

	<p style="text-align: center;">CHILDREN, EDUCATION and SAFEGUARDING COMMITTEE</p> <p style="text-align: center;">29 November 2018</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Title</p>	<p>Update report on the progress of Barnet Children's Services Improvement Action Plan and other CES Committee Priorities, including Quarterly Performance Report updates for Q2 2018-19</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Report of</p>	<p>Chairman of the Committee, Councillor David Longstaff</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Wards</p>	<p>All</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Status</p>	<p>Public</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Urgent</p>	<p>No</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Key</p>	<p>No</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Enclosures</p>	<p>Appendix 1: Self Evaluation Framework Appendix 2: Family Services Improvement Action Plan Appendix 3: Draft Care Leaver Local Offer Appendix 4: Family Services Performance Report</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Officer Contact Details</p>	<p>Chris Munday Strategic Director for Children and Young People Chris.Munday@barnet.gov.uk</p>

Summary

Children's services in Barnet were judged by OFSTED to be inadequate when OFSTED undertook a Single Inspection Framework (SIF) during April and May 2017. The Council fully accepted the findings of the report and is working collectively with the partnership to drive the improvements needed to transform social care services for children, young people and their families from inadequate to good rapidly. In response to the recommendations and areas for improvement identified by OFSTED, the Barnet Children Services Improvement Action Plan was developed and a final version presented to Committee in November 2017.

The OFSTED Improvement Plan is a corporate and committee priority; this report provides an update on progress of Barnet Children's Services Improvement Action Plan to ensure scrutiny by elected members in improving the effectiveness of the local authority in protecting and caring for children and young people in need and caring for children and young people as a corporate parent. This is the seventh update report to be received by Committee and the reporting period for progress is September to November 2018. The update on progress is structured according to the six improvement themes in the action plan, and Family Services Performance Report has been included in Appendix 1.

The report presents the Q2 2018/19 Quarterly Performance Report, which includes budget forecasts for revenue and capital, an update on key activities, performance of key indicators and high-level service/joint risks. An overall status and direction of travel is presented for each of the Children, Education and Safeguarding Committee's priorities, as per the Corporate Plan 2018/19 Addendum.

Recommendations

- 1. That the Committee note the progress of the Barnet Children's Services Improvement Action Plan as set out in paragraphs 1.9 to 1.45.**
- 2. That the Committee note the Self-Assessment and Improvement Plan of the Council's children's social care function set out at Appendix 1 and Appendix 2 respectively.**
- 3. That the Committee note and scrutinise the performance information provided in Appendix 4.**
- 4. The Committee is asked to review the budget, activity, performance and risk information in relation to Children, Education and Safeguarding.**
- 5. The Committee is asked to note the update on Barnet's Local Offer for Care Leavers and delegate authority to the Strategic Director for Children and Young People to approve a final version of the Local Offer, in consultation with the Chairman of the Committee. The draft Local Offer is attached in Appendix 3.**

1.1 Children's services in Barnet were judged by OFSTED to be inadequate when OFSTED undertook a Single Inspection Framework (SIF) of these services in April and May 2017.

1.2 The Council fully accepted the findings of the report and is working collectively with the partnership to drive the improvements needed to transform social care services for children, young people and their families from inadequate to good rapidly.

- 1.3 To enhance scrutiny by elected members to support and challenge this continuous improvement, it was agreed at Children, Education, Libraries and Safeguarding (CELS) Committee in July 2017 that an update on the progress of implementing improvements will be a standing item on committee agendas. This is to ensure the local authority is effective in protecting children in need and caring for children and young people as a corporate parent.
- 1.4 Under the Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) Framework, local authorities judged as inadequate are subject to ongoing monitoring activity from OFSTED; in Barnet, this has included an action planning visit, quarterly monitoring visits, and will also entail a full ILACS inspection after February 2019 if there is satisfactory progress in the next monitoring visits.
- 1.5 Since November 2017, OFSTED have conducted four monitoring visits of Barnet Children's Services, which focussed on 'front door' services, Duty and Assessment, Intervention and Planning, Children in Care and work with vulnerable adolescents. During this period, OFSTED have found there to be a steady and strong focus on improving services and the quality of social work practice in Barnet. Although the pace of change has begun to establish improved social work practice over the last year, there is more work to do to ensure consistent quality of practice across all services.
- 1.6 The Council was also subject to an Annual Engagement meeting with OFSTED on the 5th November 2018. In this meeting the Council's self-assessment (Appendix 1) was considered. We are awaiting a letter from OFSTED following on from the meeting.
- 1.7 The Council also participated in a quarterly stocktake meeting with Essex County Council. This was attended by the Department for Education.
- 1.8 A fifth monitoring visit is scheduled for 27 and 28 November 2018, and will focus on the 'front door' services and the Duty and Assessment Teams. A sixth monitoring visit is scheduled for 14 and 15 February 2019 and will focus on the leaving care service, Onwards and Upwards.

