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Introduction

About Barnet

Our population

- Barnet is the largest Borough in London by population and is continuing to grow. The highest rates of population growth are forecast to occur around the planned development works in the west of the Borough, with over 121% growth in Golders Green and 115% in Colindale between 2017 and 2032.
- The west of the Borough has the highest levels of deprivation, particularly in Burnt Oak, Colindale, Childs Hills and West Hendon.
- Christianity is the largest faith community in Barnet accounting for 41% of the total population.

- 1 in 5 of all Jewish people in England and Wales live in Barnet. 15% of Barnet's population is Jewish, compared to an average of 0.4% of the population in our 7 statistical neighbours.

The children and young people we work with

- There are approximately 99,000 children and young people under the age of 19 years living in Barnet, representing 26% of the Borough's total population of 387,803. The population of children and young people in Barnet is estimated to grow by 3% between 2018 and 2025, when it is projected to reach 101,875
- We know we have a large universal population that is doing well, but a small percentage (2%) need a targeted and specialist service to meet their needs and improve their outcomes in line with their peers.
- The proportion of children entitled to free school meals:
 - in primary schools is 16.7% (the national average is 14.5%)
 - in secondary schools is 13.1% (the national average is 13.2%)
- 19% of children under five (5,000 children) live in low income families.
- Barnet has a notably higher proportion of children in care aged 16+ compared to the national average (+91% as at November 2017). Part of this increase is in line with averages across London due to the number of newly arrived Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children.
- Children and young people from Black and minority ethnic groups account for 52% of all children living in the area versus 30% nationally.
- In the 0 – 9 age group there are more children from BAME groups than in any other age group.
- The largest minority ethnic groups of children and young people in the area are Indian and Black African.
- The proportion of children and young people with English as an additional language in primary schools is 48.7% (the national average is 20.1%). In secondary schools, this is 38.8% (the national average is 15.7%).
- An in-depth analysis of Barnet's rates of demand per 10,000 population for social care services highlighted an underrepresentation of Jewish children in Barnet's social care services.

About Family Services

Barnet Council and its partners are committed to the vision to be the most family friendly borough in London by 2020. At the heart of this journey is the building of resilience in children and their families enabling them to bounce back from adversity.

We are aspirational for our children and are setting high standards to drive improvements across the Borough. We want to ensure that our work with vulnerable children aligns to our philosophy of "It's all about me" – child centred assessment, planning and direct work improving outcomes.

We know that we have failed to deliver this aspiration and have let children and families down. Our drive in both the Council and its partners is to work hard in a focussed and consistent manner to consolidate and embed practice improvements.

This self-assessment considers the Ofsted 'Inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers, and review of the effectiveness of the Local Safeguarding Children Board' which took place in Barnet between 24 April 2017 and 18 May 2017. It builds on the work completed during the previous year, and is informed by evidence collected against actions in the 2017-18 Improvement Plan, the 4 Ofsted monitoring visits, our quality assurance and performance management information throughout the year, and feedback from the Department for Education.

We have developed a revised Improvement Plan for 2018/19 which includes a series of actions that sit under six improvement themes:

1. Systems leadership for children
 - a. Strengthened systems leadership for children with sufficient capacity and capability at all levels
 - b. Strengthened governance arrangements that prioritise children and add value to improvements
 - c. Corporate support which understands the role of social workers and reflects a collective ambition for children in the borough
2. Enhancing practice leadership for children
 - a. Strengthen practice leadership through effective management oversight and increased capacity
3. Right interventions, right time (thresholds)
 - a. Effective MASH
 - b. Proportionate, effective and timely decision making
 - c. Joined up Early Help
4. Strengthening assessment for children
5. Strengthening planning for children
6. Embedding a child centred culture that improves children's lives

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

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

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

We have three core strategic objectives that cut across our plans for children, young people and families and underpin the systemic and cultural change needed to drive improvement within the borough:

- Empowering and equipping our workforce to understand the importance and meaning of purposeful social work assessments and interventions with families

