

	<p style="text-align: center;">CHILDREN, EDUCATION and SAFEGUARDING COMMITTEE</p> <p style="text-align: center;">16 January 2019</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</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: Ofsted Monitoring Visit Feedback letter Appendix 2: 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.

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 eighth update report to be received by Committee and the reporting period for progress is November to December 2018. The update on progress is structured according to the six improvement themes in the action plan, and Family Services Performance Report has been included in Appendix 2.

The report includes an update from the fifth OFSTED monitoring visit which took place in November 2018, and focussed on the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) and Duty and Assessment teams.

Recommendations

- 1. That the Committee note the progress of the Barnet Children's Services Improvement Action Plan as set out in paragraphs 1.8 to 1.42.**
- 2. That the Committee note the OFSTED monitoring visit feedback letter 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.

- 1.4 Under the Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) Framework, local authorities judged as inadequate are subject to ongoing monitoring activity from OFSTED; in Barnet, this has included an action planning visit, quarterly monitoring visits, and will also entail a full ILACS inspection after February 2019 if there is satisfactory progress in the next monitoring visits.
- 1.5 Since November 2017, OFSTED have conducted five monitoring visits of Barnet Children's Services, which focussed on 'front door' services, Duty and Assessment, Intervention and Planning, Children in Care and work with vulnerable adolescents. During this period, OFSTED have found there to be a steady and strong focus on improving services and the quality of social work practice in Barnet. Although the pace of change has begun to establish improved social work practice over the last year, there is more work to do to ensure consistent quality of practice across all services.
- 1.6 The Council was also subject to an Annual Engagement meeting with OFSTED on the 5th November 2018. In this meeting the Council's [self-assessment](#) was considered. We are awaiting a letter from OFSTED following on from the meeting.
- 1.7 A fifth monitoring visit took place on 27 and 28 November 2018, and focussed on the 'front door' services and the Duty and Assessment Teams. A sixth monitoring visit is scheduled for 14 and 15 February 2019 and will focus on the leaving care service, Onwards and Upwards and children with disability.

Barnet Children's Services Improvement Action Plan update on key activities

- 1.8 In September 2018, the Barnet Family Services Improvement Board was presented with a revised improvement action plan covering the year September 2018 to September 2019, and this plan was approved by the Improvement Board in October 2018. The new plan reflects the progress made during the first year, and includes emerging priorities. It reflects the rigorous focus on assessment and care planning across Family Services.
- 1.9 As with the previous version, 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

1.10 The revised action plan has consolidated the previous turnaround priority and improvement themes into six overarching improvement themes:

1. Systems Leadership for Children
2. Enhancing Practice Leadership for Children
3. Right Interventions, Right Time (Thresholds)
4. Strengthening Assessment for Children
5. Strengthening Planning for Children
6. Embedding a Child Centred Culture that Improves Children's Lives

Update on progress since the last report:

1.11 This is the eighth update report to be received by Committee and the reporting period for progress is November to December 2018.

1.12 The update on progress is structured according to the six improvement themes in the action plan, in the same format as for the September 2017-18 improvement plan. Under each improvement theme there is a description of the theme and an update on key activities since the previous update report.

Priority 1: Systems Leadership for Children

1.13 This theme focuses on strengthening systems leadership for children, and reflects that collective accountability, ownership, understanding and priority need to be given to improving outcomes for children in Barnet. In their most recent monitoring visit, OFSTED noted that 'Senior leaders and managers have appropriately focused on ensuring a consistent and robust quality of social work practice is in place. For this reason, children and their families are now receiving more timely and effective help and support.'

1.14 The Ofsted inspectors spent time in the MASH and spoke to partners, who reported improved working. Ofsted noted that "Consultation between agencies is clear...Staff are making effective use of co-location to share and check historical information. This has led to improved decision making and a greater understanding of potential risks to children."