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

- 1.9 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.
- 1.10 The action plan was finalised as *Barnet Children's Services Improvement Action Plan* and submitted to OFSTED and the Department for Education. The Strategic Director received confirmation from OFSTED on 31 October 2017 that "*the plan satisfactorily reflects the recommendations and priorities of the inspection report*".

- 1.11 In September 2018, the Barnet Family Services Improvement Board was presented with a revised improvement action plan covering the year September 2018 to September 2019, and this plan was approved by the Improvement Board in October 2018 (Appendix 2). The new plan reflects the progress we have made over the last year, and includes emerging priorities. It reflects the rigorous focus on assessment and care planning across Family Services.
- 1.12 As with the previous version, the action plan sets out the improvement journey and gives focus to transform services, especially social care, from inadequate to good rapidly. The action plan is in line with the three core strategic objectives that cut across all our plans for children, young people and families and underpin the systemic and cultural change needed to drive improvement within the borough:
- Empowering and equipping our workforce to understand the importance and meaning of purposeful social work assessments and interventions with families
 - Ensuring our involvement with the most vulnerable children in the borough positively impacts on their outcomes
 - Providing Practice Leadership and management throughout the system to ensure progress is made for children within timescales that are appropriate and proportionate to their needs and that practitioners are well supported, child curious and focused
- 1.13 The revised action plan has consolidated the previous turnaround priority and improvement themes into six overarching improvement themes:
1. Systems Leadership for Children
 2. Enhancing Practice Leadership for Children
 3. Right Interventions, Right Time (Thresholds)
 4. Strengthening Assessment for Children
 5. Strengthening Planning for Children
 6. Embedding a Child Centred Culture that Improves Children's Lives

Update on progress since the last report:

- 1.14 This is the sixth update report to be received by Committee and the reporting period for progress is September to November 2018.
- 1.15 The update on progress is structured according to the six improvement themes in the action plan, in the same format as for the September 2017-18 improvement plan. Under each improvement theme there is a description of the theme and an update on key activities since the previous update report.

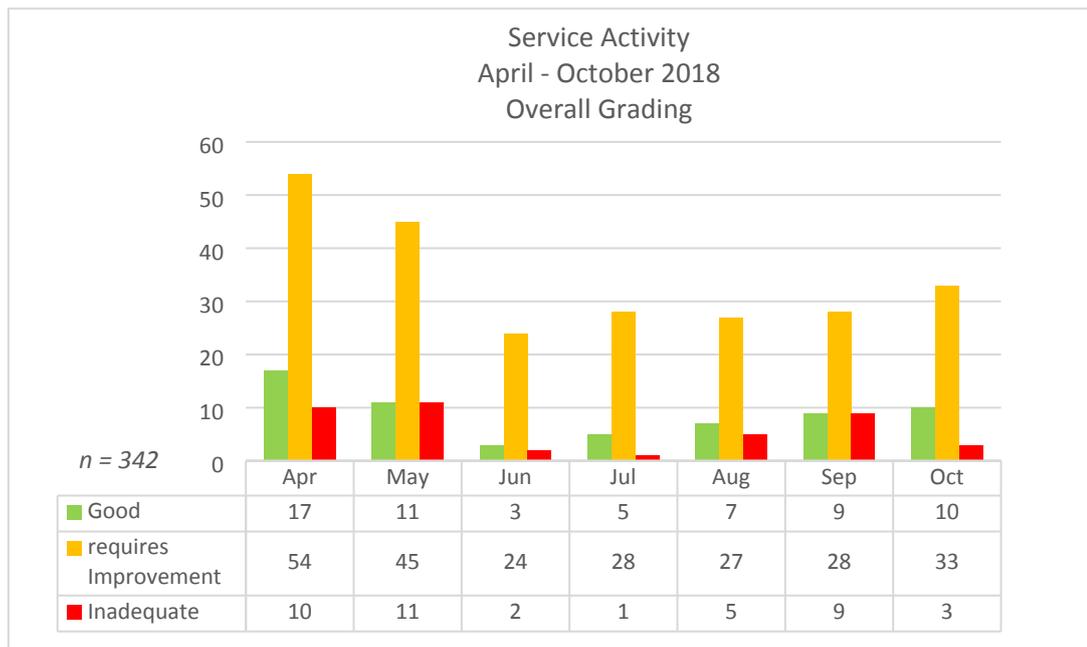
- 1.16 The 6 themes in the updated Improvement Plan align closely with themes 2 to 7 in the previous plan. The main change is that we have removed the Turnaround Priority, theme 1. Of the 8 actions under this theme, 5 have now been completed and focus on improvement of audit systems and processes along with focussed support from our improvement partner, Essex. The remaining outstanding actions under this theme have now been moved to more appropriate sections of the wider improvement plan.
- 1.17 This update report should be read in conjunction with the Self Evaluation Framework which was presented to OFSTED in November 2018, and provides an update on the current Children's Services position and progress since the OFSTED inspection with a higher level of granularity than this report. The Self Evaluation Framework can be found in Appendix 1.