- Ensuring our involvement with the most vulnerable children in the borough positively impacts on their outcomes
- Providing effective practice leadership and management throughout the system to ensure progress is made for children within timescales that are appropriate and proportionate to their needs and that practitioners are well supported, curious and child focussed

Ofsted Recommendations

The 19 recommendations for improvement of Children's Services made by Ofsted are:

1. Ensure a continued and sustained focus on improving core social work practice, strategically and operationally, to equip practitioners and managers to deliver good-quality services to children and their families.
2. Ensure that partners work together in the multi-agency safeguarding hub to ensure timely and accurate information sharing and a consistent application of thresholds for all children referred to children's services.
3. Ensure that social work practice and decision making for children focus on understanding their lived experiences and incorporate their wishes and feelings.
4. Ensure that all children identified as being at risk of harm benefit from effective child protection enquiries.
5. Ensure that strategy discussions include information gathered from all partners, and result in clear planning and recording of actions and the rationale for decisions.
6. Ensure that all written records are clear and up to date, and accurately reflect the circumstances of children and their families.
7. Ensure that the quality of assessments is sufficient to enable an accurate evaluation of the risks posed to children, and that this is regularly updated.
8. Ensure that management decision making is effective and leads to clear, timely and effective care planning that safeguards children and focuses on improving outcomes for them.
9. Ensure that children who are victims of chronic long-term neglect and emotional abuse, and who are subject to long periods of child protection planning, have appropriate risk assessments and plans made for them.
10. Ensure that timely action is taken to understand and reduce risk to children who go missing from home or care and who are vulnerable to child sexual exploitation. When risk does not reduce, or increases, ensure that effective additional safeguarding action is taken.
11. Improve the standard of social work to families under the pre-proceedings phase of the Public Law Outline and ensure that, when there is no improvement within a timescale that is right for children, the local authority issues timely court proceedings to protect them and avoid drift and delay in achieving permanence.
12. Ensure that connected carers are thoroughly assessed within regulatory timescales.
13. Ensure that all children who are privately fostered and their carers are regularly visited, that all work is compliant with minimum standards of good practice, and that the awareness of private fostering is raised in the workforce.
14. Ensure that homeless 16- to 17-year-olds are thoroughly assessed and that appropriate ongoing support is offered to them to meet their needs.

15. Ensure that the oversight of practice by all operational directors, heads of service, team managers, child protection chairs and independent reviewing officers is child focused and effective in achieving positive change for children.
16. Improve children's participation in all decisions and planning that affect them and in future service developments, including their stronger involvement in corporate parenting.
17. Ensure that all children receive help to understand their histories, and that social workers write life-story books and later-life letters sensitively, in a child-focused way.
18. Ensure that children's diversity and identity needs are met and that they are supported to retain their birth language. Ensure that interpreters are used to communicate with them and their families, when needed.
19. Improve care leavers' ownership of pathway plans and the quality and timeliness of targets, to improve their lives. Ensure that care leavers have the tools, such as money management, to cope with life's challenges and are fully aware of the 'Pledge' and their entitlements.

In addition to these, Ofsted made specific recommendations for the Barnet Safeguarding Partnership Board:

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

Leadership

The service is led by committed, resilient and experienced professionals in social care and service development and improvement. We work with Essex County Council and Dave Hill CBE to critically challenge the development of quality provision through stocktakes and a regular Improvement Board.

The Council has prioritised improvement in children's services and made significant financial investment to drive that. This has been led by the Council Leader, Lead Member and Chief Executive. They hold the service to account through both the Improvement Board and monthly performance meetings.

Work with partners is improving. Health partners have responded appropriately to the CQC inspection of safeguarding and looked after children with action plans monitored through the safeguarding board. We have strengthened relationships with schools through the secondment of an experienced headteacher to support the development of safeguarding across schools. All schools inspected by OFSTED have been rated good for safeguarding since the Inadequate judgment for children's social care.

Our work with the police has improved operationally and we are working together through the challenges of the Metropolitan Police restructure.