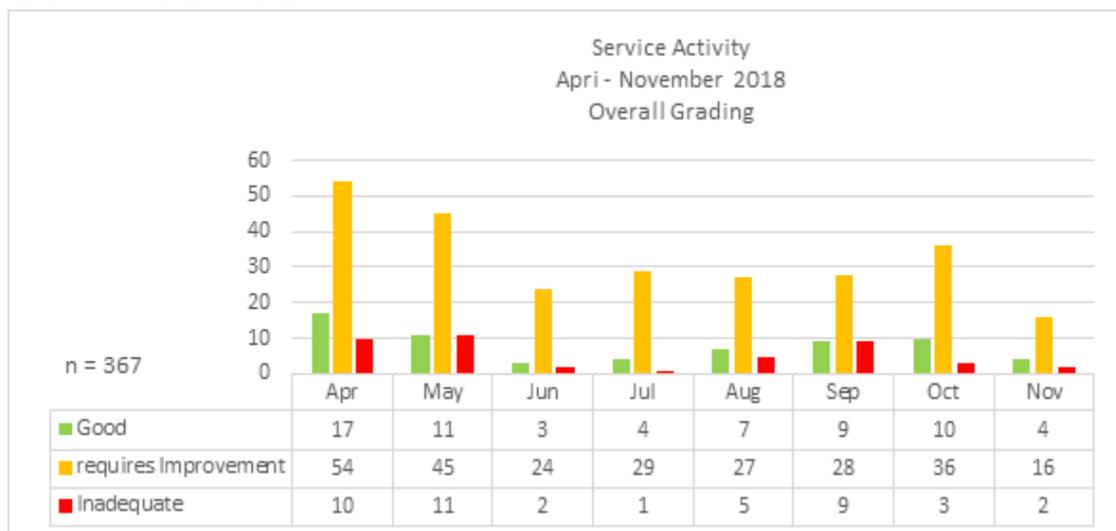
Improvement theme 2: Enhancing Practice Leadership for Children

1.15 This theme focuses on strengthening professional systems that work together effectively to improve children's lived experience. This includes that children's voices are heard and influence decisions being made about them, that these decisions are recorded to a high standard and that this leads to timely interventions from appropriately skilled professionals across the partnership.

1.16 A care leavers' Christmas dinner and ball was held on 17 December 2018, attended by young people as well as senior managers from across the service. The event featured a range of activities including mocktail making, disco and a photo booth. The event enabled care leavers to celebrate their achievements along with their peers, and provided the opportunity for their views about the service to be shared via a 'feedback tree'. The tree was created as a fun and friendly way for care leavers to share what they think about the way in which they are supported and cared for; their feedback will be incorporated into the children in care survey report and office groups.

1.17 Work on ensuring that management oversight and supervision is consistent and rigorous, and that oversight of practice provides sufficient guidance and direction to improve practice for children continues across all services. In their November visit, Ofsted commented that “All staff reported that their caseloads are manageable. They welcome their regular supervision, peer supervision and informal support from managers and practice development workers to assist them in improving their practice”. Ofsted had previously noted that our quality assurance framework is “well established”, and in the most recent visit confirmed that “quality assurance processes are effective and remain a strength”.

1.18 The Family Services’ audit programme has been embedded and provides clear insight into practice and management arrangements; the recent OFSTED report found that “auditing of case work is firmly established and is linked to clear practice standards and used well by managers to provide staff with a clear understanding of their practice”. During November 2018, 22 audits were completed. Of these 18% were graded as Good, 73% were graded as Requires Improvement and 9% were graded as Inadequate. The chart below outlines monthly audit activity and gradings which forms the basis for a monthly report provided to Heads of Service that further includes a breakdown of audit outcomes against practice domains i.e. quality of assessment and voice of the child:



Improvement theme 3: Right Intervention, Right Time (Thresholds)

1.19 This improvement theme is focussed on embedding the monitoring and understanding of thresholds across the partnership. The outcomes are to have an effective MASH, effective decision making and joined up Early Help.

- 1.20 The MASH has consolidated as a Multi-Agency Team and is working effectively together, the co-location of agencies is supporting the wider system as key agencies now routinely support child protection risk assessment processes at short notice. The team is adjusting and evolving to new points of interface i.e. 0-19 Early Help Panels and has maintained good operational links with MARAC and partnership meetings relating to young people at risk of criminal and sexual exploitation which enables more robust join up in screening and risk assessment activity. The service is interfacing positively with a range of external agencies and providers and this is helping to ensure that the purpose of MASH is well understood and referral quality improves.
- 1.21 The MASH is delivering presentations to agencies in an effort to continually promote the need for agencies to identify children in need of help and protection by referencing the pan-London Continuum of Need and Support and encouraging informal conversations with the MASH for advice. This is supporting our aim to ensure children are provided with the right help, first time.
- 1.22 Ofsted spoke to partners during their November 2018 visit, who agreed that Daily Threshold Meetings have improved communication with the MASH. Ofsted noted the fortnightly meetings as an effective forum for sharing new areas of practice shared that goes on to improve practice, and noted that partners were very positive about these meetings.
- 1.23 In the Self-Assessment we identified an area for continued development in monitoring the application of thresholds and their impact on the work we do with children and families. This will include working on how we gather service user feedback. Threshold application, timeliness and case management will be monitored and reviewed with a focus on Early Help due to new ways of working being implemented with the roll out of locality panels in the hubs.

