six months of reduced service is being funded using Troubled Families reserves. MAC-UK have submitted their report to HEE and this will be publicly available in due course. Research in Practice have also completed a one year evaluation of the REACH team approach and are due to publish their final report imminently. The draft report indicates that REACH provide a good level of responsive and multi-agency wrap-around to young people at a high risk of criminal and sexual exploitation which is supporting a reduction of entry into care, repeat offending and missing from home episodes.
- 1.52 The REACH team are supporting other children's social care team to work with young people presenting with high risk and vulnerability through consultation and joined up approaches. The Team work closely with Targeted Youth Support Service and Youth Offending Services and voluntary sector providers.
- 1.53 Growing Against Violence are delivering school based gang prevention programme; they are funded via MOPAC for a 2 year delivery between 2017 – 2019. Data for Q1 is not available as the service works within school term, data will be available at the end of term.

- 1.54 Art Against Knives are delivering community based interventions through the creation of safe community spaces which is partly funded by MOPAC. The service report footfall in quarterly monitoring visits.
- 1.55 A bid for Home Office 'Trusted Relationships' funds has been submitted in partnership with MAC-UK, Art Against Knives and Growing Against Violence to continue to build on the successful partnership that has developed with the local authority.
- 1.56 According to Metropolitan Police data, Barnet has only seen a 2% increase in knife crime victims under 25 years in a rolling 12-month period (1 additional offence) and only 6.8% of these have been linked to gang activity. Over 24 months this equates to an approximate 30% reduction (65 reported offences in May 2016 compared with 44 in the last rolling 12 months).

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

- 1.57 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.
- 1.58 Ofsted noted during their monitoring visit that staff morale was good, and that work on developing a child centred culture is embedding across the service. A refreshed communications action plan is scheduled to be launched from September to build on previous staff engagement work.

Quantitative Performance Data

- 1.59 Quantitative performance data is based on activity in June 2018. Reporting is on 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 3

2. ADDITIONAL CES PRIORITIES IN THE CORPORATE PLAN

- 2.1 In addition to the Ofsted update progress reported as part of the priorities in the corporate plan, a brief update is provided against the remaining priorities can be found below.

Attainment and progress of children in Barnet schools

- 2.2 The percentage of primary and secondary schools that were Good or Outstanding in Q1 was 95.1% (95.5% with nursery schools included). Two primary and one secondary school moved from Requiring Improvement to Good this school year. Safeguarding in all of Barnet schools inspected by Ofsted was judged to be “effective”. The number of 30 hours free entitlement early years (3 and 4-year olds) places taken up by parents/carers that are eligible for a place was 88% in Q1.

Delivering the family-friendly Barnet vision

- 2.2 Progress against the Children and Young People’s Plan (CYPP) was appraised in March 2018 at the Children’s Partnership Board. Success against key outcomes supporting the aspiration of a ‘family-friendly’ Barnet included raising awareness of travel safety for children and young people, initiatives to prevent young people from getting involved in violence, crime and anti-social behaviour as well as more schools in Barnet that are good or outstanding.
- 2.3 A new CYPP is in development for completion in autumn 2018. This will produce a more effective strategy that drives the right outcomes for the young people of Barnet. The changing context and needs of young residents has made a new plan a key priority. The proposal has taken place alongside an appraisal of the Children and Young People’s Board and its purpose. Terms of reference and membership have been strengthened to increase effectiveness and enhance collaborative partnership working.
- 2.4 Barnet has signed a three-year partnership with UNICEF to deliver Child Rights Partners Programme across the borough, working in partnership to ensure that all children, including the most vulnerable, can be supported to grow up healthy, happy, safe and resilient. Over the next three years Barnet will be working towards six badges which will be assessed by UNICEF and will underpin the new CYPP
- 2.5 A Young People’s Perception Survey is carried out every autumn. The study provides important insight on what young people think about living in the borough, their perception of the council and the services they receive; and also helps with understanding young people’s priorities and concerns. The findings will be used to inform the new CYPP.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 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.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND NOT RECOMMENDED

- 4.1 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.

5. POST DECISION IMPLEMENTATION

- 5.1 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 Dave Hill and will provide scrutiny and challenge as well as measure impact.
- 5.2 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.
- 5.3 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.

6. IMPLICATIONS OF DECISION

6.1 Corporate Priorities and Performance

- 6.1.1 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.
- 6.1.2 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
- 6.1.3 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.

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

- 6.2.1 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.