Knowing ourselves - Safeguarding, Quality Assurance, Workforce and Development

As evidenced in the Monitoring Visits, we know ourselves. Our refreshed approach to Quality Assurance and Performance Management is embedded and bringing about improvement. Close attention is paid to performance management across Family Services. This is monitored in using quantitative and qualitative data, including more recently feedback from service users and staff. In the feedback from their most recent monitoring visit, Ofsted commented that:

“Quality assurance processes are a strength. The use of auditing is well established, with more than a third of all children in care cases having been subject to a detailed audit since January 2018. Audits accurately identify practice improvements and determine appropriate actions for staff, who are open to learning to improve their practice.”

Quality Assurance Framework

Audit

The audit programme has embedded and is aligned to the Practice Standards and uses a model of Appreciative Inquiry. Between September 2017 and January 2018 regular audits were being ‘triple locked’ by Essex to ensure consistency and accuracy of audit gradings. Essex also provided a ‘triple lock’ of the 6 cases selected for audit in the November 2017 Monitoring Visit. By January 2018 the audit process had become increasingly consistent and reliable and Essex only ‘triple locked’ cases that were graded as Good or Requires Improvement for the January 2018 Monitoring Visit and made no changes to any of the audit grades submitted. During this Monitoring Visit, Ofsted noted an increase in audit activity across Family Service and commented that this is providing useful information for managers in monitoring progress and improvement. The case audits completed for the visit were found by Ofsted to be thorough and accurate, and set out clear expectations for practice improvement.

The audit programme has continued to embed and is now well established and effectively identifying practice strengths and areas for continued improvement focus. This has been consistently recognised by Ofsted during the third and fourth Monitoring Visits undertaken in April and July 2018. In their most recent monitoring visit feedback, Ofsted noted that managers have made “considerable progress in widely embedding the quality assurance framework and particularly the use of audits...”

The Quality Assurance Team provides monthly reports for Heads of Service that detail audit findings against practice domains, including quality of assessment, quality of planning, voice of the child, engagement with parents and management oversight. The reports provide insights into areas of practice that are improving and those that require focused workforce development activity to be undertaken. The reports inform the focus of the Workforce Development Team and enables

mobilisation of the Practice Development Workers to provide bespoke training tailored to individual, team and service area need, for example an ongoing programme of diversity training for social workers has improved audit grades against this domain of practice.

Workforce

We want social workers to work in an environment where they can do their jobs well. Following the inspection outcome Members invested in additional capacity across the system. The Council has also been able to target additional staffing resources when needed for example in Duty and Assessment Teams and 0-25 service. Our agency rate of 26% is similar to many outer London Boroughs. We have a continued focus on recruitment and retention of permanent social workers through agency transfer opportunities (13 since July) and a 'grow your own' approach through ASYE and student recruitment. We have recently appointed 12 NQSWs and have recruited 18 students from three different London Universities who have chosen to do their placement in Barnet. Recruitment therefore remains a focus for the service

Staff morale is generally good, as noted by Ofsted in all monitoring visits, and who in their latest visit found 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."

One of our key priorities moving forward is to ensure that all Social Workers receive regular, good quality supervision that is recorded on file to support improved practice. As Ofsted noted in July 2018:

"Inspectors found that supervision and management oversight is evident on case files, but this is not always regular, and, in some cases, lacked reflection and challenge. Social workers reported to inspectors that they valued informal supervision and management direction. However, this was not often recorded on case files in order to inform a full understanding of children's progress or plans."

Workforce Development & Practice Development Workers

Four Practice Development Workers are located across the service areas to provide hands on support to Social Workers and Team Managers through a range of activities including delivery of bespoke workshops and training sessions for individuals, teams and services areas and one to one support using social learning theory approaches of practice modelling, feedback and observation. When performance issues are evident, Team Managers can commission individualised support from Practice Development Workers to work alongside Social Workers by drawing up agreements for a period of informal support aimed at improving practice. This approach has led to some positive developments in social worker confidence and skills, feedback to Team Managers informs personal development plans and can also feed into formal capability procedures where improvements are not achieved in agreed timescales.

