

	<p>CHILDREN, EDUCATION, LIBRARIES & SAFEGUARDING COMMITTEE</p> <p>15 November 2017</p>
Title	<p>Update report on progress of Barnet Children's Services Improvement Action Plan</p>
Report of	<p>Strategic Director for Children and Young People</p>
Wards	<p>All</p>
Status	<p>Public</p>
Urgent	<p>No</p>
Key	<p>No</p>
Enclosures	<p>Appendix 1: Barnet Children's Services Improvement Action Plan Appendix 2: Confirmation letter from Ofsted regarding Barnet Children's Services Improvement Action Plan Appendix 3: Barnet Children's Safeguarding Board Annual Report</p>
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Summary
<p>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.</p> <p>In July 2017 Committee was presented with the recommendations and areas for improvement highlighted by Ofsted along with a draft Improvement Action Plan developed in response to these which Committee approved for consultation. Committee also delegated authorisation to complete and submit the plan to the Strategic Director for Children and Young People in consultation with the Chief Executive and Lead Member.</p> <p>This report includes an overview of the finalised Barnet Children's Services Improvement Action Plan (Appendix 1) which sets out the improvement journey.</p>

This report also provides an update on progress of Barnet Children's Services Improvement Action Plan in order to ensure scrutiny by elected members in improving the effectiveness of the local authority in protecting and caring for children and young people as a corporate parent. This is the second update report to be received by Committee and the reporting period for progress is September and October 2017. The update on progress is structured according to the seven improvement themes in the action plan.

The report also includes Barnet Children's Safeguarding Board (BSCB) annual report (Appendix 3) which details activities in 2016-17 and looks forward to the next two years. The report takes account of the Ofsted findings as well as being sighted on the new Children and Social Work Act 2017 whereby the emphasis is on the safeguarding partnership driving forward challenge and improvement across the safeguarding system. This report also confirms the appointment of Andrew Fraser, former Director of Children's Service for Enfield, as the new independent chair of the Barnet Safeguarding Children Partnership.

Recommendations

- 1. That the Committee note the finalised Barnet Children's Services Improvement Action Plan as set out in Appendix 1.**
- 2. That the Committee note the progress of the Barnet Children's Services Improvement Action Plan as set out in paragraphs 1.8 to 1.70.**
- 3. That the committee note and scrutinise the performance information provided in paragraph 1.71 to 1.82.**
- 4. That the Committee note the Barnet Children's Safeguarding Board (BSCB) annual report as set out in Appendix 3, and the appointment of Andrew Fraser as the new independent chair.**

1. WHY THIS REPORT IS NEEDED

- 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 in order to support and challenge this continuous improvement, it was agreed at Children, Education, Libraries and Safeguarding (CELS) Committee in July that an update on the progress of implementing improvements will be a standing item on committee agendas. This is to ensure the local authority is effective in protecting children in need and caring for children and young people as a corporate parent.

Barnet Children's Services Improvement Action Plan

- 1.4 In July 2017 CELS Committee was presented with the recommendations and areas for improvement highlighted by Ofsted along with a draft Improvement Action Plan developed in response to these which Committee approved for consultation.

Committee also delegated authorisation to complete and submit the plan to the Strategic Director for Children and Young People in consultation with the Chief Executive and Lead Member.

- 1.5 The action plan was finalised as *Barnet Children's Services Improvement Action Plan* (Appendix 1) and submitted to Ofsted and the Department for Education. The Strategic Director received confirmation from Ofsted on 31 October that "*the plan satisfactorily reflects the recommendations and priorities of the inspection report*" (Appendix 2).
- 1.6 The action plan sets out the improvement journey and gives focus to transform services, especially social care, from inadequate to good rapidly. The action plan is in line with the three core strategic objectives that cut across all our plans for children, young people and families and underpin the systemic and cultural change needed to drive improvement within the borough:
- Empowering and equipping our workforce to understand the importance and meaning of purposeful social work assessments and interventions with families
 - Ensuring our involvement with the most vulnerable children in the borough positively impacts on their outcomes
 - Providing Practice Leadership and management throughout the system to ensure progress is made for children within timescales that are appropriate and proportionate to their needs and that practitioners are well supported, child curious and focused
- 1.7 The action plan has two elements of improvement planning which are complementary. The first being the turnaround priority that has a forensic focus on social work practice driving our capacity and capability to transform at pace and the second being a series of improvement themes:
1. Turnaround priority: To drive sustainable Practice Improvement at pace
- Improvement themes*
2. Governance Leadership, and Partnership
 3. Embedding Practice Leadership
 4. Right interventions, right time (Thresholds)
 5. Improving Assessment for children
 6. Improving Planning for children
 7. Effective Communications and Engagement to drive culture change that will improve children's lives.

Update on progress since the last report:

- 1.8 This is the second update report to be received by Committee and the reporting period for progress is September and October 2017.
- 1.9 The update on progress is structured according to the seven improvement themes in the action plan. Under each improvement theme there is a description of the theme