Improvement theme 4: Strengthening Assessment for Children

- 1.24 This theme focusses on strengthening assessments, ensuring they are child centred, effectively analyse risk of harm to prevent drift in the system and prevent delays to delivering interventions.
- 1.25 In their November monitoring visit, Ofsted noted that “The duty and assessment teams have a more stable workforce, and this is helping to further embed practice improvements including a stronger child centred approach. In the cases considered during this visit, children were kept safe from immediate risks, with timely action in place to protect them.”
- 1.26 In the past 12 months there have been 223 audits undertaken on cases allocated to the Duty & Assessment Teams. The overall grades are 21.5% of audits graded as Good, 62.7% graded as Requires Improvement and 15.6% graded as Inadequate.

- 1.27 Of the 25 cases sampled, in the audit domain 'diversity and identity', 48% were graded as Good, this provides evidence that the focus on this area of practice has had a positive impact which is increasingly embedding. Ofsted found that "diversity issues are now routinely considered within children's assessments; however, the impact of culture, religion, or ethnicity are not necessarily followed through into the work with parents or children to improve outcomes for them", and this continues to be a priority area of training and development for social workers. Audits tell us that Children are promptly seen during assessments and data is reporting that 100% of children are seen during assessment which is a substantial improvement on the 50.1% reported at the same point last year. Audits are evidencing an increase in child focused work and engagement in the assessment process. During the Ofsted visit "Inspectors saw more work of a reasonable standard of practice and better engagement with children and their families."

Improvement theme 5: Strengthening Planning for Children

- 1.28 This theme seeks to ensure that planning across the system is consistently focused on outcomes and is responsive when children's circumstances change or deteriorate. We expect to see plans that are child-centred and that achieve best outcomes, tackling drift and delay.
- 1.29 A focus of the improvement work within the Children in Care service and Onwards & Upwards is to make sure every child in our care and care leavers have an up to date care plan that reflects their views and contributions to the planning process, that states in a way that they understand what their plan is and how their needs will be met. Care plans for looked after children are presented more consistently at the Children in Care Reviews and 93% of Pathway plans for care leavers were up to date at the end of October 2018, which is progress from the 76% at the same time in 2017.
- 1.30 Achieving a consistent good quality plan for looked after children remains the focus of practice development work and supervision. Audits show improvements are being made but we have not yet achieved consistency in this area. We are seeing less delay in decision making, more responsive approaches to planning and less reactive plans and the start of good collaborative thinking across teams and professionals that are resulting in creative plans for children. The Independent Reviewing Service is more robust and with this added rigour in the system good quality plans will be achieved.

Care leaver Participation Project

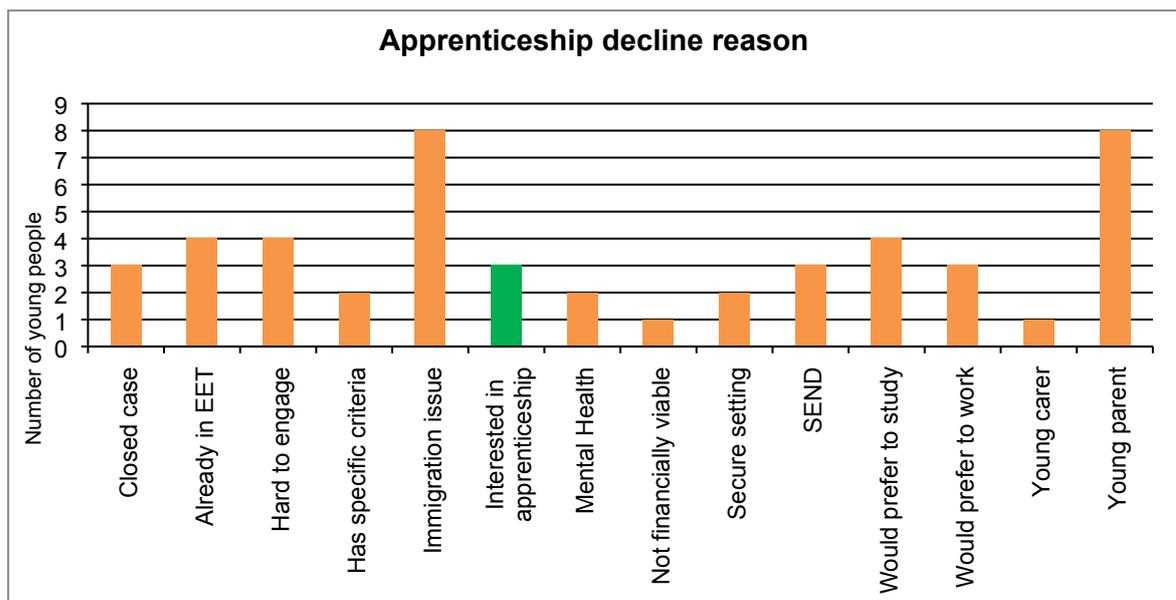
- 1.31 One of the actions within the improvement action plan pertains to the developing of new programmes to reduce Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) levels of care leavers, to ensure they have access to employment and training opportunities. This agenda has been a key area of focus for the Chief Executive of the Council, who commissioned a project in September 2017, to understand what more could be done to support Educational, Employment and Training (EET) outcomes of care leavers.
- 1.32 In September 2017, a working group consisting of key stakeholders across the council, was formed to undertake this commissioned project. The group met between September 2017 and February 2018 and completed a range of actions, insight and analyses to understand the needs of care leavers.