In their most recent monitoring visit, Ofsted noted that:

“The use of the practice development workers to support social workers to improve their practice and facilitate direct work is effective and is leading to more recent stronger practice. However, the variability of practice means that while some children are assisted well to communicate their wishes and feelings, and these inform their plans, plans for other children are made without their full involvement.”

Workforce Development activities are becoming increasingly targeted towards areas of practice that require improvement and there is more focused commissioning of training that supports the embedding of resilience based practice.

Identity and Diversity workshops are run by the Practice Development Workers across the service areas to ensure staff are aware of expectations around the consideration of family history when undertaking assessments. The Workforce Development Team have delivered specific training on Working with Fathers, which we had identified along with feedback from Ofsted as an area for development. The Practice Development Workers have been introducing Systemic Group Supervision, and have led a Corporate Parenting Service day on the theme of Direct Work with Children: Systemic Ideas in Practice.

Signs of Safety training has been provided to the children’s workforce across early help and social work teams as a tool for risk assessment and planning activities and Graduate Certificate and Post-Graduate Certificate in Systemic Practice training has been commissioned from the Institute of Family Therapy on a rolling 5-year programme. The senior leadership team recently completed a one year Systemic Leadership course and in September 2018 the first cohort of 20 staff, mainly comprising of Team Managers and Advanced Practitioners started the Graduate Certificate course.

Data

The central monthly reporting data is reported through ‘Performance Matters’, and reports are provided to the Children, Education and Safeguarding committee, the Safeguarding Partnership Board, the Improvement Board and the Council’s own Corporate Management Board, to enable effective strategic oversight of service delivery. Data is presented alongside commentary from the service areas identifying what is going well, what needs to improve, and the actions in place to address areas of concern. Further challenge is in the system through the monthly CEO, lead member, DCS and Independent Chair of the BSCP challenge meeting with Operational Directors and Divisional Directors for Family Services.

Performance data on outstanding actions in the system for Child Protection and Children in Care cases is regularly shared with Team Managers to drive the completion of tasks that have been identified as part of the CP and CiC processes and enable workflows to progress without delay and minimise data reporting errors occurring.

The monthly data is supported by daily and weekly trackers per service area to support HoS performance management oversight. the data is reviewed with Team Managers in recently introduced performance management and quality meetings which promote whole system ownership of data and performance.

Joining audit findings with management information is enabling Heads of Service to assess and respond to identified gaps, resolve system reporting issues and engage in the use of management information to inform decision making, performance management and service development.

Conference and Review

The Conferencing and Reviewing Officers team was joined with 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 QA activity creating a more cohesive approach to identifying and supporting areas for practice improvement. The Safeguarding Team engaged in a programme of activities, in collaboration with Essex County Council, to develop and strengthen the quality of Child Protection Conferences and Looked After Children Reviews. The improvement work aimed to ensure that children's Plans are developed in accordance with identified need with clear and measurable outcomes and to ensure that children and families are fully engaged in planning and review processes. Child Protection Conference Chairs and Independent Reviewing Officers observed Conferences in Essex County Council during December and January and attended a training day with Essex. Essex observed 8 'mock' multi-agency Child Protection Conferences during February and March to embed learning and, supported the roll out of a new model of Conferencing in April 2018. The new conference model is now in place. Working with colleagues in Essex to feedback and review these arrangements in August showed evidence of confident challenge and some support in developing processes to solve specific issues we have experienced in a Barnet context.

The Independent Reviewing Officers have engaged a group of Looked After Children to co-produce a new model for LAC Reviews that promotes the facilitation of child-led meetings that reflect their unique circumstances and their wishes and feelings. The changes were reviewed with young people during September, who gave feedback about developing a flexible approach, including facilitating young people chairing meetings where they wished to do so. 98% of initial meetings and reviews are currently in timescale, and interviews for permanent staff are taking place during October. A new Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Manager post has been established along with a Principal IRO so that there can be a targeted focus on the IROs, ensuring they are a truly independent service aligned with our QA framework, and that there is specific IRO expertise embedded in the leadership of service.

