

	Children, Education, Libraries, Safeguarding Committee 12 July 2016
Title	Update on Social Care Improvement Activity
Report of	Commissioning Director, Children and Young People
Wards	All
Status	Public
Urgent	No
Key	Yes
Enclosures	None
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Summary

The purpose of this report is to:

- Update Members on Performance in Children's Social Care
- Respond to the referral from Performance and Contract Management Committee in relation to Children's Social Care
- Set out the Council's priorities for the Practice Improvement Plan
- Identify areas of progress against the plan

This report sets out an update on Family Services recent social care improvement activity and frameworks which have recently been put in place to make further improvements. The key elements of activity are:

- The launch of the Children and Young People Plan 2016-2020 sets out the vision for Family Friendly Barnet, to develop resilience families and resilient children
- The Self Evaluation provides up to date evaluation of the needs of children and families within our area, effectiveness of current service provision and performance in improving outcomes for children and young people
- Additional resources for Family Services
- The 12 month review of Quality Assurance (QA) activity for the period May 2015 -

- April 2016 has identified emerging signs of improvement in social work practice
- A strong Practice Improvement Plan is now also in place and the rigorous implementation of this, drawing on additional resources and additional social work expertise, will be our major priority over the coming year to further accelerate the improvement journey and to achieve the Family Friendly Barnet vision

Recommendations

- 1. That the Committee note the improvement activity taking place in Family Services, as outlined in the body of the report.**

1. WHY THIS REPORT IS NEEDED

- 1.1 The Commissioning Director for Children and Young People, and Barnet's Statutory DCS, was requested by Members at Performance and Contracts Management Committee on 31 May 2016 to bring an update on the key themes of; status of social work practices and quality, agency and recruitment, increasing demand and overall budget issues to this Committee. This report sets out an overview of recent social care improvement activity and frameworks which have recently been put in place to make further improvements.
- 1.2 Over the past year, Family Services has focussed on establishing a sound basis on which to improve through strengthening the quality of our social work practice. This has been underpinned and informed by a focus on number of key themes identified over a period of time, including:
 - Social work practice remaining inconsistent
 - Understanding the relatively low number of children in the social care system
 - Addressing the impact of significant transformation in the service and the underlying risk of underperformance as changes are implemented
 - Addressing the challenge of recruiting and retaining sufficiently skilled and experienced social workers
 - Ensuring that sufficient strategic partnership working is in place
 - Increasing the voice of the child in planning at a strategic level
 - Engaging councillors more in delivering their corporate parenting responsibilities and broadening and updating the Pledge to children in care and care leavers
 - Improving the availability and quality of performance management information across the service
 - Ensuring that the present reporting regime is sufficiently robust to give assurance that services are improving outcomes for children, safely and effectively.
 - Ensuring that internal quality assurance frameworks are externally calibrated and verified on a regular basis to ensure that the quality of practice is not over- or understated.
 - Addressing areas of underperformance in specific teams

- Addressing the relatively high number of children and young people placed at distance from the Authority.
- Ensuring that key partners of universal provision are participating effectively in managing early help within their settings with clear and effective Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) oversight
- Developing a clear social work practice framework to improve consistency and stability of practice

1.3 There has been significant improvement work taking place in recent months. The key elements of activity are:

- The launch of the Children and Young People Plan 2016-2020 sets out the vision for Family Friendly Barnet, to develop resilience families and resilient children
- The Self Evaluation provides up to date evaluation of the needs of children and families within our area, effectiveness of current service provision and performance in improving outcomes for children and young people
- The 12 month review of Quality Assurance (QA) activity for the period May 2015 - April 2016 has identified emerging signs of improvement in social work practice
- A strong Practice Improvement Plan is now also in place and the rigorous implementation of this, drawing on additional resources and additional social work expertise, will be our major priority over the coming year to further accelerate the improvement journey and to achieve the Family Friendly Barnet vision

The vision

1.4 Over the next year Family Services will focus heavily on delivering the Children and Young People Plan 2016-2020 vision of making Barnet the most Family Friendly Borough by 2020. The Children and Young People Plan is a partnership plan, developed and shaped by partners from different sectors across the borough, and represents our joint commitment to making Barnet London's most 'Family Friendly' borough.

