

**Barnet Children's Services Improvement Action Plan  
September 2017-September 2018**

## 1. Introduction

Barnet Council and its partners are committed to the vision to be the most family friendly borough in London by 2020. At the heart of this journey is the building of resilience in children and their families enabling them to bounce back from adversity. We know that we have failed to deliver this aspiration and have let children and families down. This improvement action plan has been developed in response to these failing, and the recommendations and areas for improvement as outlined in the Ofsted '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' which took place in Barnet between 24 April 2017 and 18 May 2017.

This action plan sets out the improvement journey Family Services in Barnet needs to make to transform our social care services for children, young people and their families from inadequate to good rapidly. Improving the quality of services to children is a key partnership and corporate priority we know we need to work collectively across the partnership and the council to drive the improvements we want. Children in Barnet deserve the best possible services from us and we are committed to doing whatever we can to deliver great outcomes for children and young people across the borough

Most children and young people in Barnet excel, but there are a few children and young people who do not. Effective leadership and partnership is vital to delivering good and outstanding services that keep children and young people safe and give them the right help, at the right time in their lives.

Our commitment to Barnet's vulnerable children is to deliver services that give children and young people the platform to succeed and thrive. We will work closely together with focus and drive to deliver timely and effective services, achieving good outcomes for children and young people in Barnet.

To realise our ambitions for children and young people, we will not compromise:

- on the quality of staff we need to improve the experience of children who need our help
- the rigour applied or,
- on the pace needed to drive the improvements

We have three core strategic objectives that cut across 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 effective 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, curious and child focussed

This single plan sets out the improvement journey and gives us the focus we need to transform our services, especially social care, for our most vulnerable children, young people. We want to rapidly improve from inadequate to good we will not be deflected from that challenge.

## 2. Ofsted Recommendations

The 19 recommendations for improvement made by Ofsted are:

1. Ensure a continued and sustained focus on improving core social work practice, strategically and operationally, to equip practitioners and managers to deliver good-quality services to children and their families.
2. Ensure that partners work together in the multi-agency safeguarding hub to ensure timely and accurate information sharing and a consistent application of thresholds for all children referred to children's services.
3. Ensure that social work practice and decision making for children focus on understanding their lived experiences and incorporate their wishes and feelings.
4. Ensure that all children identified as being at risk of harm benefit from effective child protection enquiries
5. Ensure that strategy discussions include information gathered from all partners, and result in clear planning and recording of actions and the rationale for decisions.
6. Ensure that all written records are clear and up to date, and accurately reflect the circumstances of children and their families
7. Ensure that the quality of assessments is sufficient to enable an accurate evaluation of the risks posed to children, and that this is regularly updated.
8. Ensure that management decision making is effective and leads to clear, timely and effective care planning that safeguards children and focuses on improving outcomes for them.
9. Ensure that children who are victims of chronic long-term neglect and emotional abuse, and who are subject to long periods of child protection planning, have appropriate risk assessments and plans made for them.
10. Ensure that timely action is taken to understand and reduce risk to children who go missing from home or care and who are vulnerable to child sexual exploitation. When risk does not reduce, or increases, ensure that effective additional safeguarding action is taken

11. Improve the standard of social work to families under the pre-proceedings phase of the Public Law Outline and ensure that, when there is no improvement within a timescale that is right for children, the local authority issues timely court proceedings to protect them and avoid drift and delay in achieving permanence.
12. Ensure that connected carers are thoroughly assessed within regulatory timescales.
13. Ensure that all children who are privately fostered and their carers are regularly visited, that all work is compliant with minimum standards of good practice, and that the awareness of private fostering is raised in the workforce
14. Ensure that homeless 16- to 17-year-olds are thoroughly assessed and that appropriate ongoing support is offered to them to meet their needs.
15. Ensure that the oversight of practice by all operational directors, heads of service, team managers, child protection chairs and independent reviewing officers is child focused and effective in achieving positive change for children
16. Improve children's participation in all decisions and planning that affect them and in future service developments, including their stronger involvement in corporate parenting.
17. Ensure that all children receive help to understand their histories, and that social workers write life-story books and later-life letters sensitively, in a child-focused way.
18. Ensure that children's diversity and identity needs are met and that they are supported to retain their birth language. Ensure that interpreters are used to communicate with them and their families, when needed.
19. Improve care leavers' ownership of pathway plans and the quality and timeliness of targets, to improve their lives. Ensure that care leavers have the tools, such as money management, to cope with life's challenges and are fully aware of the 'Pledge' and their entitlements.

Additionally there are five recommendations for the Barnet Safeguarding Children Board

1. Ensure that a programme of quality assurance is established to monitor the quality of frontline practice across statutory work and early help.
2. Ensure that all partner agencies and their staff are aware of thresholds for intervention.
3. Increase scrutiny and challenge of practice for privately fostered children and raise awareness of the notification process.
4. Ensure that the effectiveness of multi-agency safeguarding training is monitored and evaluated.
5. Review the function of the child sexual exploitation and missing sub-group, and align this with other strategic forums to incorporate children at risk of youth violence and gang affiliation.

### **3. Improvement Plan**

The approach taken in Barnet is to have two elements in 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.