In their most recent monitoring visit, Ofsted noted that:

"The independent reviewing officers are engaging with children midway between reviews, and there is evidence of their involvement seen in children's case files. However, their challenge to care plans is still inconsistent and is not always effective in achieving improved practice or the timelier progression of children's plans."

Child Criminal and Sexual Exploitation

The April 2018 Ofsted Monitoring Visit focussed on the progress made on vulnerable adolescents. The inspectors found that:

"For vulnerable adolescents at high risk of exploitation, regular and effective strategic multi-agency sexual exploitation (MASE) meetings and

operational 'Pre-MASE' meetings provide effective scrutiny, advice and guidance to multi-agency partners and social workers. This is leading to improved safeguarding practice. Recent plans to broaden the scope of these meetings to become a vulnerable adolescent risk panel is positive. The Safeguarding Adolescents at Risk Group (SARG) was formed in 2017 to broaden the scope of strategic planning and operational practice. The new vulnerable adolescent strategy, launched in April 2018, provides the foundation for a new vulnerable adolescents' at-risk panel (VARP), which is a positive development. However, these developments are still relatively new and are not yet embedded to influence frontline practice."

The Sexual Exploitation and Missing (SEAM) tool is providing a framework for practitioners to consider and manage children's and young people's vulnerabilities and risk of exploitation. Training has been provided to all staff and SEAM strategy meetings have been held for those children and young people that need them, the actions from these are now being tracked to ensure planning reflects support for vulnerability and protection against risk.

Quality assurance undertaken in April 2018 found 83.3% of vulnerable adolescent cases when audited, were requires improvement or better. A multi-agency audit on the theme of vulnerable adolescents took place in June and showed that the child's voice and multi-agency collaboration and understanding of risk related to vulnerable adolescents was strong and well-evidenced across most audits. There is still work to do in ensuring that the positive impact of interventions is clear.

The development of trusted relationships with vulnerable adolescents has been a key area of focus. REACH has worked alongside MAC-UK over the past year to develop psychologically informed approaches to engaging and co-producing with young people, following a successful bid to Health Education England. The change in approach has led to some evidence of strong child/professional relationships which has enabled disclosures that have in turn enabled targeted disruption activity. The REACH team is multi-professional and facilitates rapid and flexible wrap-around from health, education, social work, family support and mental health professionals. The work of the team has been evaluated by Research in Practice which has evidenced the positive impact of the approach on outcomes for children and young people.

Barnet successfully bid for Home Office 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 funding supports MAC-UK to further stretch the development of psychologically informed approaches with vulnerable adolescents by locating alongside Art Against Knives workers supporting young people in the community. The Programme is linked to 0-19 Early Help delivery framework.

Young people at risk of gangs and criminal exploitation are now held in a single Vulnerable Adolescents at Risk Panel (VARP) which replaces the Pre-MASE and brings together cross-cutting intelligence and focused safeguarding and disruption activity for this group of young people.

Domestic Abuse, Parental Substance Misuse and Mental Health

Domestic Abuse

Barnet Community Safety Partnership have identified Violence Against Women & Girls (VAWG) as a key priority. A new VAWG strategy was launched this year supported by a clear action plan where partners have agreed to a focus on how services are offered to households where domestic abuse, parental substance misuse and mental ill-health are a factor.

Voluntary and Community Domestic Abuse Services are commissioned and are co-located in Early Help and MASH which enables early and rapid identification and responses to families where domestic abuse is present. Early Help Family Support Workers are trained to deliver interventions for children affected by domestic abuse and Family Services have commissioned domestic abuse perpetrator risk assessments and programmes. This suite of services and interventions recognises the need to support children and victims of domestic abuse and to also intervene to stop perpetrators engaging in violent and abusive behaviours.

The MASH has developed named link workers to attend and interface with MARAC and MAPPA meetings; this enables a flow of two-way information into and out of risk management forums and ensures case holding social workers are clear on decisions made.