Priority 1: Systems Leadership for Children

- 1.18 This theme focuses on strengthening systems leadership for children, and reflects that collective accountability, ownership, understanding and priority need to be given to improving outcomes for children in Barnet. In their most recent monitoring visit, OFSTED noted that 'senior leaders are aware that improvements are still inconsistent and require further consolidation and focus across all teams before practice is of a good standard'. The actions under this priority are designed to ensure this momentum is maintained and strengthened, and sit under three overarching areas.
- 1.19 Systems Leadership actions seek to ensure that there is sufficient capacity and capability at all levels that prioritises children. This includes lines of sight on dependent partnership activity including the implementation of the Barnet Safeguarding Children Partnership, the tri-Borough police reorganisation and its impact on our work with child protection processes and vulnerable adolescents, and the Virtual School Improvement Plan.
- 1.20 Strengthened Governance focusses on ensuring that governance arrangements drive improvement and add value. We have consolidated several actions from the previous plan into targeted work that will promote the voice of the child in planning and commissioning the delivery of services, as well as implementing the wider service user engagement strategy and new *Working Together* arrangements. The creation of the Friends of the Virtual School charity over the last year has enhanced partnership support for children in care and care leavers, and has been a key achievement to build on work to give children and young people in the care system a voice.
- 1.21 Further improvement activity is underway in corporate support, which encompasses the need for appropriate practical support to be in place such as adequate working space, good ICT systems and strong administrative support to reduce the bureaucratic burdens on social workers and social work managers. This year the relationship between legal services and case-holding teams has been strengthened following a review which identified areas for improvement.

Improvement theme 2: Enhancing Practice Leadership for Children

- 1.22 This theme focuses on strengthening professional systems that work together effectively to improve children’s lived experience. This includes that children’s voices are heard and influence decisions being made about them, that these decisions are recorded to a high standard and that this leads to timely interventions from appropriately skilled professionals across the partnership.
- 1.23 The focus for the year ahead will be on ensuring that management oversight and supervision is consistent and rigorous, and that oversight of practice provides sufficient guidance and direction to improve practice for children. In order to support this, over the past year we have designed and implemented a quality assurance framework that OFSTED have agreed is “well established”, and the processes are “a strength”. Case numbers remain low, and Practice Development Workers continue to support managers and staff in improving and developing their practice.
- 1.24 The Family Services’ audit programme has been embedded and provides clear insight into practice and management arrangements; the recent OFSTED report found evidence of this strengthening practice for children looked after. During the period April to October 2018, 342 audits were completed. Of these 18.1% (62) were graded as Good, 69.8% (239) were graded as Requires Improvement to be Good and 11.9% (41) were graded as Inadequate. The chart demonstrates that 88% of work over the past six months is of a Good or Requires Improvement to be Good standard. Following a significant decline in audits graded as Inadequate over June, July and August there was an increase in September which is relative to staffing changes that occurred during that month; lower levels of audits graded as Inadequate were reported in October. The chart below outlines monthly audit activity and gradings which forms the basis for a monthly report provided to Heads of Service that further includes a breakdown of audit outcomes against practice domains i.e. quality of assessment, voice of the child and management oversight.:



- 1.25 The Conferencing and Reviewing Officers team joined the Quality Assurance and Workforce Development Service in February 2018; this has enabled an increased focus on the quality assurance aspect of their role and has strengthened the relationship with wider Quality Assurance activity, creating a more cohesive approach to identifying and supporting areas for practice improvement.
- 1.26 The new conference model is now in place. Work was undertaken with Essex Children's Services colleagues in August 2018, to review these new arrangements and feedback. The review found evidence of challenge of professionals and plans, as well as support being provided in developing processes to solve specific issues being experienced within the service.

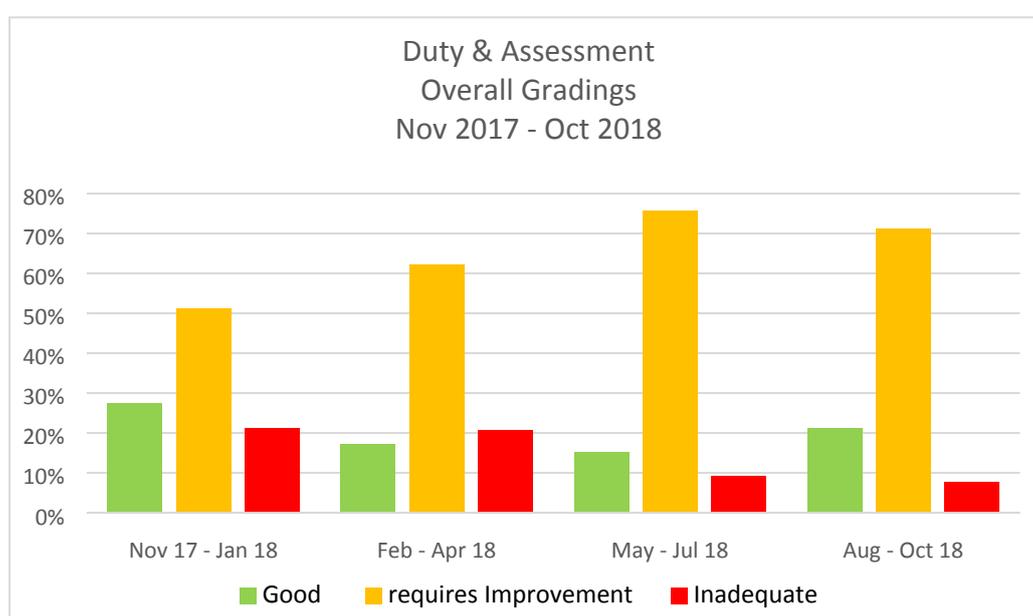
Improvement theme 3: Right Intervention, Right Time (Thresholds)