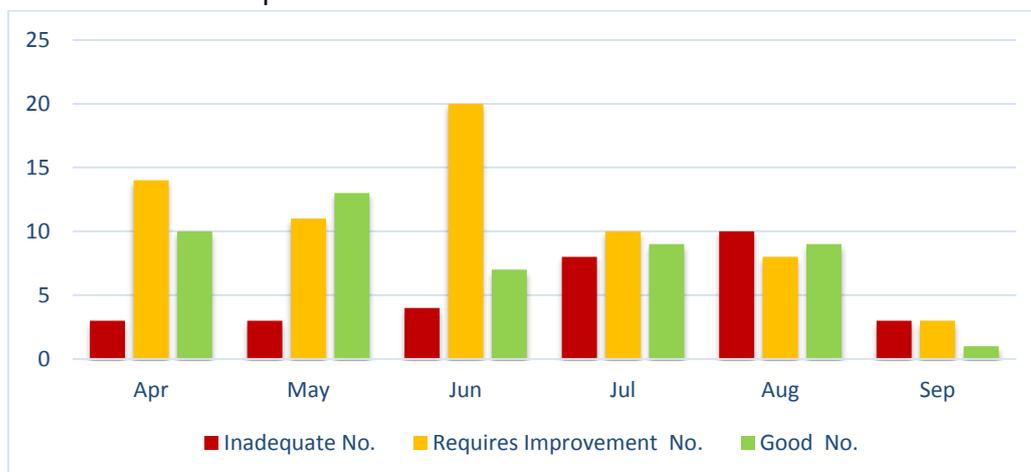
and an update on key activities since the previous update report. There is a detailed update on the turnaround priority to drive sustainable practice improvement at pace. There is also a detailed update on the Children, Young People and Family Hub Programme under improvement theme 4 (Right interventions, right time [Thresholds]) as there has been notable progress.

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

1.10 This theme is driving the quality of social work practice to turn around at pace to ensure children’s outcomes are improved.

1.11 The first tranche of ‘triple loop’ audits have been reviewed by Essex and feedback has been provided. Essex noted that the focus on the experience for the child was good and clear by Barnet auditors who were also noted to be providing a balance between appropriate challenge to guide what good looks like and recognition of good practice where this was evident. Essex noted that the case summaries were detailed and gave justification for the auditors thinking, although these could be significantly reduced in length. Essex made some suggestions for improvement including the use of the updated Essex tool which is in line with Ofsted gradings, achieving clarity on obtaining consent from parents to share information, inviting reflection and learning from Team Managers guiding them through audit actions and outcomes.

1.12 This triangulation and scrutiny is calibrating the quality of audit activity in Barnet to ensure that cases are being accurately graded and a consistent understanding from all managers and workers of what inadequate, requires improvement and good looks like. The graph below highlights a shift in the balance of audit grades with increasingly consistent volumes of Inadequate, Requires Improvement and Good judgements being made in each monthly audit cycle. This is particularly noticeable in the post Ofsted reporting period. In congruence with Essex feedback the audit outcomes suggest increased rigour in the post-inspection audit process coupled with a stronger understanding of ‘what good looks like’ being demonstrated by auditors. However, it should be noted that some post inspection audit activity has been thematic to ensure a wider lens is placed on those areas of practice that have been raised as below expected standards



1.13 For all audits graded as Inadequate a framework of appreciative enquiry is being used, a ‘4R approach’ (Rapid, Responsive, Reflective Review), as a tool to engage

social workers and their managers in reflective discussion to understand why circumstances are not improving for children and further drive activity to achieve positive impact. The introduction of this approach has led to a step change in relation to the pace at which cases shift from inadequate to requires improvement or better. 14 inadequate audits from April/May were still inadequate in September. All have been subject to a 4R and 10 have moved rapidly out of inadequate with the other 4 making significant progress.

- 1.14 The third 'Practice Week' completed since September 2016 took place between 9 and 13 October. Observation and reflection sheets completed by the participants are currently being collated, analysed and moderated to provide a comprehensive report of the findings. However, the daily reflection discussions and verbal feedback has highlighted that some key areas of practice still need to improve and further iterates the pace of change for children is slower than required.
- 1.15 The initial key findings indicate that process and procedures are in place and that thresholds and decision making is mostly effective. The majority of practitioners were observed to have good relationships with the parents, children and young people they worked with and demonstrated a genuine care about the families they were engaged with. Planning activities and direct work was still not demonstrating sufficient attention to engaging children in a meaningful way to inform assessment and planning.
- 1.16 There is a clear need to ensure social workers are equipped with the skills that they need to engage in meaningful direct work with children that results in stronger assessments and care planning activities that are purposeful. Assessments continue to require stronger evidence that professionals have been curious about children's lives and risks and needs are informed by information from a range of sources and is critically analysed. Managers need to improve their oversight on the quality of assessments and make clear their expectations to staff. The quality of planning requires further rigour to be exercised by Team Managers and Independent Reviewing Officer and Chairs that plans are sufficiently identifying the changes that need to be made, with clear and measurable actions to be undertaken in agreed timescales.
- 1.17 The learning from this period is providing a basis for a programme of focused activity on the areas of practice that are in need of immediate support from management, the Practice Development Workers and targeted training. This includes critical risk analysis in assessments, quality of plans so that they address risk and are focused on change (SMART), quality of reviewing processes, supervision and reflective practice, direct work with children and families, evidence of the voice of the child, recording of management and multi-agency decisions with rationale, improved timeliness of recording, up to date chronologies and evidence of attention to diversity and cultural context in assessments and plans.
- 1.18 Learning has also been used to shape the workforce development offer. A series of seminars will be introduced to strengthen practice around identity issues and on direct work with children to emphasise the need to challenge common parental

assumption that children do not know about issues of concern, to consider how to discuss issues in an age appropriate manner and to explore what children really want and need to know. A regular programme of activities will also be developed to share good practice examples of written work, provide positive feedback to Social Work Teams and improve consistency across services.