#### 4. Themes

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

##### **Improvement themes**

2. Governance Leadership, and Partnership
  - a. *Strengthened systems leadership for children with sufficient capacity and capability at all levels.*
  - b. *Strengthened governance arrangements that prioritise children and add value to improvements*
  - c. *Corporate support which understands the role of social workers and reflects a collective ambition for children in the borough*
3. Embedding Practice Leadership
  - a. *Strengthen practice leadership through effective management oversight and increased capacity*
4. Right interventions, right time (Thresholds)
  - a. *Effective MASH*
  - b. *Proportionate, effective and timely decision making*
  - c. *Joined up Early Help*
5. Improving Assessment for children
  - a. *Strengthen risk assessment*
  - b. *Child focussed assessment: Tackling drift and delay*
6. Improving Planning for children
  - a. *Child centred planning*
  - b. *Plans achieving best outcomes: Tackling drift and delay*
7. Effective Communications and Engagement to drive culture change that will improve children's lives
  - a. *Connection via impactful, two-way communication and engagement from the top to the bottom of the children's service*
  - b. *Strong cross agency engagement and communication from top to bottom*

*c. A strong and impactful corporate communications and engagement approach, both internally to the wider organisation and externally to service users and wider residents and communities*

## **5. Driving Improvement**

To achieve change, we must be relentless in our expectations and committed to achieving improvements in the way we deliver services and the outcomes we achieve with children and families. We are investing in achieving and sustaining a systemic leadership style that promotes respectful challenge and curiosity about the systems we work within and our influence upon the effectiveness of these.

The change we want to see must be continually modelled, promoted and challenged when it is not evident in children's experiences of our services. Our social work practice must be purposeful and focused on achieving change for children by ensuring that they are at the centre of everything we do.

We will work with our collegiate improvement partner to support and challenge our approach.

## **6. Governance and monitoring arrangements**

In responding to the inspection report Barnet has changed its improvement board arrangements. The Children's Services Improvement Board will be independently chaired by our collegiate improvement partner (Essex County Council Executive Director) and will ultimately be responsible for the delivery of the Improvement Plan through effective scrutiny, challenge and measuring its impact. The Board is made up of the senior leaders from the Council – including Members - and its key partners to bring focus and pace to the implementation of the Improvement Plan. It will act as the primary driver of improvement.

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

Reports on progress of the plan will be received by:

- Children, Education, Libraries and Safeguarding Committee,
- Health and Well-Being Board,
- Barnet Safeguarding Children's Board.

## **7. Planning for 18/19 and beyond**

The Improvement Plan is a one-year plan. It will be reviewed at a whole day stocktake in May 2018 to consider whether actions can be integrated into the new three-year Children and Young People's Plan or whether a further Improvement Plan is required.

## **8. Metrics**

An Improvement dashboard has been developed which will provide key data and headline narratives to describe how the implementation of the plan is progressing, and what impact this activity is having on the delivery of services to children and their outcomes. These indicators will be reviewed over time to establish if they are effective in monitoring change.

## **9. RAG Key**

The RAG rating set out in the plan specifically monitors the delivery of the item embedded in the plan.

The impact of the plan will be reported to the Improvement Board through the improvement dashboard and reporting from activity leads designed to show how the work being done on the plan is making a difference to children.

The RAG ratings are defined as follows:

-  Action completed
-  Action on track to be completed in timescales
-  Action unlikely to meet timescales, but plan in place to deliver
-  Action will not be delivered in timescales and no plan in place to mitigate

## **10. Managing Risk**

Where individual elements of the plan are off track and not delivering the expected outcomes, mitigation plans will be developed by the Operational Improvement Group to rectify and address the outstanding issues.

## 1. Turnaround Priority

### What do we need to fix?

The quality of social work practice needs to turn around at pace to ensure children's outcomes are improved. More capability and capacity is required at different levels across the Council and partnership to drive this improvement.

### What do we need to change?

- Social work practice is inadequate with the needs of children not being effectively understood and met
- Practice leadership has not driven quality improvements across the service
- The pace of improvement is too slow, and the focus on improvement needs to be more forensic and rigorous
- Essex CC as improvement partner to provide capacity and capability, working alongside children's services to accelerate improvement.
- All staff, managers and leaders know what good look like, the improvements required, and how to translate this into their practice

### What do we want to see?

- Consistently good social work practice leading to the best possible outcomes for children

**Lead: Chris Munday**

ID	Objective	Actions	Lead	Date of Delivery (Activity completed Month ending)	RAG
T1	<b>To drive sustainable Practice</b>	Introduce a more systemic approach to case file audit in Barnet in order to provide quality assurance of work and evidence of the impact of other areas of this plan	DS	October 2017	<b>G</b>

T2	<b>Improvement at pace</b>	Calibrate quality of audit activity in Barnet in partnership with Essex to ensure consistent understanding from all managers and workers of what inadequate, requires improvement and good looks like.	DS	October 2017	<b>A</b>
T3		Secure the functioning of the MASH arrangements in Barnet with input from Essex.	SM	October 2017	<b>G</b>
T4		Coach and mentoring from Essex for the Barnet Children's Services senior management team to give extra capacity to drive turnaround.	CM	October 2018	<b>A</b>
T5		Support effective practice challenge from Child Protection Conference Chairs and Independent Reviewing Officers with input from Essex so that plans are appropriately scrutinised and reviewed	BJ	October 2017	<b>G</b>
T6		Review and Strengthen Leadership and Management turnaround capacity across all management tiers within Family Services through recruitment activity	TMcE	October 2017	<b>A</b>
T7		Introduce practice stock take meetings to drive improvement chaired by Essex as Improvement Partner	CM	October 2017	<b>G</b>
T8		Ensure "conditions for success" are embedded within Barnet (Appendix 1)	JH	October 2017	<b>A</b>

## Priority 2: Governance, Leadership and Partnerships

### What do we need to fix?

Improving the quality of services for children is a priority in the Corporate Plan but whole system leadership is not yet effective at driving improvement. There is not collective accountability, ownership, understanding and priority given to improving outcomes for children and young people in Barnet. Senior leaders do not understand the lived experience of vulnerable children and young people. There is insufficient support and challenge across the system by senior leaders which hinders the improvement of service delivery at pace. Corporate Governance and performance reporting is not effective in driving improvement and adding value. Safeguarding Board arrangements are inadequate and not meeting statutory requirements.

### What do we need to change?

The collective ambition for children in Barnet is harnessed to improve outcomes.