1.33 A proposal was developed by key stakeholders from Cambridge Education, Family Services and the Commissioning Group, and presented to the Chief Executive in February 2018. The proposal made a series of recommendations to develop and implement over three years, which included the following:

- Funding for a project coordinator to develop, implement and oversee a project to increase Education, Employment and Training (EET) levels amongst care leavers aged 16 to 25 years old, in line with Barnet’s Corporate Parenting and Ofsted Improvement Plan priorities. This project will increase participation and raise aspirations by increasing awareness of support for NEET care leavers. This will include delivering sessions and running events to promote post 16 options and work with key stakeholders to develop understanding of best practice in supporting care leavers;
 - Invest in bespoke re engagement programmes and mentoring for those who need additional support to take up education, employment and training; Review the traineeship and apprenticeship offer for care leavers. Offer financial support to care leavers who wish to take up a traineeship and increase the investment in high quality apprenticeships for care leavers within the council workforce;
 - Increase the support provided to and capacity of the leaving care service Onwards and Upwards to develop information, advice and guidance skills to support care leavers, including an increase to the in the JobCentre Plus support to the team (from a 0.5FTE to a full time Work Coach).

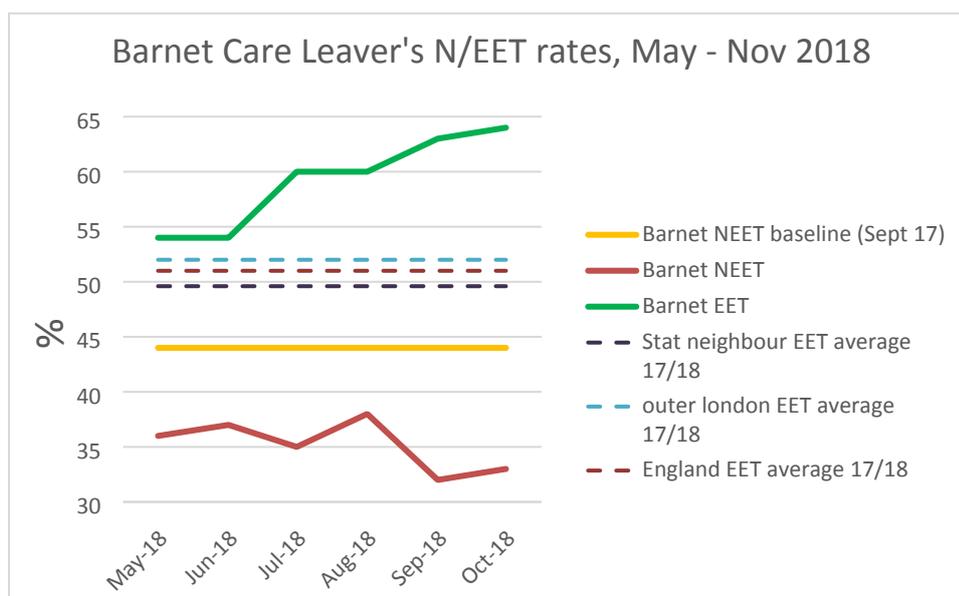
1.34 The proposal was approved, and the Care Leaver Participation Project started in May 2018. The project will run for three years to enable systemic and practice level changes to be made that can be sustained long term.