- 1.19 There have been developments to support effective practice challenge from Child Protection Conference Chairs and Independent Reviewing Officers so that plans are appropriately scrutinised and reviewed. A task and finish group has been established with a focus specifically on the escalation processes between the Child Reviewing Teams and the Social Work Teams. This work has led to the implementation of revised resolution practices encouraging conversation and constructive challenge focused on the child. The revised resolution protocol will be agreed and fully implemented. Management of Child Protection Chairs and Independent Reviewing Officers has also been enhanced by the appointment of a new Head of Service who came into post on 2 October.
- 1.20 Barnet continues to ensure “conditions for success” are embedded. Social workers with manageable workloads and social care teams small enough to allow team managers to know both staff and families well have been achieved for all service areas with the exception of DATS where pressures remain. Management capacity in the DATS team has been increased to enable the system to cope.
- 1.21 There have been developments in service design which minimises the number of changes to key worker. There is an earlier transfer of cases from CIC to Leaving Care teams and all over 16 Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) go direct to the Leaving Care Service. Private Fostering cases are going direct from MASH to a dedicated Private Fostering worker which has improved visit compliance significantly.
- 1.22 There has been an increased investment in appropriate practical support with increased administrative support, and a schedule of IT changes to make practice recording and reporting as efficient as possible.

2. Governance Leadership, and Partnership

- 1.23 This theme focuses on strengthening systems leadership for children with sufficient capacity and capability at all levels and governance arrangements that prioritise children and add value to improvements. The theme also seeks to ensure effective corporate support is in place which understands the role of social workers and reflects a collective ambition for children in the borough.
- 1.24 In June 2017 Policy and Resources committee approved additional resources to be part of Family Services base budget to support the improvement journey (a detailed breakdown is provided in item 7, CELS agenda 18 September 2017). Part of this additional resource was to ensure that Family Services has sufficient resource of the right quality to drive change. To improve practice, reduce caseloads and spans of control in social work teams, and reduce agency workers by 5%, 31 additional managers and social workers are being recruited.

- 1.25 A recruitment campaign entitled *Bouncebackability* was launched on 14 September 2017 to attract experienced practitioners and managers into the borough for key roles across the service. The Social Work Team Managers (4 vacancies), Advanced Practitioners (8 vacancies) and Social Workers (11 vacancies) response was poor, it remains a challenge to attract and recruit social workers possessing the experience and skill required to deliver the standard of practice expected in Barnet. Other roles including Clinical Practitioners, Youth Offending and support staff received a stronger response. The process of assessing candidates is ongoing and final results should be known by mid-November.
- 1.26 Work has been done with key Chief Officers, Councillors and senior leaders across the partnership to ensure understanding of the Improvement Plan. There is regular attendance at the Children's Services Improvement Board from senior members of the Police, Education and the CCG along with Members and Chief Officers from the council. Bespoke plans have been developed by partner agencies which detail how they will contribute to the delivery of improvements identified in the Children's Services Improvement Plan, and this activity is being communicated to colleagues within partner agencies including via the Council Management Team, the CCG Management Team and Headteacher's forum.

3. Embedding Practice Leadership

- 1.27 This improvement theme seeks to strengthen practice leadership through effective management oversight and increased capacity.
- 1.28 All Operational Directors and Divisional Directors have now been recruited to embed leadership at the most senior level. Four Practice Development Workers have been recruited to focus on supporting staff to develop their practice as part of a wider practice development programme. Regular audit activity using the newly introduced framework from our improvement partners in Essex will monitor and evaluate the implementation of the operational protocol. The operational protocol is based on the principles set out in the Practice Standards Document which is currently in development.

MASH

- 1.29 The MASH management arrangements were changed in July to ensure stronger leadership of the service and ensure that practice and partnership working improves at pace. The new Head of Service has proactively sought to engage the co-located and wider MASH partners to develop a common understanding of purpose and stronger collaboration, this has led to the introduction of daily MASH meetings which is providing the partnership with an opportunity to discuss and agree thresholds of need.
- 1.30 On 13 October 2017 Essex visited the MASH and met with the Head of Service, Team Managers, Social Workers, Police and support officers. Essex fed back that the Head of Service demonstrated a good level of insight into the current operating model and the work that needed to be undertaken and was driving the changes to

process and practice required which, whilst still requiring further work, was showing some early signs of positive impact.

- 1.31 Essex noted that the commencement of daily threshold MASH meetings was a good and welcomed opportunity to generate open discussion and increase confidence within a culture of supportive challenge. They considered this and the weekly MASH meetings with partners were a good avenue for opening previously closed communication channels between internal and external partners so all can be clear on the roles and responsibilities of others.
- 1.32 However Essex also considered the need for the development of the threshold document to ensure all agencies are clear of the services available to meet children's range of needs, a cautious approach was observed to be in place for a few children where early help could have been considered. The development of the threshold document is in train through the Barnet Safeguarding Children Partnership.
- 1.33 At the time of the visit workloads were observed to be manageable which has been achieved through the provision of additional capacity of staff in the MASH. The additional capacity is aimed at improving the timeliness of work being processed. Essex observed no overdue contacts or MASH referrals during the visit and time management deadlines were reported to be visible in staff work trays. This is a positive development but more needs to be done to ensure the quality of decision making is sufficiently effective in ensuring children receive the help they need when they need it.
- 1.34 The MASH has recently introduced a single recording system which is now accessible by all co-located partners. This has been an important development, supported by the systems team, to reduce duplication of work, improve recording and decision making. The effectiveness of the system and quality of partnership contributions can now be closely monitored and further subjected to scrutiny with the introduction of audit processes which provide insights into the areas of practice that still need to improve.
- 1.35 The regularity of supervision is improving to ensure closer management oversight, staff are responding well to the increased support and challenge in the system and morale is generally good. The introduction of the 'Signs of Safety', whilst still an early development, is providing opportunities to assess risk more effectively and will remain under close scrutiny to ensure positive impact.
- 1.36 Essex shared areas to consider for further development of the MASH and this included the need to strike a balance between management oversight and staff development, the need to provide a clear justification for dispensing with consent, involving and being curious about children's fathers, ensuring that the child's lived experience was reflected in decision making and information shared by the MASH partners, undertaking dual checks on children passed to the Duty & Assessment Team for assessment and considering the effectiveness of the RAG rating system in providing explicit evidence of risk.