- Senior leaders across the Council, Schools and partner organisations, as well as Councillors, know how they are contributing towards improving frontline practice and supporting better outcomes for children and families.
- The right capability and capacity needs to exist from a leadership, management and frontline perspective to drive improvement and improve outcomes quickly.
- Performance reporting needs to be focused on giving Members and senior leaders the right information to be able to monitor the quality of services.
- Systems in family services need to be in place to give social workers and managers the information they need to do their job effectively.
- The systems leadership and governance should create a culture of openness and transparency

### What do we want to see?

A plan that is owned, understood and has contributions from leaders across the system.

- Strengthened systems leadership for children with sufficient capacity and capability at all levels
- Strengthened governance arrangements that drive improvement and add value
- Corporate support which reflects a collective ambition for children in the borough and understands the needs of the social care workforce in order to achieve this

**Lead: Chris Munday**

ID	Objective	Actions	Lead	Date of Delivery	RAG
2a(i)	<b>Strengthened systems leadership for children with sufficient capacity and capability at all levels.</b>	Ensure the service has sufficient resource of the right quality to drive change by <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>recruiting additional managers</li> <li>recruiting additional social workers</li> </ul> to improve practice, reduce caseloads (to 12-16) and spans of control in social work teams and reduce agency rate by 10% at pace	GL	September 2017 onwards	<b>A</b>
2a(ii)		Ensure all Chief Officers, Councillors and senior leaders in the partnership understand the Improvement Plan and drive changes to support improvement within corporate directorates and strategic partnership boards and support the development of front line practice and engagement with young people	JH	November 2017	<b>A</b>
2a(iii)		Ensure the voice of children is heard in the planning of Barnet services so that their lived experience is reflected in the commissioning and delivery of services.	SD	January 2018	<b>A</b>
2a(v)		Establish the UNICEF Child Rights Programme in Barnet to facilitate the child's voice being heard.	SD	Launched August 2017	<b>G</b>
2a(vi)		Improve children's participation in all decision making and planning that affect them in future service developments including their stronger involvement in corporate parenting so that their lived experience is reflected in the commissioning and delivery of services	SD	September 2017	<b>G</b>

ID	Objective	Actions	Lead	Date of Delivery	RAG
2a(vii)		Implement an annual social work survey to evaluate impact of practice changes and opportunities to improve services further	CM	January 2018	<b>G</b>
2a(viii)		Create Friends of virtual school charity to enhance partnership support for LAC and care leavers and fundraise at least £100k per annum to improve the experience for children in care and enhance their outcomes through funding their participation in life enhancing activities.	JH	March 2018	<b>G</b>
2a(ix)		Agree an escalation and resolution process within the partnership	SD	October 2017	<b>A</b>
2b(i)	<b>Strengthened governance arrangements that prioritise children and add value to improvements</b>	Ensure Members of the Council are well informed, understand and undertake their role more effectively in order to strengthen governance of services for children.	CM	November 2017	<b>G</b>
2b(ii)		Commission additional support from Essex Lead Member to support CELS members on their role and effective challenge	Cllr T	October 2017	<b>G</b>
2b(iii)		Develop a forward plan of member training and development, including mandatory training on safeguarding and corporate parenting	JH	October 2017	<b>A</b>
2b(iv)		Update Members code of conduct to reflect key safeguarding and corporate parenting responsibilities.	JH	November 2017	<b>A</b>
2b(v)		Undertake monthly review of improvement plan at Leaders Briefing to	JH	November 2017	<b>A</b>

ID	Objective	Actions	Lead	Date of Delivery	RAG
		ensure that all Committee chairs understand the plan and are driving and contributing to improvement activity.			
2b(vi)		Review Terms of Reference of Corporate Parenting Advisory Board to ensure that Members get the opportunity to understand and develop services for looked after children	Cllr T	December 2017	<b>G</b>
2b(vii)		Review Children's Partnership Board to ensure it is delivering effectively improved outcomes for children in Barnet	CM	November 2017	<b>G</b>
2b(viii)		Develop new Children and Young People's Plan so that Senior leaders across the multi-agency children's system are able to demonstrate how they are strategically contributing towards improving frontline practice and supporting improved outcomes for children and families	CM	September 2018	<b>G</b>
2b(ix)		Implement the new governance and partnership structural arrangements for the LSCB to ensure; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) the strategic objectives for the safeguarding partnership are set by senior leaders from the core partner agencies</li> <li>b) A more agile responsive partnership structure to address practice</li> <li>c) Business and Improvement plan in place that clearly demonstrates how partners are engaged in delivering good services to children and have line of sight on the effectiveness of these services</li> </ul>	SD	September 2017	<b>G</b>

ID	Objective	Actions	Lead	Date of Delivery	RAG
2b(x)		Review of governance framework to ensure that reporting to Committees and SCB is sufficiently self-critical and focused on the important issues to facilitate challenge, learning and improvement.	JH	January 2018	G
2c(i)	<b>Corporate Support which reflects a collective ambition for children in the borough</b>	Strengthen relationship between Legal Services and Case holding teams through a review to ascertain how improvements can be made in the timeliness of children's cases	SE	November 2017	G
2c(ii)		Enhance practice and case recording through a range of developments in the IT systems.	YP	September 2018	A
2c(iii)		Improve recruitment system to be more effective and efficient enabling	SE	October 2017	A
2c(iv)		Systems review of finance to enable social workers to do their jobs efficiently	AD	November 2017	G
2c(v)		Review of bureaucracy across the Council and the Service to ensure that systems are efficient and effective to support the social work task.	CS	November 2017	G

### Priority three: Embedding Practice Leadership

#### What do we need to fix?

- Oversight of practice does not provide sufficient guidance or direction to improve practice for children
- Management oversight and supervision is not consistent and rigorous to ensure effective assessment, planning, intervention and review.
- Performance data needs to have a child focus and be linked to management information that drives practice improvement