1.35 We know that some of the barriers faced by care leavers cannot be addressed ‘overnight’, for example, the below graph shows the responses of 48 care leavers offered an apprenticeship in the 17/18 academic year.



- 1.36 The graph clearly highlights two key groups for which barriers to engagement are being experienced. These are young parents and care leavers experiencing immigration issues. Young people mentioned other barriers such as a lack of suitable apprenticeships e.g. office based, ones for shorter periods or part-time and lacking qualifications to meet the eligibility criteria.
- 1.37 In addition to this, commissioned provider Bridging the Gap identified 6 main barriers to care leavers entering the re-engagement programme in October 2018:
1. Mental health problems
 2. Timekeeping
 3. Low confidence/low self esteem
 4. Difficulty completing things they start
 5. Substance misuse
 6. Learning difficulties
- 1.38 A multi-agency, multi-dimensional approach to reducing the number of NEET care leavers is therefore needed to ensure a broader range of needs can be met.
- 1.39 Highlights from May to November 2018 are as follows:
- Development of the Care Leaver Participation Action Plan 2018 – 2021 which has been embedded within the Corporate Parenting Plan, and reports to Corporate Parenting Officers Group. The plan consists of 10 domain areas and seeks to support the following Corporate Parenting Plan outcomes over the next three years:
 - Strengthened offer for care leavers who are able and want to go to Further Education (FE) or Higher Education (HE) according to aspirations, in order to close the gap with peers;
 - Greater number of care leavers supported to undertake high-quality apprenticeships;
 - Care leavers participate in EET, regardless of their background, and participation is sustained;
 - Reduction in NEET care leavers.
 - £200k of corporate funding allocated to the Commissioning Group until March 2021 to fund apprenticeship salaries, staffing and young people's expenses as part of a Care Leaver Participation Project.
 - Recruitment of a Cambridge Education based Project Coordinator in September 2018. The Coordinator is supported by the broader Barnet Education Employment and Training team and their Information, Advice and Guidance workers.
 - Increase in the support to Onwards and Upwards from JobCentre Plus. There is now a full time Work Coach available to support Care Leavers.
 - Commissioning of local provider Bridging the Gap, who recruited 11 care leavers for their 5-week re-engagement programme in September 2018. Of the young people recruited, 91% (n=10) completed the programme and 73% (n=8) achieved a level 1 qualification, which enabled them to progress onto a 16-week traineeship programme. The Care Leavers have reported feeling more confident and motivated as a result of attending the programme. Bridging the Gap will work intensively with a minimum of 30 care leavers over the course of one year (September 18 to 19), with ten more young people due to start the programme in January 2019.

- The development of a traineeship for Barnet Care Leavers, run with Skills Training UK, that started in December 2018. Care Leavers will take part in training and a work placement and be offered support to find an apprenticeship. Financial support is being offered to those who take part. The provision of such funding removes a significant barrier to participation for care leavers.
- Agreement from the council to fund 5 apprenticeships, specifically for care leavers. Three roles have been identified so far, one level 4 role in Communications, and two level 2 roles in Street Scene.
- Finalising of a 'NEET tracker', which shows EET status of all Barnet care leavers and enables effective Project reporting. As at 31 October 2018, 64% (n=161) of care leavers were in EET, this is 31 more young people in EET than when the project started in May 2018. This is 1% short of the EET target set by the Strategic Lead for Children and Young People of 65%.
- This is the highest level since the project started, and includes 8 young people who's EET status is yet to be updated on the case recording system following their transfer to Onwards and Upwards. The graph below shows the progress:



- 1.40 The Participation project will focus on developing an offer to support care leavers wishing to pursue self-employment and enterprise in 2019, as much of the current participation offer has focussed on education and training options to date. An update of the project's progress will be included within the Corporate Parenting Officers' Group report that is presented at Corporate Parenting Advisory Panel.

Improvement theme 6: Embedding a child centred culture that improves children's lives

- 1.41 This improvement theme will enable and ensure that all staff are fully engaged with the child centred culture and aware of the support available to them from management and senior leaders. This will include building connection via communication within children's services, across partner agencies and corporately. Communication across the Council has been led by the Chief Executive who has raised the importance of children's services improvement across a series of briefings in the last period. Work

has also been undertaken to ensure that the Corporate Parenting principles are more embedded in the Council's governance arrangements with guidance issued to report writers.