Family Friendly Barnet focused on making Barnet an even better place to live for all families - whether a couple with dependent children, a single-parent family, a foster family, a blended family or any other kind of family.

The theme of resilience has been chosen to drive Family Service's ambition for strong communities in which children can thrive and achieve. Resilience is the ability to bounce back from stress and adversity and take on new challenges, leading to better outcomes (Pearson & Hall 2006, adapted). A strategy based on resilience involves looking for strengths and opportunities to build on, rather than for issues or problems to treat.

1.5 'Family Friendly Barnet' is the Council's response to three key drivers for change impacting on Family Services:

The changing demographic nature of the borough. Barnet is now forecast to have the largest number of children of any London Borough by 2020. Alongside this, Barnet is becoming increasingly diverse as a result of regeneration and migration. We have seen demand for specialist services increase over the last 12 months.

The need to take a holistic, community focussed approach. The prevalence of Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE), Missing and Neglect present an overwhelming case for a community-based, integrated, practice-focussed approach promoted by resilience based practice; to build resilience not only within families, but also within Barnet's diverse communities to enable all of Barnet's children and young people to achieve the best outcomes.

The need to develop practice to the next level. We continue to build the foundations for good social work practice, with some key areas of strength. The focus is now on embedding the Family Friendly vision through the strands of our practice improvement plan: with a focus on quality social work; systems and tools and workforce development and recruitment.

Self Evaluation

- 1.6 The recent completion of a Self Evaluation provides up to date evaluation of the needs of children and families within our area, effectiveness of current service provision and performance in improving outcomes for children and young people.

Barnet has a strong governance framework for partnership work, underpinned by the recently refreshed Children and Young People's Plan which will drive forward the Family Friendly Barnet vision. There is clear direction and corporate commitments in place for improvement work to happen, particularly around Family Friendly Barnet and resilience based practice agenda

There is a longstanding commitment to and belief in Early Intervention as a key driver to improve outcomes for vulnerable children, which is underpinned by the multi-agency Early Intervention Strategy. Regular reviews and audits have found thresholds decision making is appropriate. A revised thresholds document was agreed by the Safeguarding Board in 2015 and was implemented across partnership. Step up and step down processes are working well; changes have allowed for greater professional discussion and reduction in drift and delay.

A clear governance structure for looked after children and care leavers supports them to be aware of their rights, entitlements and for their views, wishes and feelings to be taken into account in planning for their current and future development. A recent review of corporate parenting arrangements has improved the effectiveness of corporate parenting arrangements and

senior leaders and lead members are committed to their responsibilities as corporate parents, as illustrated by a recent joint motion by Councillors to Full Council and the subsequent launch of an ambitious new Pledge.

It is clear that there are some areas of strength in the service. At the same time, Family Services, in line with other authorities in London, experiences challenges in recruiting high-calibre, permanent social workers and at present our practice in Social Work in Barnet is not of sufficient consistent high quality. Frameworks have recently been put in place to improve the quality of social work practice, and the rigorous implementation of this will be our major priority over the coming year. There are robust measures in place to both recruit new social workers, agency staff and ensure that existing staff are working with manageable caseloads, good support and a strengthened learning and development offer focussing on resilience-based practice.

Increasing demand and additional resources

- 1.7 A number of changes to the Family Services establishment were required to help deliver purposeful, resilience-based practice in line with the practice improvement plan. The service needs to be configured in the best way possible, with manageable caseloads, and sufficient capacity to deliver service improvement. In summary, 36 new posts have been added to the establishment, 1 post has been deleted, alongside a change line management for that team, Market Factor Supplement has been introduced for Duty and Assessment team social workers, the Principal Social Worker post has been upgraded and there will be a move from 3 large to 6 small teams in Intervention and Planning.

Additional capacity to manage demand supports manageable caseloads for social workers to enable purposeful social work; Increased CAF capacity supports the provision of effective early intervention support; Increased capacity in Family Support assist high quality interventions to be delivered from family support services; Early Years brokerage officers support the expansion of early years places across the borough; and the formalising of CSE officer posts offer continuity for this important agenda. Overall, an additional £1,902.5k has been added to the establishment, as set out in paragraph 5.2.2 below.