#### What do we need to change?

- Practice Leadership improvements should be designed to increase capacity, improve performance and enhance consistency and effective decision making.
- Managers to provide effective and respectful challenge to social work practitioners, team managers and partner agencies to ensure risk is identified, responded to and managed
- Timely and robust decisions are made to ensure progress is achieved for children and appropriate steps are taken to safeguard their welfare
- Managers to work closely with practitioners to ensure practice improves and any barriers are managed without delay
- Being clear about what we mean about practice leadership across the partnership
- A focus of the Learning and Development Programme to be on practice leadership that leads to improved decision making and outcomes for children
- Performance management is clear, effective and robust
- Our resilience based approach to becomes more systemic

#### What do we want to see?

##### A support and challenge practice culture in which:

- Children benefit from professional systems that work together effectively improving their lived experience
- Children's voices are heard and influence decisions being made about them
- Decisions about children are recorded, accurately, timely and proportionate to their changing needs and risks they may face
- Decisions lead to timely interventions from appropriately skilled professionals across the partnership

**Lead: Tina McElligott and Brigitte Jordaan**

ID	Objective	Actions	Lead	Date of Delivery	RAG
3a(i)	<b>Strengthen practice leadership through effective management oversight and increased capacity</b>	Recruit Operational Directors	CM	August 2017	<b>C</b>
3a(ii)		Recruit 4 Practice Development Workers to focus on supporting staff to develop their practice	DS	November 2017	<b>C</b>
3a(iii)		Develop an operational protocol that sets out practice standards and expectation for management oversight	TMcE	October 2017	<b>A</b>
3a(iv)		Review caseloads across the service to ensure appropriate resource levels are maintained	BJ/TMcE	September 2017	<b>A</b>
3a(v)		Implement performance management framework by bringing information together from case audit, practice development and performance data at team level	DS	November 2017	<b>A</b>
3a(vi)		Refresh appraisal approach and align staff performance objectives to the appropriate Knowledge and Skills Statements	BJ/TMcE	June 2017	<b>C</b>
3a(vii)		Provide social workers with reflective supervision that is frequent, outcome focused, with clear actions and timescales that are reviewed regularly.	BJ/TMcE	November 2017	<b>A</b>
3a(viii)		Drive development of expertise and knowledge to ensure evidence based	DS	October 2017	<b>A</b>

ID	Objective	Actions	Lead	Date of Delivery	RAG
		practice and the confident use of theoretical models through a new Workforce Development Programme			
3a(ix)		Design and implement a Quality Assurance framework that includes live audit activity, practice week and 4R's – reflective case reviews to be delivered by practitioners and practice development workers	DS	November 2017	<b>A</b>
3a(x)		Embed a multi-agency workforce development programme through BSCB	SD	October 2017	<b>A</b>
3a(xi)		Through workforce development and practice development ensure service and partnership understands what a good child-centred plan looks like and highlights any evidence of drift or delay in planning for children.	DS	December 2017	<b>A</b>

#### Priority 4: Right Interventions, Right Time (Thresholds)

##### What do we need to fix?

Threshold decisions are inconsistently made and are misunderstood resulting in children not getting the help when they need it. This results in delay for too many children, some of whom remain at risk of significant harm

##### What do we need to change?

- Children and young people get the right help they need at the right time
- Listen to children and act upon what is heard
- Work effectively with children's families, professionals & community systems
- Involve children and families in the decisions being made about them
- Recognise risk and effectively escalate and respond swiftly
- Consistently make good decisions that keep children safe
- Use information held and views shared by partners and key agencies effectively, to understand and inform risk analysis and decisions
- MASH partners work effectively together to share information and make decisions about risk children and young people face and the services they need to improve their outcomes
- There is understanding of the multi-agency escalation policy

##### What do we want to see?

- a. Effective MASH (Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub)
- b. Effective decision making
- c. Joined up Early help

**Lead: Tina McElligott**

ID	Improvement theme	Actions	Lead	Date of Delivery	RAG
4a.(i)	<b>4a. Effective MASH</b>	MASH Steering Group is established to engage with a wide range of partners to drive improvements in the multi-agency delivery of the service.	TMcE	August 2017	C
4a.(ii)		Strengthen management oversight within the MASH to enhance operational delivery and partnership arrangements.	SM	August 2017	C
4a.(iii)		Adult Social care to embed Mental Health and Learning Disability Social Work skills in the MASH	DW	November 2017	A
4a.(iv)		Implement MASH Quality Assurance activity which considers the voice of the child, management oversight, quality and timeliness of decision making	DS	October 2017	C
4a.(v)		Ensure improved quality of communication to the MASH from referrers and response from MASH in order to promote information sharing and collaborative working.	SM	October 2017	G
4b(i)	<b>4b. Effective decision making</b>	All partners are aware, understand thresholds and make good referrals with consent where appropriate	SM	January 2018	A
4b(ii)		Establish routine quality assurance activity on thresholds, decision making for children in need, children in need of protection and those subject to the pre-proceedings process.	DS	End October 2017	G

ID	Improvement theme	Actions	Lead	Date of Delivery	RAG
4c(i)	<b>4c. Joined up Early Help</b>	Pilot integrated early help offer through the Children and Young People Family Hubs	TMcE/ JN	September 2017	<b>A</b>
4c(ii)		Undertake a review of the menu of interventions and its accessibility for schools, health and police	KP	January 2018	<b>G</b>
4c(iii)		Evaluate new delivery model and its impact on how we meet the needs of children	JN	September 2018	<b>G</b>
4c(iv)		BSCB establishes effective arrangements to monitor and drive improvement on the impact of work undertaken on thresholds and Early Help	SD	Quarterly	<b>G</b>
4c(v)		BSCB develops a Safeguarding handbook with partners clarifying best practice, roles and responsibilities, policies and procedures for all agencies	SD	November 2017	<b>G</b>