- 1.27 This improvement theme is focussed on embedding the monitoring and understanding of thresholds across the partnership. The outcomes are to have an effective MASH, effective decision making and joined up Early Help.
- 1.28 This year the MASH steering Group has been established and is well attended by the partnership, providing a forum for the multi-agency partnership to examine the effectiveness of operational arrangements and referrals data and trends. As a result, the MASH team have developed an improved professional relationships and interface with key stakeholders and referrers which is strengthened by allocated links to the Early Help Panel, Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC), Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) and a range of local adult and community based services. We aim to further improve the quality of communication between the MASH and referrers in order to promote information sharing and collaborative working over the next year.
- 1.29 Early Help services have been reconfigured following the successful locality based pilot of 0-19 services in September 2017. The three locality based hubs in the East/Central, South and West of the borough went live on 1st October and are supporting the delivery of integrated working for families of children across the age ranges. The Early Help delivery model supports co-location with a range of agencies providing a 'hub' of support across all Children Centres, Primary and Secondary Schools, Colleges, health providers and community and voluntary services operating in the locality enabling targeted and responsive services to be delivered to meet local need. A workforce development programme will support staff to develop a wider repertoire of skills to enable them to work with children of different ages. The Locality Service Managers are developing the focus and remit of their quarterly board meetings to include local users and parents to shape local services for local communities and respond to changing need.

Improvement theme 4: Strengthening Assessment for Children

- 1.30 This theme focusses on strengthening assessments, ensuring they are child centred, effectively analyse risk of harm to prevent drift in the system and prevent delays to delivering interventions.

- 1.31 Evidence from audits shows that the Duty & Assessment Teams are more consistently using management oversight and Signs of Safety tools to assess and analyse risk, and meaningfully engage children in their assessments; however, this remains too inconsistent. Practice Development Workers have been supporting staff within the teams to build on their repertoire of tools and skills in engaging families using genograms and direct work tools. Greater attention is being paid to cultural context, although there is still work to do to ensure family histories are consistently explored and supervision records better reflect the complex risk analysis and decision-making processes that take place.
- 1.32 The chart below demonstrates the downward trajectory in audits graded as inadequate. All audits graded as Good have been quality assured to test the gradings against over-optimism.



Improvement theme 5: Strengthening Planning for Children

- 1.33 This theme seeks to ensure that planning across the system is consistently focused on outcomes and is responsive when children's circumstances change or deteriorate. We expect to see plans that are child-centred and that achieve best outcomes, tackling drift and delay.
- 1.34 Audits show evidence of stronger practice for children subject to Child Protection Plans and Looked After Children, and Children's diverse backgrounds and needs are being better considered with the introduction of identity and diversity workshops facilitated by the Practice Development Workers.
- 1.35 There is a focus on scrutiny and monitoring of caseloads in to ensure that cases are closed, stepped down or progressed to permanency without delay. Pre-proceedings assessment frameworks will be strengthened by better mobilising existing resources to ensure that only those children that require their planning arrangements to be agreed in court enter proceedings.

- 1.36 The changes to the Corporate Parenting Advisory Panel are now in place; the refreshed Terms of Reference enables young people to be more effective and part of conversations and planning that take place at the panel. The engagement with councillors is improving and the chair of the children in care council is the co-chair of the panel. The new arrangement is strengthening the voice of the children in the planning and consultation.

Care leavers Council Tax Reduction Scheme

- 1.37 All council tax awards under the newly introduced Council Tax Reduction scheme for care leavers were awarded by the end of September 2018. A total of £13,387 was awarded to 44 care leavers in accordance with the policy. This was awarded to care leavers open to Onwards and Upwards who were eligible for the offer. Further work will continue throughout October and November 2018 to ensure that all care leavers who can apply for exemption are identified.