Quality Assurance activity

- 1.8 In April 2015, following a review of the Quality Assurance Framework, revised audit activity began. The QA Framework sets out arrangements for case file audits and reviews, and thematic audits. Activity is monitored through the monthly performance meetings; there is challenge and accountability through regular monthly reporting to the Strategic Commissioning Director (DCS) and Lead Member. There is a clear, planned Quality Assurance programme of activity.

All audits include seeking the views of children and families (to ensure the voice of the child and family is heard), these are moderated by the Quality Assurance Manager to provide assurance against the overall grading of the audits.

The 12 month review of Quality Assurance (QA) activity for the period May 2015 - April 2016 has identified emerging signs of improvement and the quality of practice evidenced through audits has shown a positive improvement.

Practice Improvement Plan

1.9 The rigorous implementation of the practice improvement plan will be our major priority over the coming year to further accelerate the improvement journey. The delivery of the plan is being overseen by a Board, chaired by the interim CEO. The plan has 3 key strands;

1. To empower and equip the social care workforce to understand the importance and meaning of purposeful social work in Barnet, through:

- Disseminate and embed the vision of Family Friendly Barnet, which has resilience at its core
- Implement a tailored model of delivery
- Promote reflective supervision that supports social work practice
- Ensure consistent recording of information
- Effect sustained change in families through purposeful social work
- Further developing participation, to ensure that the voice of the child continues to inform the delivery of services
- Drive changes through purposeful practice leadership

2. To ensure that Barnet's organisational culture, systems and tools support the delivery of high quality social work, through:

- Review and implement changes to IT systems to support good practice
- Embed policies and procedures and refresh in line with vision
- A more timely, effective allocation system with aspirations for lower caseloads in Intervention & Planning
- Review accommodation requirements to support good practice

3. To retain, attract and grow a cadre of effective social workers who are child focussed, curious and inquisitive about what they are seeing and assessing through:

- More effective recruitment and retention methods
- Instil more rigorous and robust performance management
- Implement tools to better understand workforce performance
- Commission a learning and development core programme
- Develop a Practice Academy

2. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 Barnet is a great place to live for most families, children and young people. Barnet has some of the best schools in the country, some of the best parks and open spaces in London, and low levels of unemployment among the adult population. The borough is benefitting from large-scale regeneration projects, which are creating more housing, infrastructure and opportunities for all. In Barnet, most children and young people achieve well and successfully make the transition into adulthood.

The vision is focused on making Barnet an even better place to live for all families - whether a couple with dependent children, a single-parent family, a foster family, a blended family or any other kind of family. The theme of resilience to drive our ambition for strong communities in which children can thrive and achieve.

There will be situations where families require additional assistance to help build their resilience. In Barnet, the early help offer is provided across the strategic partnership in a timely, targeted and coordinated way to help families to achieve the best outcomes for their children. For some families, social work involvement will be required at particular points in time.

It is of significant importance that services delivered are high quality, seek to work in a meaningful way with families to build their resilience, to ensure that children, young people and their families are safe, healthy, knowledgeable, responsible, informed and listened to. As such, the implementation of improvement activity in Family Services is a key priority.

3. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND NOT RECOMMENDED

- 3.1 The coordinated implementation of the Practice Improvement Plan is integral the continuation of Family Services' improvement journey. The alternative option of maintaining the status quo will not make the desired improvements at the pace required.

4. POST DECISION IMPLEMENTATION

- 4.1 The delivery of the Practice Improvement Plan is underway. The delivery of the plan is being overseen by a Board, chaired by the interim CEO. Two meetings have taken place to date and additional resources and social care expertise are being drawn upon. A specialist, recently experienced social care leader has come into Barnet Family Services to support the implementation of the Practice Improvement Plan.

5. IMPLICATIONS OF DECISION

- 5.1 **Corporate Priorities and Performance**

5.1.1 Implications for Corporate Priorities

Ensure that Barnet is a place of opportunity, where people can further their quality of life: Family Services seeks to build community resilience to provide a good start in life for children and young people. “Community factors can also promote resilience. Children are likely to find it easier to access support outside the home when they live in cohesive neighbourhoods with formal facilities that encourage participation and achievement.” (Hill et al, 2007)¹

5.1.2 Implications for the committee’s Commissioning Objectives

Every child in Barnet has a great start in life, with the security and safety to grow in a nurturing environment: Warm, authoritative and responsive parenting is usually crucial in building resilience. The Practice Improvement Plan is a key mechanism through which Family Services will deliver the Family Friendly Barnet vision, which seeks to support parents’ roles in building their child’s resilience.