## Priority Five: Improving Assessment for children

### What do we need to fix?

Poor quality assessments do not effectively analyse risk of harm and lead to reassessment and poor planning. Too many children are reassessed meaning they can drift in the system and be delayed in receiving intervention. This has an adverse effect on the outcomes for children

### What do we need to change?

- Children at risk must receive responsive, timely and robust investigations of their circumstances leading to proportionate decisions and actions leading to improved outcomes
- Address the over tolerance of risk for our children across the system
- Children are seen, listened to and effectively helped by all professionals in contact with them; and are provided with opportunities to participate in assessments and decisions made about them
- Children are kept safe through robust assessments that lead to SMART plans that are rigorously monitored by managers
- Having a skilled workforce that can analyse what is seen and read to identify risk, make sound decisions and deliver effective interventions for children
- All assessments hold children at the center, clearly articulating what life is like for the child, detailing risks and what needs to happen to improve their circumstances, and timescales for review
- Children's records accurately reflect their circumstances, risks, plans and rationale for decisions made about them, written so that children can understand
- Swift action is taken to protect children when, by holding multi-agency strategy meetings, the information gathered by a range of source indicates an increase in risk.
- Assessments thoroughly explore and consider family history including the influence of cultural, linguistic and religious beliefs, norms and expectations
- Do not delay the provision of support when a need is identified
- Ensure children's views and wishes are recorded in their own words/pictures
- Young people who are homeless receive a comprehensive assessment and are appropriately supported
- Thoroughly assess connected adults /persons as early in the permanency journey as possible and within regulatory timescales

### What do we want to see?

5a. Strengthened risk assessment

5b. Child focused assessment tackling drift and delay

**Lead: Tina McElligott and Brigitte Jordaan**

ID	Objective	Actions	Lead	Date of Delivery	RAG
5a(i)	<b>5a. Strengthen risk assessment</b>	Make all strategy discussions compliant with " <i>Working Together to Safeguard Children – update 16 February 2017</i> " to ensure that assessment is timely and effective at managing risk	KPop	October 2017	<b>A</b>
5a(ii)		Barnet's Community Safety Strategy and the Statutory Community Safety Partnership have clear strategic and operational alignment that supports the safeguarding of children and responds to the findings and recommendations of Barnet's Ofsted Inspection.	JB	November 2017	<b>A</b>
5a(iii)		Ensure information from MASE, MARAC, Prevent and Gangs Panels arrangements inform assessment of risk and that children get the help they need at the right time	SM	October 2017	<b>A</b>
5a(iv)		Improve approach and assessment for children missing from home and from care to ensure robust tracking and multi-agency assessment of risk	TMcE	October 2017	<b>G</b>
5a(v)		Vulnerable adolescent risk management group will monitor how agencies coordinate and respond effectively to adolescent risks, including: Gangs, Serious Youth Violence and group offending, trafficking, harmful sexual behaviour, CSE, Missing, E-Safety and radicalisation	KH	March 2018	<b>A</b>
5a(vi)		Implement and embed the use of appropriate risk assessment tools	DS	October 2017	<b>A</b>

ID	Objective	Actions	Lead	Date of Delivery	RAG
5a(vii)		Implement and evaluate new Joint Housing and CSC Protocol for Homeless 16 & 17 year olds so that young people at risk of homelessness are appropriately supported	KPop	September 2017	<b>C</b>
5a(viii)		Ensure fostering and connected person assessments are tracked and delivered to a high quality	BJ	September 2017	<b>A</b>
5b(i)	<b>5b. Child focused assessment</b>	Strengthen quality of assessments through encouraging curiosity evidencing the child's voice and being more analytical	TMcE	March 2018	<b>G</b>
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	TMcE	March 2018	<b>G</b>
5b(iii)		Ensure assessments demonstrate collective view on child's needs	TMcE	March 2018	<b>G</b>

## Priority Six: Improving Planning for children

### What do we need to fix?

Poor planning that is not focused on outcomes and is unresponsive when children's circumstances change or deteriorate.

### What we need to change?

- Ensure that children, young people and their families have a clear understanding of the concerns and risks identified and what needs to happen to achieve change in agreed timescales
- Involve children, young people and families in the development of their plans
- Evidence impact of learning and improvements in children's assessment and plans
- Social workers are equipped to undertake direct work to understand the child's lived experience, wishes and views
- The lives of children, young people and families in need of help and protection are improved by rigorous challenge at all levels through multi-agency planning and reviews of their circumstance
- Escalate interventions to ensure children and young people do not continue to live in situations that are harmful to them
- Swift action is taken when progress is not being made for children in accordance with their plan and agreed timescales
- Ensure plans are consistently reviewed and progress in agreed timescales with contingencies to address lack of progress
- Children subject to pre-proceedings process have timely interventions, leading to improved outcomes
- Children's whose outcomes are not improving are protected through timely Court proceedings to secure change and permanency for them
- Children will not experience drift or delay in achieving outcomes and permanence
- Children who are Looked After will have a clear permanency plan by their second CLA review
- Ensure children in private fostering arrangements are safe, visited regularly and monitored through regular reviews
- Young people make successful transitions to adulthood and achieve their aspirations through having the care, support and help they need

### What we want to see?

- a. Child centred planning
- b. Plans achieving best outcomes, tackling drift and delay