Care leaver local offer

- 1.38 In April 2017, the Children and Social Work Act 2017 (CSWA) came into force, which aims to improve support for looked after children, especially those leaving care, and introduced various duties for local authorities. Section 2 of the Act requires each local authority to consult on and publish a local offer for its care leavers. The local offer should provide information about all the services and support that is available to care leavers from the local area, including information about both their statutory entitlements as well as any discretionary support that a local authority chooses to provide, in areas such as health, education, employment and accommodation.
- 1.39 The Local Offer requirement came into effect on 1 April 2018, but involves the local authority first consulting young people, before publishing their local offer. Local authorities are required to publish their local offers by 1 January 2019 at the latest.
- 1.40 Since the introduction of the CSWA, work has been underway to develop Barnet's local offer; this has been done in conjunction with the Voice of the Child Team who are creating a new Children in Care website, part of which will feature the published local offer. There have been several consultation and engagement activities undertaken with care leavers across several areas that will be included in the local offer; such as council tax, education, mental health and housing.
- 1.41 A draft version of Barnet's Care Leaver local offer can be found in Appendix 2. This document will be further developed to ensure the full range of support available to care leavers is reflected in the document. Once this has been updated, care leavers will be consulted about the content and format in December 2018, after which point a final version will be developed for publication in January 2019.

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

- 1.42 This improvement theme will enable and ensure that all staff are fully engaged with the child centred culture and aware of the support available to them from management and senior leaders. This will include building connection via communication within children's services, across partner agencies and corporately.
- 1.43 There has been notable progress in this area; although there is still work to do to ensure consistency of child centred culture, staff morale is generally good, as has been noted in all OFSTED monitoring visits.
- 1.44 In OFSTED's most recent visit, they fed back that:

"Recent practice for children looked after is improving. Social workers have manageable caseloads, which means that they have time to engage in direct work with children. Those spoken to by inspectors reported that they liked working in Barnet and welcomed the positive shift in culture towards more child-centred practice and relationship working with children and families."

Quantitative Performance Data

- 1.45 Quantitative performance data is based on activity in September 2018. Reporting is on indicators that are subject to additional focus through the Improvement Plan, with information about what needs to change and what is being done about it, as well as what is working well. The full Barnet Children's Services Performance Matters report and Director commentary has been included in Appendix 1.

2. ADDITIONAL CES PRIORITIES IN THE CORPORATE PLAN

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

Corporate Priority update: Tackling Gang Activity

- 2.2 This is a CES Committee priority within the Corporate Plan Addendum 2018/19.
- 2.3 MAC- UK have been working with REACH as a co-located partner since April 2017 following a successful bid to Health Education England (HEE). HEE funding ended in March 2018 and a further six months of reduced service is being funded using Troubled Families reserves. MAC-UK have submitted their report to HEE and this will be publicly available in due course. Research in Practice have also completed a one-year evaluation of the REACH team approach and are due to publish their final report imminently. The draft report indicates that REACH provide a good level of responsive and multi-agency wrap-around to young people at a high risk of criminal and sexual exploitation which is supporting a reduction of entry into care, repeat offending and missing from home episodes.

- 2.4 MAC-UK has used an INTEGRATE approach to support REACH staff to use psychologically informed approaches when engaging young people who are gang-involved or at risk of becoming gang-involved. The development of trusted relationships when working with this vulnerable cohort of young people has been a key area of focus within this work. REACH has worked alongside MAC-UK over the past year to develop psychologically informed approaches to engaging and co-producing with young people. The change in approach has led to some evidence of strong child/professional relationships which has enabled disclosures that have led to targeted disruption activity. The REACH team is multi-professional and facilitates rapid and flexible holistic support from health, education, social work, family support and mental health professionals.
- 2.5 Building on the success of the REACH Team partnership, in June 2018, Barnet submitted a bid for the Home Office's Trusted Relationships funding, which builds on the provision of schools based gang prevention programmes and community based support delivered by the Voluntary and Community Sector in Creative Safe Spaces. The bid, submitted in conjunction with Art Against Knives, Growing Against Violence and MAC UK, was confirmed as one of a small number of successful applications in September 2018. The funding will support the MAC-UK team to further stretch the development of psychologically informed approaches with vulnerable adolescents alongside Art Against Knives workers and the REACH team.
- 2.6 The project will work across a spectrum of services and levels of need, taking an evidence based approach that focuses on relationships and resilience as follows:
- Universal engagement with young people within creative community spaces, providing creative skills training and individual and group support;
 - Targeted / Specialist support in communities based within Art Against Knives creative spaces to provide direct support to those identified through relation working and assessment as at risk of exploitation;
 - Psychologically informed staff at MAC-UK delivering staff learning spaces to the Art Against Knives team and 'hang out' in creative spaces with young people;
 - In-School preventative evidence based programme delivery to young people.

Corporate Priority update: Attainment and progress of children in Barnet schools

- 2.7 The percentage of primary and secondary schools that were Good or Outstanding in Q2 was 94.3% Two primary and one secondary school moved from Requiring Improvement to Good this school year. Safeguarding in all of Barnet schools inspected by OFSTED was judged to be "effective". The number of 30 hours free entitlement early years (3 and 4-year olds) places taken up by parents/carers that are eligible for a place was 70% in Q2.