Budget forecasts

6.2.2 NARRATIVE UPDATE

- 6.2.3 Family Services budget forecast at the end of July 2018 based on information available is currently forecasting a pressure of £0.163k. The pressure relates to the non-achievement of Adoption regionalisation savings. Pressures relating to external high cost specialist placements and associated services are being mitigated.
- 6.2.4 Forecast pressures are being offset in the main by additional resources of £2.333m from the Performance and Resources Committee of February and June 2018 and additional one-off grant funding

6.3 Social Value

- 6.3.1 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.

6.4 Legal and Constitutional References

- 6.4.1 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.
- 6.4.2 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.

6.4.3 Article 7 of the council's constitution states that the Children, Education and Safeguarding Committee has the responsibility for all matters relating to children, school 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.

6.5 Risk Management

6.5.1 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.

6.5.2 There are three high level risks linked to the Children's Services Improvement Plan priority. One is a strategic (STR) risk and two are service (FS = Family Services) risks. Note the Ofsted risk sits at strategic and service level.

- STR021 and FS023 Delivery of Ofsted Improvement Action Plan (residual risk score 16). The Ofsted plan is monitored regularly and overseen by a Board chaired by the Chief Executive. The third monitoring visit took place in April 2018 and the report indicated that improvement had taken place, particularly in terms of all work related to vulnerable adolescents. However, the completion of some actions in the Ofsted plan were delayed. Efforts have been made by social care to keep children at home where possible. As recommended by Ofsted visits, additional supports have been implemented for young people throughout the borough. Supervision and practice standards help to control this risk, as well as quality assurance activity. The service provides assurance reports to the lead member, SCB Assurance, Barnet Safeguarding Partnership and the Children's Services Improvement Board to ensure scrutiny and oversight. The lead member meets monthly with service leads to provide oversight. Training has been provided to project managers within the last quarter. Additionally, proposals regarding the consolidation of panels that address CSE[1], Missing and Gangs are in place to improve responsiveness and implement more efficient guidelines and protocol, which should guide decision-making more effectively. Several governance mapping exercises have been undertaken by the Safeguarding Adolescents at Risk Group (SARG) to determine the efficiency of the current structure; and the SARG has met regularly to discuss the various issues around CSE/Missing. Several actions have been taken, including the development of the JSNA[2] to get an understanding of the immediate and long-term risk factors based across the cohort.

- FS021 Base budget pressures (residual risk score 16 – increased from 6). If not funded corporately, base budget pressures on the Family Services budget due to high cost placement and requirement for high cost agency workers could lead to an overspend resulting in an inability to meet savings targets; and an impact on demand-led budgets and improvement activities. Recovery Plans have been developed and are a priority for the Senior Management Team.

6.6 Equalities and Diversity

6.6.1 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

6.6.2 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

6.6.3 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%).

6.6.4 Social workers practice in relation to inequalities and disadvantage is inconsistent. 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", and training is ongoing to ensure this work is embedding..

6.7 Corporate Parenting

6.7.1 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.'

6.7.2 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.

6.7.3 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:

- An annual on performance against Barnet's Corporate Parenting Pledge will be presented to the 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.
- Learning and development for elected members and senior officers has and will continue to be delivered, to ensure that there is a clear understanding of 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 last training session for members was delivered on 31 May 2018.
- A Local Offer for care leavers is being developed as per the Children and Social Work Act 2018 requirements. Care leavers will be consulted with to ensure their views are considered and incorporated as the Local Offer is developed and a final version is published by January 2019. The Local Offer will be reviewed and updated bi-annually to ensure that the services and information outlined within it are up to date and help young people gain access to and make best use of local services.

- 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, the administering of council tax relief has been reviewed and a proposed policy consulted on to help care experienced young people have a more successful transition to independence, through the provision of guaranteed relief in their first two years of independent living.

Young people, key services and senior officers developed the policy, which was amended based on feedback received from the care leavers that responded to the public consultation.

The introduction of the care leavers council tax policy will help improve the emotional and physical health of care experienced young people and contribute to the achievement of the best outcomes for this cohort.

- We 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, and Safeguarding Committee (bi-monthly), Corporate Parenting Advisory (quarterly) Panel and Corporate Parenting Officers' Group (monthly).

6.8 Consultation and Engagement

6.8.1 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.

6.8.2 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.

6.8.3 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.

6.8.4 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.

6.9 Insight

6.9.1 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.

7. BACKGROUND PAPERS

7.1 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/bar-net/051_Single%20inspection%20of%20LA%20children%27s%20services%20as%20pdf.pdf

7.2 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)