**Lead: Tina McElligott and Brigitte Jordaan**

ID	Objective	Actions	Lead	Date of Delivery	RAG
6a(i)	<b>a. Child centred planning</b>	Ensure all children and young people requiring social care intervention have robust child-centred plans which are timely and reviewed if not effective to mitigate against drift and delay	BJ	December 2017	<b>A</b>
6a(ii)		Children and families participate in developing their plans, leading to stronger engagement in working towards the agreed goals	TMc	December 2017	<b>A</b>
6a(iii)		Undertake analysis of Reviewing Officer's monitoring forms to ensure plans and progress is tracked against agreed requirements for change	NH	October 2017	<b>G</b>
6a(iv)		Ensure that children in need of protection or in care are aware of advocacy services to support planning	NH	October 2017	<b>A</b>
6a(v)		Increase capacity for Family Group Conference service to support care planning	KPop	August 2017	<b>C</b>
6a(vi)		Ensure the Permanency Planning Panel strengthens decision making for children and robustly reviews care planning	BJ	June 2017	<b>C</b>
6a(vii)		Review pathway plans routinely to ensure young person's participation and ownership of plan.	NH	September 2017	<b>G</b>
6a(viii)		Ensure all children in care have life story work to prepare them for independence	NH	February 2018	<b>A</b>

ID	Objective	Actions	Lead	Date of Delivery	RAG
6a(x)		Ensure that transfers between teams are conducted according to best practice and in a timely manner so that this does not contribute to drift and delay in plans	All HoS	October 2017	A
6a(xi)		Create opportunities for review meetings to be delivered in a way that the child can most effectively participate in the planning	NH	January 2018	A
6b(i)	<b>b. Plans achieving best outcomes, tackling drift and delay</b>	Equip social workers with intervention tools necessary for effective resilience based direct work	DS	January 2018	G
6b(ii)		Improve the quality of Personal Education Plans (PEPS) and educational outcomes through implementing the Virtual School improvement strategy	JM	Sept 2018	G
6b(iii)		Embed an effective and seamless process for identification of Connected Carers and tracking of assessment and approval process	NH	Sept 2017	A
6b(iv)		Strengthen private fostering arrangements through practice development and increased publicity	NH	Oct 2017	G
6b(v)		Evaluate the Life skills project, with young people, to ensure it addresses their needs and improves their outcomes in adulthood	NH	Jan 2018	G

ID	Objective	Actions	Lead	Date of Delivery	RAG
6b(vi)		Develop information for care leavers telling them about their entitlements and how to access them; and disseminate to all care leavers	NH	Nov 2017	G
6b(vii)		Develop new programmes to reduce levels of NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) care leavers to ensure they have access to employment and training opportunities	CS	April 2018	G
6b(viii)		Tackle delays in access to CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services) provision by ensuring children have timely access to CAMHS in line with CAMHS transformation plan	CMc	April 2018	A
6b(ix)		Improve the provision of discretionary funds for care leavers reducing the risk of homelessness and poor outcomes	CS	November 2017	G

## Priority Seven: Effective Communication and Engagement driving culture change

### What do we need to fix?

There is insufficient clarity around the vision, model and practice improvement required across family services, across the wider organisation, members and partners leading to a disconnect between senior management and frontline social workers which is a barrier to rapid improvement.

Front line staff do not feel engaged with the changes.

There is a lack of transparency around decision making across the system

### What we need to change?

- A culture which focusses on improving the lived experience of children and young people in receipt of social care services from all service providers across the borough
- Regular engagement takes place between senior leaders and frontline practitioners, including effective two way dialogue.
- Work across children's services and all services supporting children's services promotes a culture of honesty, escalation and improvement.
- Effective Induction ensures all staff are clear of the vision, philosophy and practice approach.
- Clear line of sight exists from Members, senior leaders through to frontline practice.
- The wider organisation and partners are well engaged in the improvement work, understand their roles within it, and actively contribute.

### What we want to see?

Effective Communications and Engagement drive culture change and improvement through:

- a. Building connection via impactful, two-way communication and engagement from the top to the bottom of the children's service
- b. Strong cross agency engagement and communication
- c. Strong corporate communication and engagement

**Lead: Chris Munday**

ID	Objective	Actions	Lead	Date of Delivery	RAG
7a(i)	<b>7a. Building connection via communication and engagement from the top to the bottom of the children's service</b>	Ensure that senior managers have regular meaningful engagement with front line staff and managers that facilitates two-way communication and feedback	CM	October 2017	<b>A</b>
7a(ii)		Embed clear lines of sight between senior management and frontline practice through a programme of ongoing engagement.	KM	November 2017	<b>A</b>
7a(iii)		Utilise all existing communication channels within Family Support to communicate progress of the improvement plan to internal staff, creating a systematic and structured approach to ensuring engagement	CM	November 2017	<b>A</b>
7a(iv)		Ensure all staff receive an effective induction	DS	October 2017	<b>A</b>
7a(v)		Implement Service User Engagement Strategy (appendix 2)	SD	October 2017	<b>A</b>
7b(i)	<b>7b. Strong cross agency engagement and communication for top to bottom</b>	A strong and impactful corporate communications and engagement approach, both internally to the wider organization and externally to service users and wider residents and communities	SE	October 2017	<b>A</b>
7b(ii)		Promote understanding of multi-agency working through development of a local handbook for partners and refreshing of the LSCB website	SD	November 2017	<b>A</b>

ID	Objective	Actions	Lead	Date of Delivery	RAG
7b(iii)		Utilise regular engagement with schools to promote improvement activity	IH	January 2017	A
7c(i)	<b>7c. A strong and impactful corporate communications and engagement approach, both internally to the wider organisation and externally to service users and wider residents and communities</b>	Implement a cycle of communication to include internal, member and partners around the update reports for committee	SD	November 2017	A
7c(ii)		Enhance lines of sight across the organisation through wider member, partner and SCB attendance of, for example, practice week, along with other engagement initiatives.	JH	October 2017	A

## Appendix 1

### Conditions for Success



## **1. Articulating values and vision**

Senior managers and other leaders talking and acting as a team. They must have a shared approach and view about their intention to improve outcomes for the most vulnerable children and about the provision of social care for children and families. This includes being clear about what children's social care is seeking to achieve.