- 1.37 Essex also considered the need to think about the role of MASH Police in analysis and decision making of police notifications to ensure this remains relevant and proportionate to presenting risk.

Duty and Assessment Teams

- 1.38 The Duty and Assessment Teams are a key area of concern. An increase in referrals with improving rigour in the MASH following the Ofsted Judgement coupled with instability of agency staff, often leaving at short notice, has led to a high volume of assessments within the service has created a concerning backlog of assessments.
- 1.39 In response to the high level of concern and to ensure the Duty and Assessment Teams are operating a safe and functional 'front door' service, additional capacity Team Manager (3) and Social Worker (8) has been brought in to address the backlog and ensure sufficient management oversight is available on the high volume of work held within the service.
- 1.40 In addition to the increased management and social work capacity provided to the Duty & Assessment Teams, Practice Development Workers have been actively present to support staff and ensure that addressing the quantity does not further compromise quality. The Practice Development Workers are ensuring that Social Workers improve engagement with children and families in assessment by accompanying them on home visits, supporting the delivery of group supervision and providing live case consultation, reflection and guidance.
- 1.41 Two of the four Duty and Assessment Team Managers are leaving and this provides an opportunity to appoint sufficiently robust managers to drive the improvements required forward but also risks further instability. The additional capacity available within the service have proven to be of a good quality and will hold the service during the management transition. The service will remain a key priority for improvement and stabilisation in the coming weeks and subject to intensive monitoring and practice improvement focus.

Intervention and Planning Service

- 1.42 The Intervention and Planning Service has had a period of relative stability with minimal staffing changes and relatively stable case allocation numbers averaging 15 families per social worker. The volume of children subject to Child in Need Plans has increased by 172 in the past three months and the volume of children subject to Child Protection Plans has increased by 15 in the same period.
- 1.43 The key challenge for the service is to improve the quality of children's plans to ensure that they are driving timely change children. Practice Development Workers will be undertaking focused work with social workers to improve this area of practice.

Children in Care

- 1.44 There are now 3 Children in Care Teams with an average caseload of 14. This has enabled better management oversight of cases and with the expertise in place supervision and auditing of cases has improved. The managers are working well

with their colleagues in Intervention & Planning teams and the Onwards & Upwards team to improve transitions for children across the service areas.

0-25

- 1.45 The 0-25 team establishment has now been finalised and the staff group is a combination of those with adult and children social care experience with an average caseload of 17. The two Team managers and a Strategic Manager are in post and are developing clear and co-ordinated pathways for children and adults with disabilities, through better partnership working with Adult Services and Health. There is a newly appointed Head of Service in post whose leadership and expertise is positively impacting on decisions for children.

Onwards and Upwards

- 1.46 Currently the caseloads in this team are higher than elsewhere but that is not unexpected as their cases require varying levels of work and time commitment. The average caseload is 21 at the moment and this is being closely monitored. An analysis of the implications for this service given the changing demographics of the Looked After Children cohort and change in legislation increasing the service obligation to the age of 25 years is being completed. This will include financial modelling for the service.

Adoption and Fostering

- 1.47 The newly appointed Head of Service is currently working with the team managers in Adoption and Fostering to review the effectiveness of these teams and their impact on permanency planning. The leadership and planning within fostering has resulted in an increased number of foster carer assessments coming through the system, and a better response to enquiries coming in on fostering.

Appraisal

- 1.48 The appraisal approach has been refreshed, and performance objectives for staff and managers have been aligned to the social work Knowledge and Skills Statement (KSS) for practice managers, supervisors and practitioners. Staff development plans are being collated from all staff to inform the Workforce Development Programme, focussing on developing the workforce and raising practice standards. Staff will be held accountable for the quality of their work, and will be expected to evidence that they have achieved Barnet Practice Standards in line with the KSS during the mid-year appraisals round.

4. Right interventions, right time (Thresholds)

- 1.49 This theme is focused on developing an effective MASH and proportionate, effective and timely decision making across the whole social care system.
- 1.50 The MASH Steering Group has been established to engage with a wide range of partners in a coherent and effective partnership meeting which is designed to drive improvements, measure quality and impact, and disseminate learning. Bi weekly multi agency team meetings are now in place which include all partners based in the MASH and provide an opportunity to discuss collaborative working. Three Team Managers in the MASH are linked to a specific area of work across either Children's

Social Care or the wider partnership, linking MARAC (Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences for high domestic abuse cases), Youth Justice and CSE, ensuring that specialist work is picked up by the right area of the system first time.