Quantitative Performance Data

- 1.42 Quantitative performance data is based on activity in October 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 1.

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.

Corporate Priority update: Tackling Gang Activity

- 2.2 This is a CES Committee priority within the Corporate Plan Addendum 2018/19.
- 2.3 MAC- UK have been working with REACH as a co-located partner since April 2017 following a successful bid to Health Education England (HEE). 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.
- 2.4 Building on the success of the REACH Team partnership, in June 2018, Barnet submitted a bid for the Home Office's Trusted Relationships funding, which builds on the provision of schools based gang prevention programmes and community based support delivered by the Voluntary and Community Sector in Creative Safe Spaces. The bid, submitted in conjunction with Art Against Knives (AAK), Growing Against Violence (GAV) and MAC UK, was confirmed as one of a small number of successful applications in September 2018.
- 2.5 The project will work across a spectrum of services and levels of need, taking an evidence based approach that focuses on relationships and resilience as follows:
- Universal engagement with young people within creative community spaces, providing creative skills training and individual and group support;
 - Targeted / Specialist support in communities based within Art Against Knives creative spaces to provide direct support to those identified through relation working and assessment as at risk of exploitation;
 - Psychologically informed staff at MAC-UK delivering staff learning spaces to the Art Against Knives team and 'hang out' in creative spaces with young people;

- In-School preventative evidence based programme delivery to young people.

2.6 Since being announced as a successful applicant, the following progress has been made with the Trusted Relationships project:

- Several planning and preparation meetings between partners have taken place, with the first partnership Steering Group for Barnet's Vulnerable Adolescents taking place in December 2018;
- AAK and MAC-UK have co-produced the multi-agency clinical, safeguarding, information sharing and operational arrangements and frameworks;
- The Vulnerable Young Adults Forum, which is chaired by the Strategic Lead for Child Sexual Exploitation & Missing in Barnet Council is established and the first meeting is taking place on 18th Dec 2018;
- We are in the process of recruiting to the Partnership and Engagement Lead post that will lead this project, recruitment should take place in January. In the interim this work is led by the Head of Service for 0-19 Early Help with a designated data lead within the council;
- AAK have engaged young people in the co-production of their creative spaces in the community setting and context. A team of 'Creative Directors' have been established with a view of recruiting the 4 Youth Consultants as planned in January 2019;
- AAK have engaged in youth-led activities and opportunities to build trusted relationships with young people through informal contact time;
- A schedule / timetable of community creative spaces in the places that work for young people has been created, this includes an additional 4th creative space that was established on Grahame Park Estate as of August 2018;
- AAK and MAC-UK have started to implement evaluation measures with young people, partners and Home Office Independent Evaluators to monitor impact of placement team and outcomes for service users.

Corporate Priority update: Delivering the family-friendly Barnet vision

2.7 Barnet's new Children and Young People's plan which is underpinned by the Borough's participation in UNICEF UK's Child Friendly Cities programme. The approach, which complements the ambition to be the most 'Family Friendly borough by 2020', will embed child-rights in Barnet's services and delivery.

Contributions are being taken from young people, elected members, council officers, heads of service and partner agencies to ensure the best outcomes. It will enable Barnet Council, its partners and young people to work in a more responsive and empowering way. A draft version of the Plan will be presented at the January CES Committee.

2.8 Barnet's annual Young People's Survey will be conducted in the next few months and provide an important insight into views, opinions and concerns of children and young people living in the Borough. As well as informing the new Plan, responses will assist with better targeting and improvement of services.

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 2019-2024 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 pleasant, well maintained borough that we protect and invest in;
 - Residents live happy, healthy, independent lives with the most vulnerable protected;
 - Has safe and strong communities where people get along well.

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 CES Committee target for 2018/19 – 2019/20 was £8.303m has been revised to £4.435m in the 2018/19 Policy & Resource Committee Business Planning Report.

Budget forecasts

6.2.2 Family Services budget forecast at the end of October 2018 based on information available is £1.304m overspend.

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 has been in place from January 2018, however monitoring visits are still 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, 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.

6.4.4 Section 1 of the Children and Social Work 2017 Act introduces corporate parenting principles, which comprises of seven principles that local authorities must have regard to whenever they exercise a function in relation to looked after children and care leavers. These principles apply to every part of the local authority, not just to children's services. These are largely a collation of existing duties local authorities have towards looked after children and those leaving care.