A whole systems approach to strategic planning and service delivery for children – from early help through protection to care and adoption – including:

- a) service design and delivery based on learning from experience, including feedback from service users about what works
- b) a coherent mix of interventions, available at the right time and at the right level
- c) the whole system promoting a culture of meeting need in the least intrusive and most universal way, reserving specialist services such as social care for those in the highest need
- d) an adequate resource envelope for each tier of services, based on an analysis of need that promotes targeted evidence-based interventions and prevents escalation of need/risk to the child

This whole system approach needs to be developed, agreed and owned by all statutory partners and all providers of children services.

## **2. A unifying use of theoretical models of evidence-based social work practice**

Approaches should be used that are in line with local values and vision - such as systemic, strengths based, solution focused, motivational interviewing, and social learning approaches. Relational based approaches provide the skill base to enable social workers to help families to change, helping them to find solutions, so that the safety, development and wellbeing of their children is enhanced.

Having a unifying approach to social work across the organisation promotes good evidence informed practice, a coherent and consistent focus on the way the organisation operates and fidelity to an approach that can persist over time. This will lead to embedded cultural change and improvement that is sustainable over the long term.

## **3. A relentless focus on the recruitment, development and retention of social workers and social work managers in frontline practice with children and families**

Clinical social work practice must be valued highly and this should be reflected in the support, qualification and career structure for social workers and their pay grades. Career progression must reflect individual performance – how learning is translated into practice and delivers

better outcomes for children.

A strategy must be in place and regularly reviewed to keep good social workers in frontline practice but also, to achieve a healthy level of succession planning – growing high quality supervisors and managers from within the organisation whilst also being seen as an employer of choice by external applicants.

#### **4. Social workers with a manageable workload which is regularly reviewed**

Social workers can only work effectively with a limited number of families. Allocating more than they can manage means workers and managers formally or informally decide to prioritise some cases and give limited attention to others. Whilst there is no ideal number because manageability depends on the nature of cases and the professional capabilities of the practitioner, a range should be set beyond which an alert should be made. Controlling workload through high-quality supervision is necessary to promote effective analysis of risk and appropriate intervention. This means that social workers get involved with the most vulnerable children, so work with few cases but more intensely and decisively.

#### **5. Social care teams small enough to allow team managers to know both staff and families well**

The complexity of the families that social workers deal with requires them to receive high quality, regular, reflective and appropriately challenging supervision and for cases to have good case management oversight with careful and thoughtful decision making in respect of risk and next best steps.

#### **6. Service design which minimises the number of changes to key worker/transfers between teams and also respects the need for some specialism across children social work teams**

There needs to be clarity about the role and purpose of each team from contact and referral through to adoption, with simple rules about the management oversight of the way in which cases flow between teams. Co-location and integration or secondment of multidisciplinary professionals may be appropriate.

#### **7. An operational culture of dialogue, reflective thinking, feedback, learning and support**

The organisation needs to be proactive in respect of the risks that present in children's social work and to promote sensible approaches to growing confidence and expertise. High quality performance should be expected from all staff, and learning and accountability woven into the fabric of operating approaches. This includes having clearly understood systems, supported by the culture, of delegation in respect of

decision making in respect of casework and financial management, promoting accountability and responsibility at the appropriate level right through the organisation

### **8. An aspirant and system-wide approach to improvement and performance**

In addition to action to address specific issues identified by inspections, peer reviews, self-audits and local performance analysis, a broader and long-term approach about the total improvement journey to 'outstanding' is needed. This should be supported by a comprehensive performance approach, with good and timely information across a range of indicators and outcomes at individual, team and service level.

A good quality case audit process will reliably look at quality of practice, the outcome for the child and family and the business processes.

### **9. Appropriate practical support**

Such as adequate working space, good ICT systems and strong administrative support to reduce the bureaucratic burdens on social workers and social work managers.

## **Appendix 2**

### **Voice of the Child**

The Barnet Service User Engagement Strategy will enable us to better understand the experience of children and families who we work with. The following methods will assist us in demonstrating that the actions within the improvement plan are making a difference. These include:

- General satisfaction feedback forms for both children and young people;
- Child Protection Conference evaluation forms for both children and young people;
- Children Looked After Review evaluation forms for both children and young people;
- Learning from complaints
- Advocacy feedback
- MOMO (Mind of My Own) app. feedback
- Social worker and team self- assessments of capturing the voice of children
- Case audits check if social workers have captured the child's lived experience as part of their assessment and planning
- Timeliness and engagement checks on visits, engagement at meetings, being seen alone

Each team will review feedback from children, young people and families and consider their team and individual development plans.

Working with #BOP, our children in care council we will identify key themes and priorities for children in care teams and the leaving care team to consider, oversee and report these through to the Corporate Parenting Advisory Panel.

The safeguarding youth panel will consider the themes arising from across these engagement activities and report to the safeguarding partnership for actions to be taken forward.