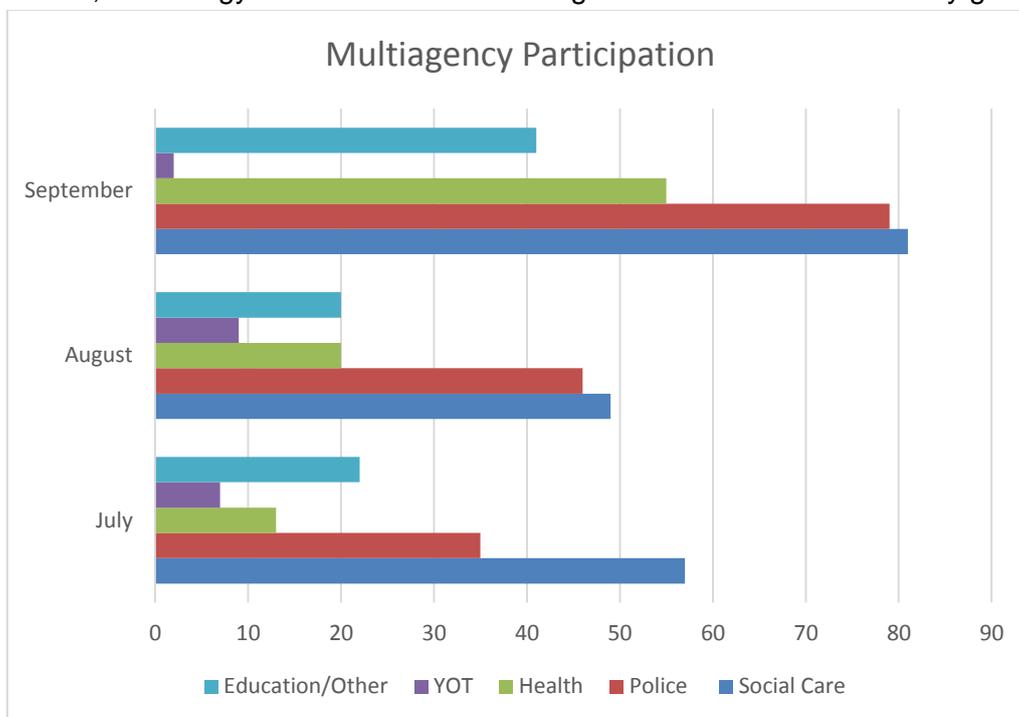
- 1.51 This theme is also advancing the join up of Early Help services. The Children, Young People and Family Hub Programme was established in early 2017 and was reviewed and widened in June 2017 to focus on improving how Early Help was delivered across the different public sector agencies in Barnet. The programme is now focussed on trialling improvements to partnership working. This in turn will inform the Council's long term service model, including how savings can be best achieved whilst keeping the impact on service users to a minimum.
- 1.52 The programme is focussed on creating three Children, Young People and Family Hubs in the borough. The hubs are based on the current Children's Centre localities, and will focus on supporting children and young people aged 0-19 and their families who are in need of Early Help. The hubs will do this through:
- Co-location of staff from different organisations in the same location(s)
 - Introducing an Early Help Multi Agency Panel to identify the lead agency and co-ordinate support for individual families in need of Early Help
 - Improving ways of working between organisations and different professional backgrounds through shared training and development
 - Reviewing our partnership offer in the locality, so it is delivered in the right places, to the right people, has the right impact and is clear
- 1.53 The hub model is currently being rolled out across Barnet starting in the East Central area (covering High Barnet, Underhill, Oakleigh, Totteridge, East Barnet, Brunswick Park, Coppetts, Woodhouse, West Finchley and East Finchley wards). So far the impact has been positive:
- 35 cases have been to the Early Help Multi Agency Panel with co-ordinated plan developed to support each one and a lead professional appointed to be the key point of contact for families.
 - Feedback so far is that the Panel has significantly sped up the response to families, has led to a more accurate assessment of safeguarding risk, and has streamlined the services being offered.
 - Professionals from 8 organisations across health, education, early help, housing and employment have agreed to co-locate in two locations in the East-Central Locality either on a full or part time basis. This will help to foster a culture of more integrated working, as well as make it simpler to access services because more of them will be based in the same place.
 - Some gaps and duplications in service across the partnership are being identified via the needs discussed at the Early Help Multi Agency Panel and work at the development group.
- 1.54 The programme is also currently being rolled out to the West Locality (covering Hale, Edgware, Burnt Oak, Mill Hill and half of Colindale ward).
- 1.55 The pilot work in East Central and West Localities will inform service reform required to both improve the co-ordinated delivery of Early Help, and to achieve MTFS targets.

An Outline Business Case will be presented at CELS in January 2018 outlining the options to achieve long term service change.

5. Improving Assessment for children

1.56 This theme focuses on strengthening risk assessments and ensuring child focussed assessments to tackle drift and delay.

1.57 Work has been progressing to ensure that all children identified as being at risk of harm benefit from effective child protection processes. Audits have been completed on all Section 47 enquiries. A section 47 enquiry is initiated when a child is taken into Police Protection, is the subject of an Emergency Protection Order or there is reasonable grounds to suspect that a child is suffering or is likely to suffer Significant Harm. Training and development needs were highlighted on the use of the outcome form and on the requirement that all Strategy Discussions are multi agency. The table below demonstrates emerging evidence that multi-agency participation, particularly health, in Strategy Discussions is increasing in accordance with statutory guidance.



1.58 The review noted that sit down Strategy Discussions are stronger with good evidence of information sharing, clear plans and well written minutes which led to appropriate progression to Section 47 and Initial Child Protection Conferences where necessary.

1.59 The Sexual Exploitation and Missing (SEAM) tool is live but is not yet embedded in the social work practice and management oversight of vulnerable children and young people who go missing. Training for staff has been completed, children and young people missing from home and care are being tracked and SEAM Meetings, chaired by the CSE/Missing Lead, have been held for those young people where there are concerns relating to vulnerability and exploitation. The Vulnerable Adolescents Risk Group (VARG) is providing a line of sight for senior managers in CSC, Police and the Safeguarding Partnership. This enables targeted multi agency responses where CSE and Missing are highly prevalent.