- 2.8 Pupils in Barnet topped national GCSE league tables this year (August 2018). Provisional results released by the Department for Education show Barnet was ranked second highest in the country based on Progress 8 scores which gauge the progress made by each student during their time at secondary school. Barnet was behind only one other local authority and that was the Isles of Scilly, which had only 14 students sitting exams this year. The average Attainment 8 score, which is a way of measuring pupils across eight qualifications including Maths and English, saw the authority ranked fifth highest nationally. Primary school performance in 2018 is the best ever. According to the DfE's published provisional results, the percentage of pupils who achieved 'Expected or above' in Reading, Writing and Maths combined at the end of Key Stage 2 ranks Barnet 8th best out of 151 LAs.

Indicator	Polarity	17/18 EOY	18/19 Target	Q2 18/19			Q2 17/18	Benchmarking
				Target	Result	DOT	Result	
The percentage of all schools rated as good or better	Bigger is better	New for 18/19	92.6%	92.6%	94.3%	New for 18/19	New for 18/19	No benchmark available
30 hours free entitlement early years (3 and 4-year olds) places taken for up by parents/ carers that are eligible for a place	Bigger is better	New for 18/19	Monitor	Monitor	70%	New for 18/19	New for 18/19	No benchmark available

Corporate Priority update: Delivering the family-friendly Barnet vision

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

Contributions are being taken from young people, elected members, council officers, heads of service and partner agencies to ensure the best outcomes. It will enable Barnet Council, its partners and young people to work in a more responsive and empowering way. A draft version of the Plan is due to be reviewed by the CES committee in the next few months

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

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

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

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND NOT RECOMMENDED

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

5. POST DECISION IMPLEMENTATION

- 5.1 As the primary driver of improvement, the Children's Service Improvement Board will oversee the delivery of the action plan and is ultimately responsible for its delivery. The Children's Services Improvement Board is independently chaired by Dave Hill and will provide scrutiny and challenge as well as measure impact.
- 5.2 Operationally the Improvement Plan is driven and directed by the Operational Improvement Group chaired by the Strategic Director of Children's Services with senior representatives from key partner agencies. The group will oversee the day to day transformation of services and ensure effective communication and engagement with staff, children, young people and their families.
- 5.3 Reports on the progress of the action plan will be received by Children, Education, and Safeguarding Committee, Health and Well-Being Board and Barnet Safeguarding Children's Board.
- 5.4 A draft Local Offer is being developed by Onwards and Upwards and will be completed by the end of November 2018. A consultation schedule has been developed and will be rolled to care leavers across a range of channels, including Barnet's Care Leaver Forum, an online survey and Corporate Parenting Officers Group. The consultation will run for one month in December 2018. The Children in Care website and Care Leaver Offer will then be published by the end of January 2019, and the final version will be presented at the next CES Committee for noting.

6. IMPLICATIONS OF DECISION

6.1 Corporate Priorities and Performance

- 6.1.1 The implementation of Barnet Children's Services Improvement Action Plan is a key mechanism through which Barnet Council and its partners will deliver the Family Friendly Barnet vision to be the most family friendly borough in London by 2020.
- 6.1.2 This supports the following Council's corporate priorities as expressed through the Corporate Plan for 2015-20 which sets out the vision and strategy for the next five years based on the core principles of fairness, responsibility and opportunity, to make sure Barnet is a place;
- Of opportunity, where people can further their quality of life
 - Where people are helped to help themselves, recognising that prevention is better than cure

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

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

6.2.1 MTFS savings for 2018 - 2020 have been reviewed in light of the Family Services improvement journey to consider achievability. The original CES Committee target for 2018/19 – 2019/20 was £8.303m has been revised to £4.435m in the 2018/19 Policy & Resource Committee Business Planning Report.

Budget forecasts

6.2.2 Family Services budget forecast at the end of September 2018 based on information available is showing forecasting no variance.

6.2.3 Pressures relating to external high cost specialist placements and associated services are being mitigated. Forecast pressures are being offset in the main by additional resources of £2.333m approved by the Policy and Resources Committees of February and June 2018 and additional one-off grant funding.

6.3 **Social Value**

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

6.4 **Legal and Constitutional References**

6.4.1 Local authorities have specific duties in respect of children under various legislation including the Children Act 1989 and Children Act 2004. They have a general duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in need in their area and, if this is consistent with the child's safety and welfare, to promote the upbringing of such children by their families by providing services appropriate to the child's needs. They also have a duty to promote the upbringing of such children by their families, by providing services appropriate to the child's needs, provided this is consistent with the child's safety and welfare. They should do this in partnership with parents, in a way that is sensitive to the child's race, religion, culture and language and that, where practicable, takes account of the child's wishes and feelings.