6.5 Risk Management

Children's Services Improvement Action Plan

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 is one high level risk linked to the OFSTED Improvement Action Plan priority. This is a strategic (STR) risk.

STR021 - Delivery of OFSTED Improvement Action Plan (residual risk score 16).

The Improvement Action Plan is monitored regularly and overseen by a Board chaired by the Chief Executive. In November 2018, OFSTED conducted a fifth monitoring visit of Children's Services, which focused on children in care. The feedback from this visit was reported to CES and Policy and Resources Committee in Quarter 1 2018/19. A sixth monitoring visit is scheduled for February 2019

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, race and ethnicity, faith or belief, sex, gender reassignment, language, maternity / parental status 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 Barnet also has an above average rate of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children when compared to statistical neighbours, and the statistical neighbour average. In 2018, Barnet had 66 unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, compared to an average of 34 amongst statistical neighbours. The only statistical neighbour which had more was Hillingdon, a London Borough which is within a 10-mile radius of Heathrow airport.

6.6.5 Unaccompanied young people experience separation and loss from their families, and in addition to this they are also likely to have experienced further trauma, such as abuse and exploitation whilst travelling to the UK. There have been several practice and service developments to ensure the needs of this group are met, many of whom arrive in the UK without being able to speak English. In 2018,

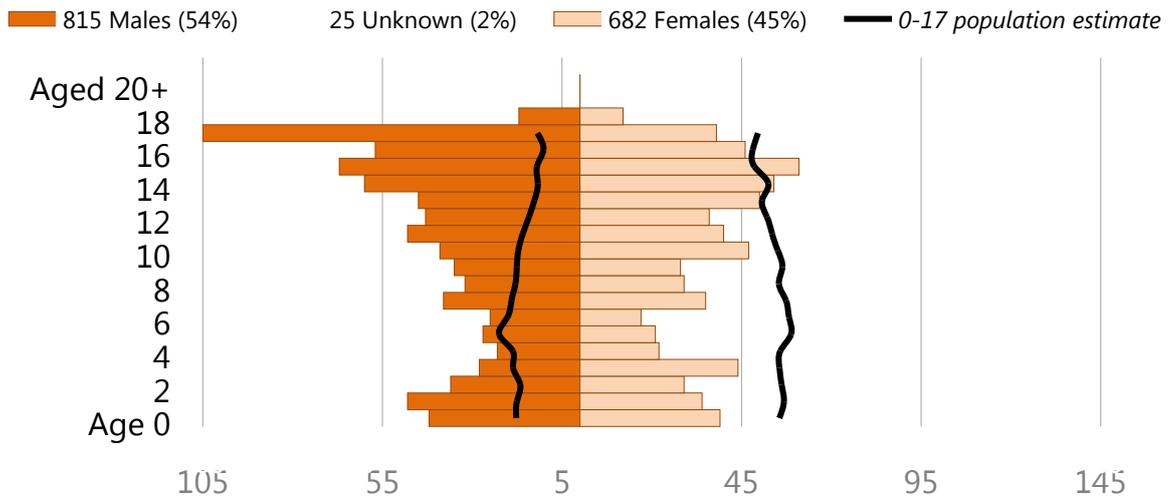
- an education programme was commissioned from Whitefields School to induct unaccompanied young people into the UK and education system;
- an initial health assessment pathway was created that included specific processes for unaccompanied young people, to accommodate the range of checks that need to be undertaken for this group;
- a new unaccompanied asylum-seeking children specialist Personal Advisor role was created in Onwards and Upwards. The worker speaks Pashtu and Albanian – the two most common languages spoken by Barnet's unaccompanied young people – and has experience in dealing with the Home Office and dealing with tasks such as Human Rights Assessments, which has been invaluable in supporting this vulnerable group of young people;
- Practice improvements in life story work resulted in a former unaccompanied young person creating a video work as an outcome of his successful life story work and foster placement;
- All newly arrived unaccompanied young people are now allocated to a worker in Onwards and Upwards upon arrival to reduce the number of workers and times a young person has to repeat their story.