- 1.60 The REACH team which was established in April 2017 to work with young people at risk of Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE), gang-involvement and who go missing from home is improving assessments as well as planning and interventions with this cohort. Although not yet consistent, data from quarter 1 and quarter 2 is showing some early signs of positive impact in school attendance, preventing young people from going into care, reduction in offending/re-offending behaviour, missing episodes and the number of young people reported missing, and engagement with services.

6. Improving Planning for children

- 1.61 This improvement theme seeks to ensure planning is child centred and that these plans achieve the best outcomes, tackling drift and delay.
- 1.62 All partners have produced their priorities and actions for the Corporate Parenting Officers Group action plan and work has started on many, including:
- The Staying Put policy, the ability for fostered young people to stay with their foster families when they reach 18, is under review to improve awareness of care leavers rights and entitlements and pathway planning by having a clear and robust offer. The policy will be consulted on and presented to members in January.
 - The virtual school has commissioned a 6 week induction programme for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) Children in Care to support transition to British culture and education to improve educational outcomes and their lived experience
 - Numerous Employment, Education and Training events have been planned to increase the numbers of care leavers participating. There are also plans to host a traineeship at the Council which will be a pre-apprenticeship programme linking young people to the Council's apprenticeship opportunities. First Rung has been commissioned to provide the training component and the council and other local employers will provide the placement.
- 1.63 Monthly multi-agency meetings have been scheduled to consider joint planning for children in care and care leavers. Recruitment is in motion for Life Story Workers to support and progress the work in ensuring all children in care have life story work to prepare them for independence, and one worker has commenced work in the Leaving Care Services with 16-17 year olds.
- 1.64 Write it Right training has been commissioned to provide staff with best practice examples of writing in plain English. Team Managers have attended Practice Leader Signs of Safety training to ensure plans are SMART and focussed on what needs to change, with agreed timescales. Children's plans are being robustly reviewed to ensure they are focused on achieving and measuring change, and all agencies and professionals will be held accountable and responsible.

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

- 1.65 This improvement theme will develop connection via impactful two-way communication and engagement from the top to the bottom of the children's service and strong cross agency engagement and communication from top to bottom. The improvement journey needs to be owned by all.
- 1.66 This is currently an area where considerable work is needed within the service to create a positive, high performance culture and bring staff along with us on the improvement journey with a consistent understanding of what good looks like.
- 1.67 The third Practice Week ran from 9th to 13th October 2017, and provided an opportunity for Senior Leaders and Managers to have a direct line of sight to practice through observations of practice activities including home visits, child protection meetings, children in care reviews and supervision of staff.
- 1.68 On 30 October the Strategic Director and Operational Directors led an interactive conference which focused on bringing the improvement plan to life, sharing the vision for Social Work Improvement in the coming months and feedback on Practice Week.
- 1.69 The Strategic Director has also implemented changes to improve communication with staff including increasing the monthly staff briefing to fortnightly, meeting with a focus group of staff each month to hear views, starting a monthly Open Door surgery with the Operational Directors, raising awareness of red letter boxes (anonymous feedback mechanism) and frequently attends the staff forum.

Quantitative performance data

- 1.70 Quantitative performance data is based on activity in September 2017. Reporting is of indicators that are subject to additional focus with information about what needs to change and what is being done about it, as well as what is working well.

What needs to change, and what we are doing about it

- 1.71 The number of open CAF's has been in steady decline since June when the number of open CAF's was higher than the target of 800. The fall in numbers over the summer period of July (767), August (752) and September (720) is partly due to an expected seasonal decline which correlates with the summer school break. The volume of open CAF's at this point last year was 778, representing a reduction of 58 over the year. The decline correlates with a significant increase in the volume of closed CAF's during June when 190 CAF episodes were closed. The number of open CAF's is expected to increase with the start of the new school term.
- 1.72 The percentage of assessments completed within 45 working days has been decreasing since June and is currently at 55%, 35% away from the target of 90%. The data over a six-month period calculates that 71% of assessments are completed within 45 days. The recent decrease in assessment timescales is largely attributable to increased workloads in the Duty & Assessment Team following a higher than average spike of 353 contacts progressing to referrals in July. This coupled with a high volume of staff turnover subsequent to the publication of the Ofsted judgement in July and increased Head of Service scrutiny of assessment quality has led to a decrease in assessment timeliness. Additional social work resource has been

brought in to manage down case numbers and to provide additional capacity for assessment quality assurance and sign off activity. It is expected that timeliness of assessments completed will increase as caseloads reduce and staffing stabilises under new and more robust line management arrangements.