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

5.2.1 There are clear governance arrangements and a stable management team are supporting the continuous improvement of Family Services.

5.2.2 As detailed in paragraph 1.7 above, Additional resources have been assigned in order to drive further improvements and change.

Reason Cost	Reason Cost
Increase in demand at the front door	£444.0k
Increase in demand in the rest of the system	£670.5k
Adjustments to transformed structure	£175.0k
Early Years places	£160.0k
Child Sexual Exploitation & Missing	£110.0k
Caseload reduction	£343k
Total	£1,902.5k

5.3 Social Value

5.3.1 The Public Services (Social Value) Act 2013 requires people who commission public services to think about how they can also secure wider social, economic and environmental benefits. Elements of the Practice Improvement Plan implementation will involve the commissioning of services and training, learning and development. Opportunities to secure social value through these mechanisms will be considered as part of any commissioning process.

¹ Hill, M, Stafford, A, Seaman, P, Ross, N and Daniel, B (2007) ‘Parenting and resilience’, *Joseph Rowntree Foundation*. <https://www.jrf.org.uk/sites/default/files/jrf/migrated/files/parenting-resilience-children.pdf>

5.4 Legal and Constitutional References

- 5.4.1 Local authorities have specific duties in respect of children under the Children Acts 1989 and 2004. They have a general duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in need in their area and, provided that this is consistent with the child's safety and welfare, to promote the upbringing of such children by their families by providing services appropriate to the child's needs. They also have a duty to promote the upbringing of such children by their families, by providing services appropriate to the child's needs, provided this is consistent with the child's safety and welfare. They should do this in partnership with parents, in a way that is sensitive to the child's race, religion, culture and language and that, where practicable, takes account of the child's wishes and feelings. Services might include day care for young children, after-school care for school children, counselling, respite care, family centre services or practical help in the home or targeted parenting and family support.
- 5.4.2 Responsibility for Functions, Annex A, in the council's constitution states that the Children, Education, Libraries and Safeguarding Committee has the responsibility for powers, duties and functions relating to Children's Services. In addition to this, the committee has responsibility for overseeing the support for young people in care and enhancing the council's corporate parenting role.

5.5 Risk Management

- 5.5.1 The nature of services provided to children and families by Family Services manage significant levels of risk. High 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 Practice Improvement Plan will support the vision of Family Friendly Barnet, through high quality interventions, which seek to build the resilience of children, families and communities.

5.6 Equalities and Diversity

- 5.6.1 The 2010 Equality Act outlines the provisions of the Public Sector Equalities Duty which requires Public Bodies **to have due regard** to the need to:
- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010
 - advance equality of opportunity between people from different groups
 - foster good relations between people from different groups

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.

Barnet's Council commissioning plan up to 2020, to deliver involved, successful and resilient communities, is underpinned by a recently refreshed, thorough JSNA which sets out the issues facing the local community. The

use of the JSNA is now an anchor for all commissioning activity to ensure needs are understood and met in a coordinated way. There are a number of strategic commissioning activities which support Family Friendly Barnet and which contribute to building resilience for children, young people and their families.

5.7 Consultation and Engagement

5.7.1 A range of consultation and engagement activity is taking place both across Family Services and across the multi-agency partnership in relation to the Children and Young People Plan and the Early Intervention and Prevention Strategy implementation. A multitude of workshops have taken place between the Senior Leadership Team in Family Services and members of staff across Family Services to progress the resilience based practice approach. The discussion and feedback from this engagement activity is informing and shaping the ongoing improvement activity. This is supplementing ongoing consultation with children and young people, including the implementation of new tools such as Mind of My Own (MoMo) to hear their views and to shape service development.

5.8 Insight

5.8.1 Historically Barnet has had relatively low levels of Children in Need, Child Protection and Children in Care per 10,000, which can be partly explained by population factors, however there have been recent increases in demand at the front door, in early intervention and social care. These have been addressed through the injection of increased resources. A performance framework, monthly assurance report and complements and complaints mechanisms enable insight to be used to inform the continuous improvement of services.

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

6.1 Item 8, Performance and Contract Management Committee, 31 May 2016:
<https://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=693&MId=8412&Ver=4>