6.6.6 In Barnet, we have a higher percentage of children in need with a recorded disability compared to the London and England rat. As at 31 March 2018, the rate of disability was as follows:

Local authority	Number of Children in need episodes at 31 March	Number of children in need episodes at 31 March with a disability recorded	Percentage of children in need episodes at 31 March with a disability recorded
England	404,710	49,770	12.3
London	72,810	9,460	13.0
Inner London	31,460	3,900	12.4
Outer London	41,350	5,560	13.4
Barnet	2,107	317	15.0

- 6.6.7 One key service which supports disabled children, young people and families is the 0-25 service. The service was reorganised in September 2017 and consists of a team of social workers, family support workers, direct payment workers and occupational therapists who work with young people as per the Children Act 1989 and Care Act 2014. The service supports a strength based model of practice that aims to build families strengths, resilience and capacity. The service intervenes and supports families earlier and throughout young people's transition to adulthood, building their capacity and resilience.
- 6.6.8 Since the service's introduction, and the inadequate Ofsted rating, practice has improved across children and adult cases, and there is significantly better partnership working with Adult services, SEND, Health and parents - with the aim to achieve effective co-production. There is a better understanding of safeguarding within the service which means that children with disabilities are better protected.
- 6.6.9 The focus for 2019 regarding support for disabled children, young people and families pertains to practice development, data and systems and support for families, such as recommissioning the Short Breaks service. These fall under the OFSTED improvement plan themes of 'enhancing practice leadership for children' and 'strengthening planning for children', which will lead to better outcomes for children, young people and families.
- 6.6.10 As at 20 December 2018, there are more children in need aged 14 to 18 than any other age group, as illustrated in the graph 1 below.

Graph 1: Age/Gender of all Children in Need (1522) (including Child Protection and Looked after Children)



- 6.6.11 The number and needs of adolescents has resulted in several services being invested in to ensure that emerging and existing issues are supported to prevent them becoming more serious problems; data shows that this age group are more likely to be affected by issues such as exploitation, criminality and poor mental health. As at 30 November 2018, of 27 young people identified as known to the Youth Offending Team and vulnerable (gone missing, those with an open Child Sexual Exploitation or gang flag, and those who have been the subject of a Sexual Exploitation And Missing meeting, within a selected time period) 96% (n=26), were aged 15 to 17, one was 12 years old.
- 6.6.12 One of the services that has been invested in to engage vulnerable young people in this age group is the REACH Team. This team was set up in April 2017 to provide multi-agency wrap-around support to young people at high risk of criminal or sexual exploitation. Further to this the Trusted Relationships Project will be delivered in 2019 following a successful bid to the Home Office in September 2018; more details about this can be found in 2.2 to 2.6.
- 6.6.13 A further way in which the service is attempting to meet the specific needs of this age group, is through the provision of mental health support at Onwards and Upwards, which includes 1:1 appointments with trainee psychotherapists from Terapia which is available for care leavers in need of emotional support.
- 6.6.14 Some areas of social work practice in relation to inequalities and disadvantage still remain 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 Ofsted improvement 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.

6.6.15 Additional equalities and diversity information and data in relation to service improvements that have, and continue to be made following the 2017 OFSTED inspection, are outlined within the Self-Evaluation Framework presented at the November 2018 CES Committee. For example, a new programme of diversity training for social workers has been introduced, which has resulted in improvements in this domain of practice, as evidenced by audit grades.

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 its children in care and care leavers:

- 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; a final version will be 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 was approved at Full Council on 31 July 2018 and backdated to April 2018 when implemented in September 2018. This scheme helps 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 aims to help improve the emotional and physical health of care experienced young people and contribute to the achievement of the best outcomes for this cohort.

- A Care Leaver Participation Coordinator has been recruited to lead on a targeted participation project which seeks to improve the education, employment and training (EET) outcomes of Barnet's Care Leavers. The Coordinator's role includes working with key stakeholders to develop and implement an appropriate and accessible EET Pathway for Barnet Care Leavers, action EET related tasks within the Corporate Parenting Plan and work with staff and care leavers to increase skills and opportunities available to care leavers. This project has been funded by the Council's Chief Executive until March 2021.
- 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 Children in Care Survey was re-launched on 10 December 2018 as part of a two-week campaign to capture our children and young people's views. The campaign was called *It's All About Me Fortnight* and was a targeted effort from Corporate Parenting teams, to obtain at least 100 responses from children in care and care leavers.
- 6.8.4 Listening to the voices of our children and young people is important to the Council; we want to always provide the opportunity for young people to have a say on issues that are important to them. The Children in Care Survey is designed to gather views and opinions on young people's experience of the service using the five priorities outlined in the Pledge for Children in Care and Care Leavers. Following the previous low response level, a different approach to the survey has been taken this time.
- 6.8.5 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.
- 6.8.6 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/barnet/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)