- 1.73 The number of Children in Need (CiN) visits completed within 4 weeks, currently 55.7%, remains an area for focus. Visits reporting to be out of timescale have been sampled and continue to evidence that the large majority of children have been seen in timescale but social workers have not recorded these as 'visits' on the child's record. A CiN visit tracker has been developed and monitors all overdue, pending and future visits detailing children, social workers and team managers. This enables increased management oversight for planning and prompting social workers to plan visits in their calendar, re-arrange cancelled and failed visits and record visits that have been undertaken.
- 1.74 Visits to children subject to Child Protection Plans are currently reported at 62%, although the 3-monthly average is 70% of visits are completed within 10 days. As with the CiN visits that are reporting to be out of timescale, sampling has been undertaken and continue to evidence that the large majority of children have been seen in timescale but social workers have not recorded these as 'visits' on the child's record. Further, the volume of children in sibling groups affects the overall picture. A CP visit tracker has been developed and monitors all overdue, pending and future visits detailing children, social workers and team managers. This enables increased management oversight and interrogation of the data in addition to planning activities to prompt social workers to plan visits in their calendar, re-arrange cancelled and failed visits and record visits that have been undertaken.
- 1.75 Children in Care (CiC) visits within timescale are currently at 84%. We have seen deterioration in this measure over the last four months and this has resulted in implementing a weekly tracking process by which the team managers receive weekly reports that aid them and the social worker to monitor all statutory visits and plan their calendars accordingly. Since implementation, we are seeing a slight improvement in the performance. Recording visits on the child's file in a timely way remains an area for improvement and the team managers are now able to access information from the visit tracker on their individual staff member's performance which informs supervision and performance management.
- 1.76 The percentage of 5 to 16-year-old children in care with a Personal Education Plan meeting completed in the last 6 months is 84%. Personal Education Plans are currently not all up to date due to a number of staff changes delaying PEP meetings. The Virtual School now provide the CiC team managers with a list of all incomplete PEP's and those that are due within that month. This is being taken to individual supervision for discussion and planning.
- 1.77 The percentage of Care Leavers on a Pathway Plan who have had a visit within 2 months is 76.9%. Care leavers are being seen on a regular basis at the Onwards and Upwards centre and at their accommodation. These visits are not always recorded in the timeliest way and this has an impact on the performance data. The team are

working to improve their working practices and improved individual and group supervision will support this.

What's working well

- 1.78 The percentage of referrals that are repeat referrals within 12 months is currently 0.1% away from our target of 18%. It remains below our statistical neighbours of 18.2%, and our previous years' figure of 19.2%. This indicator has consistently decreased towards target since May 2017.
- 1.79 Section 47 (s47) enquiries leading to a decision to progress to an Initial Child Protection Conference (ICPC) within 15 working days has significantly increased. The sharp rise indicates that the threshold of using statutory child protection procedures to make enquires about children's welfare is being applied correctly; a lower ratio of s47 enquiries leading to ICPC would suggest the s47 threshold was being used incorrectly and families were being subjected to unnecessary statutory interventions and enquiries.
- 1.80 In September 34 s47 enquiries progressed to an ICPC; all were within statutory timescales. This is in line with previous performance over the period March to May and in August and a continued improvement from the dip in June and July when the service was undergoing post-inspection management changes.
- 1.81 The percentage of Private Fostering cases that have had visits within timescales is 92.3%. Private Fostering visits are now taking place as required. The number of privately fostered children has increased from 6 in August to 18. All cases are assessed and held by the designated private fostering social worker and this has improved the service to these children which is more targeted and focused.

Barnet Children's Safeguarding Board (BSCB) annual report

- 1.82 Since 2010 Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCB) are required to publish annual reports outlining the work of LSCB over the past year. The Barnet Children's Safeguarding Board (BSCB) is a partnership of statutory and voluntary agencies, whose activities impact the lives of children and young people in Barnet. This report (Appendix 3) details our activities in 2016-7 and looks forward to the next two years, taking account of the Ofsted report 2017 as well as being sighted on the new Children and Social Work Act 2017 whereby the emphasis is on the safeguarding partnership driving forward challenge and Improvement across the safeguarding system. The annual report for 2016/17 was approved to the Safeguarding Children's Board Executive Group on 19th October 2017.
- 1.83 A new independent chair of the Barnet Safeguarding Children Partnership has been appointed. Andrew Fraser, former Director of Children's Service for Enfield, takes over from Chris Miller, the previous chair, with immediate effect. The appointment follows a competitive selection process and formal approval by the senior leaders from the London Borough of Barnet, Barnet Clinical Commissioning Group and the Metropolitan Police Barnet.

2. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 Members are asked to note progress to ensure scrutiny by elected members and improve the effectiveness of the local authority in protecting and caring for children and young people as a corporate parent.

3. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND NOT RECOMMENDED

- 3.1 The continued monitoring of progress and impact of Barnet Children's Services Improvement Action Plan is integral to driving the continuation of the Family Services' improvement journey to ensure improved outcomes for children and families. The alternative option of maintaining the status quo will not make the desired improvements or improve outcomes at the pace required.

4. POST DECISION IMPLEMENTATION

- 4.1 As the primary driver of improvement the Children's Service Improvement Board will oversee the delivery of the action plan and is ultimately responsible for its delivery. The Children's Services Improvement Board is independently chaired by the collegiate improvement partner (Essex County Council Executive Director) and will provide scrutiny and challenge as well as measure 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.
- 4.2 Operationally the Improvement Plan is driven and directed by the Operational Improvement Group chaired by the Strategic Director of Children's Services with senior representatives from key partner agencies. The group will oversee the day to day transformation of services and ensure effective communication and engagement with staff, children, young people and their families.
- 4.3 Reports on the progress of the action plan will be received by Children, Education, Libraries and Safeguarding Committee, Health and Wellbeing Board and Barnet Safeguarding Children's Board.

5. IMPLICATIONS OF DECISION

5.1 Corporate Priorities and Performance

- 5.1.1 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.
- 5.1.2 This supports the following Council's corporate priorities as expressed through the Corporate Plan for 2015-20 which sets out the vision and strategy for the next five years based on the core principles of fairness, responsibility and opportunity, to make sure Barnet is a place;
- Of opportunity, where people can further their quality of life
 - Where people are helped to help themselves, recognising that prevention is

better than cure

5.1.3 Family Services are working with partners to make Barnet the most family friendly borough to ensure a great start in life for every child and prepare young people well for adulthood. Building resilience through purposeful social work practice, enabled by appropriate tools and a high quality workforce so that families are able to help themselves and prevent problems from escalating.