- 6.4.2 Part 8 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 provides the statutory framework for OFSTED inspections. Section 136 and 137 provide the power for OFSTED to inspect on behalf of the Secretary of State and requires the Chief Inspector to produce a report following such an inspection. OFSTED will have monitoring visits on a regular basis in local authorities found to be inadequate. A new OFSTED framework has been in place from January 2018, however monitoring visits are still undertaken for authorities found to be inadequate. In addition to OFSTED's statutory responsibilities, the Secretary of State has the power to direct local authorities. This power of direction includes the power to impose a commissioner, direct the local authority to work with improvement partners and direct alternative delivery options. Subsequent directions can be given if the services are not found to be adequate.
- 6.4.3 Article 7 of the council's constitution states that the Children, Education and Safeguarding Committee has the responsibility for all matters relating to children, schools and education. In addition to this, the committee has responsibility for overseeing the support for young people in care and enhancing the council's corporate parenting role.
- 6.4.4 Section 1 of the Children and Social Work 2017 Act introduces corporate parenting principles, which comprises of seven principles that local authorities must have regard to whenever they exercise a function in relation to looked after children and care leavers. These principles apply to every part of the local authority, not just to children's services. These are largely a collation of existing duties local authorities have towards looked after children and those leaving care.
- 6.4.5 Section 2 of the Children and Social Work Act 2017 states that local authorities will be required to consult on and publish their local support offer to care leavers and to promote the educational attainment of children who have been adopted or placed in other long-term arrangements. The Council will be required to publish information about all the services and support that is available to care leavers. It should include information about their statutory entitlements as well as any discretionary support the Council might chose to provide. The local offer can include details of other services the Council will offer in relation to health and well-being, relationships, education and training, employment, accommodation and participation in society. When developing their local offer local authorities are required to consult with relevant persons which would include care leavers and organisations or people that support care leavers.
- 6.4.6 The Council has power as a billing authority under S13A (1) (c) of the Local Government Act 1992 to reduce to nil the amount of council tax payable by residents. The power to reduce council tax to nil is limited to those young people living in care in the borough. However, financial support can be offered to meet the cost of council tax that may be payable by Barnet's care leavers who live outside the borough.

6.5 Risk Management

Children's Services Improvement Action Plan

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

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

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

6.6 Equalities and Diversity

- 6.6.1 The 2010 Equality Act outlines the provisions of the Public-Sector Equalities Duty which requires Public Bodies **to have due regard** to the need to:
- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010
 - advance equality of opportunity between people from different groups
 - foster good relations between people from different groups
- 6.6.2 The broad purpose of this duty is to integrate considerations of equality into day business and keep them under review in decision making, the design of policies and the delivery of services
- 6.6.3 Equalities and diversity considerations are a key element of social work practice. It is imperative that help and protection services for children and young are sensitive and responsive to age, disability, ethnicity, faith or belief, gender, gender, identity, language, race and sexual orientation. Barnet has a diverse population of children and young people. Children and young people from minority ethnic groups account for 52%, compared with 30% in the country. The percentages of children and young people from minority ethnic groups who receive statutory social care services account for 61% of Children in Need cases, 56% of child protection cases and 60% of all Children in Care. The proportion of children and young people with English as an additional language across primary schools is 44% (the national average is 18%).

- 6.6.4 Social workers practice in relation to inequalities and disadvantage is inconsistent. Learning from audits and practice week has highlighted attention to diversity and the cultural context in assessments is an area of practice in need of immediate support from management, the Practice Development Workers and targeted training. The action plan addresses the additional work which needs to be done to ensure that children's diversity and identity needs are met; "5b(ii) Strengthen consideration of diversity in assessment so that assessments thoroughly explore and consider family history including the influence of cultural, linguistic and religious beliefs, norms and expectations", and training is ongoing to ensure this work is embedding.
- 6.6.5 Additional equalities and diversity information and data in relation to service improvements that have, and continue to be made following the 2017 OSTED inspection, are outlined within the Self-Evaluation Framework (Appendix 1). For example, a new programme of diversity training for social workers has been introduced, which has resulted in improvements in this domain of practice, as evidenced by audit grades. Further analysis of Family Services equalities and diversity data, and its impact on service delivery, will be undertaken in December 2018; an update on this will be included in the January 2019 CES report.