### Appendix 3 Data Dashboard

ID	Theme	Measure	Lead
T1	To drive sustainable practice improvement at pace	Audit analysis	HL/DS
T2	To drive sustainable practice improvement at pace	Audit analysis	HL/DS
T6	To drive sustainable practice improvement at pace	Posts over establishment	JH/CM/BJ/TMc
T6	To drive sustainable practice improvement at pace	Vacant posts/Agency staff numbers/Secondments	JH/CM/BJ/TMc
T8	To drive sustainable practice improvement at pace	Caseload numbers and transfer numbers	JH/CM
2a(i)	Strengthened systems leadership for children	Caseload numbers and transfer numbers	AD/GL
2a(vii)	Strengthened systems leadership for children	Audit analysis of numbers of children attending conferences	TL
3a(vii)	Support and challenge practice culture	Supervision data including 1:1s, group and signs of safety group	BJ/TMc
3a(vii)	Support and challenge practice culture	Audit Analysis of case supervisions	BJ/TMc
3a(viii)	Support and challenge practice culture	Supervision data including 1:1s, group and signs of safety group	Kpop/SM/GT
3a(viii)	Support and challenge practice culture	Audit Analysis of case supervisions	Kpop/SM/GT
3a(ix)	Support and challenge practice culture	To develop framework around Practice Development Worker activity	DS
3a(x)	Support and challenge practice culture	Audit data from QA framework	DA
4a(iv)	Effective MASH	Timeliness of contact decision	DS
4a(iv)	Effective MASH	Timeliness of assessment	DS
4b(ii)	Effective decision making	Timeliness of pre-proceedings	TMc/BJ/SM/KPop
4b(ii)	Effective decision making	S47: which agency was involved in discussion education/health/police	TMc/BJ/SM/KPop

4b(ii)	Effective decision making	S47: length of time open	TMc/BJ/SM/KPop
4b(ii)	Effective decision making	S47: Outcome	TMc/BJ/SM/KPop
4b(ii)	Effective decision making	S47: Number progressed to ICPC	TMc/BJ/SM/KPop
4b(ii)	Effective decision making	S47: Number progressed to plan	TMc/BJ/SM/KPop
5a(i)	Strengthen assessment	S47: which agency was involved in discussion education/health/police	KPop/SM
5a(i)	Strengthen assessment	S47: length of time open	KPop/SM
5a(i)	Strengthen assessment	Missing strat: timeliness	KPop/SM
5a(i)	Strengthen assessment	Missing strat: which agency was involved in discussion education/health/police	KPop/SM
5a(i)	Strengthen assessment	Live audit information with a focus on drift and delay in assessments	KPop/SM
5a(ii)	Strengthen assessment	Thematic audit of panel information in managing risk	KPop/SM
5a(iii)	Strengthen assessment	Length of missing episode	CK
5a(iii)	Strengthen assessment	Reason for missing episode	CK
5a(iii)	Strengthen assessment	Overall number of missing episodes	CK
5b(i)	Child focussed assessment	Audit analysis of the child's voice	KPop/SM
5b(ii)	Child focussed assessment	Audit analysis of consideration of diversity in assessments	KPop/SM
5b(iii)	Child focussed assessment	Audit analysis of the collective view being demonstrated in assessments	KPop/SM
6a(i)	Child centred plans	Audit analysis of robust, child centred plans	BJ
6a(iv)	Child centred plans	Number of escalations of plans	BJ
6a(iv)	Child centred plans	Reason for escalation of plan	BJ

6a(iv)	Child centred plans	Timeliness to resolution (against protocol) of plan	BJ
6a(iv)	Child centred plans	IRO and CPC escalations	BJ
6a(vi)	Child centred plans	FGC KPIs	KPop
6a(vii)	Child centred plans	Pre-proceedings progressing to care proceedings	BJ
6a(vii)	Child centred plans	Timeliness of care proceedings	BJ
6a(vii)	Child centred plans	Outcomes of care proceedings	BJ
6a(ix)	Child centred plans	Number of children participating in life story work	GT
6b(ii)	Plans achieving best outcomes	Virtual School Audits of PEPs	JM
6b(iii)	Plans achieving best outcomes	Length of process from temporary to final approval of connected carers against targets (16 weeks)	HoS PI
6b(vii)	Plans achieving best outcomes	How many NEET young people (quarterly from September)	CS
6b(vii)	Plans achieving best outcomes	How many NEET care leavers (quarterly from September)	CS

**Appendix 5: Named Officers**

<b>JH</b>	John Hooton	Chief Executive Officer
<b>CS</b>	Cath Shaw	Deputy Chief Executive Officer
<b>SE</b>	Steven Evans	Assistant Chief Executive
<b>CM</b>	Chris Munday	Strategic Director of Children's Services
<b>DW</b>	Dawn Wakeling	Strategic Director of Adults Communities and Health
<b>JB</b>	Jamie Blake	Strategic Director of Environment
<b>Cllr T</b>	Cllr Thompstone	Lead Member
<b>Cllr C</b>	Cllr Cornelius	Leader
<b>DH</b>	Dave Hill	Executive Director, Essex Social Care and Education
<b>HL</b>	Helen Lincoln	Executive Director, Essex Children and Families
<b>TMcE</b>	Tina McElligott	Operational Director Early Help and Children in Need of Help and Protection
<b>BJ</b>	Brigitte Jordaan	Operational Director Corporate Parenting, Permanence, & 0-25 disability
<b>KP</b>	Karen Pearson	Head of Service Early Help and Early Years
<b>SM</b>	Sarah Marshall	Head of Service Intake and Assessment
<b>KPop</b>	Karen Popely	Head of Service Intervention and Planning
<b>NH</b>	Nikki Hale	Head of Service Children in Care & Permanence
<b>SL</b>	Sarah Lowe	Head of Service Placements, Transitions and 0-25 disability
<b>YP</b>	Yogita Popat	Head of Service Performance, Improvement and Inspection
<b>DS</b>	Donna Swanberg	Practice Development, Innovations and Programmes Manager
<b>SD</b>	Sharon Dodd	Safeguarding Board – Transformation Advisor
<b>GL</b>	Graeme Lennon	HR Director
<b>BW</b>	Bryan Webb	Capita IT Director
<b>KH</b>	Katie Harber	Police – Superintendent
<b>CMcC</b>	Collette McCarthy	Health – Head of Joint Commissioning
<b>IH</b>	Ian Harrison	Education – Director of Education and Skills
<b>SMcG</b>	Siobhan McGovern	Safeguarding Lead CCG
<b>KM</b>	Katie Mayers	Head of Communications
<b>AD</b>	Anisa Darr	Director of Resources (s151 Officer)