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

5.2.1 Policy and Resources Committee agreed to invest an additional £5.7m in Family Services some of which has been invested to improve practice to ensure improvements are made which result in better outcomes for children, young people and families. The detailed breakdown of this additional £5.7 million is provided in item 7, CELS agenda 18 September 2017.

5.2.2 MTFS savings for 2018-2020 have been reviewed in light of the Family Services improvement journey to consider achievability. New savings have been proposed where saving lines have been deemed unachievable. Currently there is a gap of £2.713 million across 2018-2020. More details can be found in the CELS Business Planning Report 2018/2019.

5.2.3 The ongoing improvement will continue to place pressure on existing resources.

5.3 **Social Value**

5.3.1 The Public Services (Social Value) Act 2013 requires people who commission public services to think about how they can also secure wider social, economic and environmental benefits. Before commencing a procurement process, commissioners should think about whether the services they are going to buy, or the way they are going to buy them, could secure these benefits for their area or stakeholders.

5.4 **Legal and Constitutional References**

5.4.2 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, 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.

5.4.3 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. Following receipt of the report, the local authority must prepare a written statement of (1) action which they propose to take in light of

the report and (2) the period within which they propose to take that action.

5.4.2 Article 8, Committees, Forums, Working Groups and Partnerships in the council's constitution states that the Children, Education, Libraries and Safeguarding Committee has the responsibility for all matters relating to children, schools, education and libraries. In addition to this, the committee has responsibility for overseeing the support for young people in care, enhancing the council's corporate parenting role and receiving an annual report from the Safeguarding Children's Board.

5.5 Risk Management

5.5.1 The nature of services provided to children and families by Family Services manage significant levels of risk. An inappropriate response or poor decision-making around a case could lead to a significant children's safeguarding incident resulting in significant harm. Good quality early intervention and social care services reduce the likelihood of children suffering harm and increase the likelihood of children developing into successful adults and achieving and succeeding. The implementation of the Barnet Children's Services Improvement Action Plan based on inspection findings and recommendations reduce this risk and drive forward improvements towards good quality services.

5.6 Equalities and Diversity

5.6.1 The 2010 Equality Act outlines the provisions of the Public Sector Equalities Duty which requires Public Bodies **to have due regard** to the need to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010
- advance equality of opportunity between people from different groups
- foster good relations between people from different groups

5.6.2 The broad purpose of this duty is to integrate considerations of equality into day business and keep them under review in decision making, the design of policies and the delivery of services

5.6.1 Equalities and diversity considerations are a key element of social work practice. It is imperative that help and protection services for children and young are sensitive and responsive to age, disability, ethnicity, faith or belief, gender, gender, identity, language, race and sexual orientation. Barnet has a diverse population of children and young people. Children and young people from minority ethnic groups account for 52%, compared with 30% in the country as a whole. The percentages of children and young people from minority ethnic groups who receive statutory social care services account for 61% of Children in Need cases, 56% of child protection cases and 60% of all Children in Care. The proportion of children and young people with English as an additional language across primary schools is 44% (the national average is 18%).

5.6.2 Social workers practice in relation to inequalities and disadvantage is inconsistent.

Recent learning from audits and practice week has highlighted attention to diversity and the cultural context in assessments is an area of practice in need of immediate support from management, the Practice Development Workers and targeted training. The action plan addresses the additional work which needs to be done to ensure that children's diversity and identity needs are met; *"5b(ii) Strengthen consideration of diversity in assessment so that assessments thoroughly explore and consider family history including the influence of cultural, linguistic and religious beliefs, norms and expectations"*.

5.7 Consultation and Engagement

5.7.1 Consultation and engagement with children and young people is central to social work practice and service improvement across the Safeguarding Partnership. A service user engagement strategy has been developed and is in the process of being implemented. The strategy ensures that how we work with children and young people is child centred, that we know and understand and can capture the lived experience of children and also to ensure that the lessons learnt feed into service improvement.

5.7.2 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, young commissioners to co-design services and Children in Care Council to improve the support children in care receive. More recently this has included children in care influencing the commissioning of independent Fostering services and in the CAMHS transformation.

5.7.3 The Barnet Children's Services Improvement Action Plan looks to improve children's participation to ensure that all decisions and planning that affects them is influenced by their wishes and feelings. The action plan also includes actions to strengthen how the views and experiences of children, young people and their families influence service design. This feedback will also help monitor the impact of improvement activity.

5.7.4 Improving the quality of services to children is a key partnership and corporate priority and collective work is needed across the partnership and the council to drive improvements. The action plan was completed in consultation with various stakeholders. Staff engagement activities have included monthly staff briefings, team meetings, staff conference. Partners have been engaged through the safeguarding partnership board. Senior leaders are members of the Improvement Board and their continued engagement is assured through core multiagency groups and specific forums such as head teacher's forums.

5.8 Insight

5.8.1 Insight data will continue to be regularly collected and used in monitoring the progress and impact of Barnet's Children's Services Improvement Action Plan and to shape ongoing improvement activity.

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 6.1 Item 7, Ofsted Report and Action Plan, Children Education, Libraries & Safeguarding Committee, 18 July 2017
http://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s40996/Ofsted%20Committee%20Report_FINAL.pdf
- 6.2 Item 8, Update on the Ofsted Improvement Action Plan implementation progress, Children Education, Libraries & Safeguarding Committee, 18 September
<http://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s42232/Update%20report%20on%20the%20Ofsted%20Improvement%20Action%20Plan%20implementation%20progress.pdf>