6.7 Corporate Parenting

- 6.7.1 In July 2016, the Government published their Care Leavers' strategy *Keep on Caring* which outlined that the "... [the government] will introduce a set of corporate parenting principles that will require *all departments* within a local authority to recognise their role as corporate parents, encouraging them to look at the services and support that they provide through the lens of what a reasonable parent would do to support their own children.'
- 6.7.2 The corporate parenting principles set out seven principles that local authorities must have regard to when exercising their functions in relation to looked after children and young people, as follows:
1. to act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and well-being, of those children and young people;
 2. to encourage those children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings;
 3. to take into account the views, wishes and feelings of those children and young people;
 4. to help those children and young people gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners;
 5. to promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for those children and young people;
 6. for those children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work; and;
 7. to prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living.
- 6.7.3 As part of the OFSTED improvement journey and to ensure that Barnet has due regard to the Principles and improves on the delivery of corporate parenting to its children in care and care leavers:

- Barnet have committed to supporting children and young people to achieve their best in childhood, adolescence and adulthood within the Corporate Parenting Pledge for children in care and care leavers, as approved by full council on 29 January 2016. The Pledge can be found in section 6.3.
- Learning and development for elected members and senior officers has and will continue to be delivered, to ensure that there is a clear understanding of their duties and responsibilities to children and care and care leavers and ways in which the Principles can be embedded and sufficient challenge provided regarding work and decisions of the council. The last training session for members was delivered on 31 May 2018.
- A Local Offer for care leavers is being developed as per the Children and Social Work Act 2018 requirements. Care leavers will be consulted with to ensure their views are considered and incorporated as the Local Offer is developed; a final version will be published by January 2019. The Local Offer will be reviewed and updated bi-annually to ensure that the services and information outlined within it are up to date and help young people gain access to and make best use of local services.
- To ensure that Barnet has due regard to the Principles and improves on the delivery of corporate parenting to children in care and care leavers in Barnet, the administering of council tax relief was approved at Full Council on 31 July 2018. This scheme will help care experienced young people have a more successful transition to independence, through the provision of guaranteed relief in their first two years of independent living.

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

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

- A Care Leaver Participation Coordinator has been recruited to lead on a targeted project which seeks to improve the education, employment and training (EET) outcomes of Barnet's Care Leavers. The Coordinator's role includes working with key stakeholders to develop and implement an appropriate and accessible EET Pathway for Barnet Care Leavers, action EET related tasks within the Corporate Parenting Plan and work with staff and care leavers to increase skills and opportunities available to care leavers. This project has been funded by the Council's Chief Executive.
- We ensure elected members, senior officers and partners can monitor and challenge the performance of the council and its partner agencies pertaining to consideration of the Principles and outcomes for children in care and care leavers through the appropriate channels. This includes the Children, Education, and Safeguarding Committee (bi-monthly), Corporate Parenting Advisory (quarterly) Panel and Corporate Parenting Officers' Group (monthly).

6.8 Consultation and Engagement

- 6.8.1 Consultation and engagement with children and young people is central to social work practice and service improvement across the Safeguarding Partnership. A service user experience strategy has been developed and was launched on 19th February 2018. The strategy ensures that how we work with children and young people is child centred, that we know, understand and can capture the lived experience of children and feed lessons learnt into service improvement. We have nominated Voice of the child champions across partner agencies and within Family Services to promote and lead on the Service User Engagement agenda within their respective areas.
- 6.8.2 Our Voice of the Child Strategy Group enables the wider engagement of children and young people in service design and commissioning of provision across the partnership. This includes youth forums such as Barnet Youth Board and Youth Assembly, the SEN forum (to co-design services) and Children in Care Council (to improve the support children in care receive). The team have been working closely with UNICEF UK to deliver the Child Friendly Communities and Cities initiative. This is a global programme that aims to advance children's rights and well-being at the local level. More recently the team have had a change in staff with a newly appointed Voice of the Child Coordinator and Child's Rights Lead. The team are reviewing the current Youth Voice Offer to develop a structured action plan to focus on increasing reach and impact for children and young people in Barnet.
- 6.8.3 The Barnet Children's Services Improvement Action Plan looks to improve children's participation to ensure that all decisions and planning that affects them is influenced by their wishes and feelings. The action plan also includes actions to strengthen how the views and experiences of children, young people and their families influence service design. This feedback will also help monitor the impact of improvement activity.
- 6.8.4 Improving the quality of services to children is a key partnership and corporate priority and collective work is needed across the partnership and the council to drive improvements. The action plan was completed in consultation with various stakeholders. Staff engagement activities have included monthly staff briefings, team meetings, staff conference. Partners have been engaged through the safeguarding partnership board. Senior leaders are members of the Improvement Board and their continued engagement is assured through core multiagency groups and specific forums such as head teacher's forums.

6.9 Insight

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

7. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 7.1 Single Inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers and Review of the effectiveness of the Local Safeguarding Children Board report, OFSTED, 7 July 2017
https://reports.OFSTED.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/local_authority_reports/barnet/051_Single%20inspection%20of%20LA%20children%27s%20services%20as%20pdf.pdf
- 7.2 Barnet's Corporate Parenting Pledge to Children in Care and Care Leavers (2016)

[https://www.barnet.gov.uk/dam/jcr:c33f12a5-86d9-4215-9c89-a8c82675fba4/Pledge%20for%20Children%20in%20Care%202016%20\(digital\).pdf](https://www.barnet.gov.uk/dam/jcr:c33f12a5-86d9-4215-9c89-a8c82675fba4/Pledge%20for%20Children%20in%20Care%202016%20(digital).pdf)