The multi-agency domestic abuse audit undertaken in May found that no child was at risk of imminent harm and no cases were graded as Inadequate. Overall the grading was in the domain of Requires Improvement to Good with some strong evidence of Good practice in some cases. The multi-agency understanding of domestic violence and abuse and the impact on the wellbeing of children was well understood in case discussion and evidenced in some audits. In order to achieve an overall grading of Good, multi-agency safeguarding practice and its impact would be strengthened by: more consistent and timely sharing of information between agencies; improved analysis of historic and contextual information within risk assessments; closer coordination with the MARAC, and; increased consideration and utilisation of specialist services, such as Solace and Westminster Drug project, to offer additional expertise and to support more robust and effective care planning and implementation. Multi agency training is offered through VWARP and the Partnership Board is monitoring partnership take up of specialist services. This links to the Improvement Plan under the themes of 'strengthening assessment for children' and 'strengthening planning for children'.

Parental Substance Misuse

Westminster Drugs Project (WDP) Hidden Harm workers are co-located in the MASH to support the identification and mobilisation of support services for parents and young people affected by substance and alcohol misuse. The workers provide weekly drop in sessions to the social work teams to discuss cases where substance and alcohol misuse is present. The MASH Hidden Harm worker interfaces with their counterpart in Adult Services to discuss referrals and promote joined up delivery.

WDP have established links into the Youth Offending Service and Early Help Services and have set up parents support groups which meet on a weekly basis. Partners such as Barnet Carers give talks regularly to support groups about their services and how children can be supported.

Troubled Families Transformation Grant funding has created additional WDP and Domestic Abuse capacity, and has further supported the development of seconded partnerships posts from Adult Mental Health, Probation (NPS/CRC), Education and Health services. These new arrangements are aimed at ensuring targeted support is provided to families meeting the programme criteria in early help and children's social care services. The Probation and additional WDP posts are now operational and co-located with Early Help Services; the remaining posts are on track for recruitment in the coming months.

Performance and Outcomes by Service Area

Early Help

Summary

The overall intention of the Resilience based model is to intervene at earliest stage of identified need so that family's problems are resolved without the need for escalation into statutory services and interventions. In September 2017, a pilot for locality based hubs for children aged 0-19 was launched with the aim to improve the journey of families in the Early Help system, reduce the number of times families have to repeat their story to professionals and, to bring professionals closer together to reduce siloed working. The East-Central Locality was first to launch and introduced the first Multi-Agency Early Help Panel in September 2017. The West Locality Hub and Panel launched in January 2018 and the South Locality Hub and Panel launched in the summer.

A 0-19 Early Help Partnership Board has provided senior management steer to the development of the integrated 0-19 Early Help Hubs with each locality pilot being overseen by a locality lead who chairs a monthly Multi-Agency Development Group which facilitates localised identification of community needs and partnership engagement. The group seeks to build a strong commitment and ownership by key stakeholders, including adult services, housing and the Police, in working together to deliver a 'whole family' approach to families with multiple needs.

Children and families identified as needing targeted multi-agency support at an early help level are referred to the weekly locality Early Help Multi-Agency Panels which are comprised of over 20 key stakeholders with decision making capacity for their respective agencies. Children and Families are primarily processed via the MASH and referred to Panel with parental consent; schools and local providers can also refer to the Panel. Diverse membership at the Panel meetings facilitates sharing of relevant and proportionate information as well as rich discussion that enables services to be swiftly mobilised with an agreed Lead Practitioner and Team Around the Child/Family.

The Early Help Panels have been received well by key stakeholders who have maintained consistent attendance and commitment to the approach. Family feedback has reported prompt responses that immediately put the right professional system around the family, reducing the negative impact of a 'referral-on' culture that creates multiple layers of uncoordinated professional input.

In each locality a multi-agency Hub has been created for professionals to co-locate in Children's Centres and Youth Centres., Each Hub has satellite buildings which accommodate flexible working arrangements and brings services closer to where children and families need them. The Hubs and satellites link with Early Years, Primary and Secondary and Health providers delivering in the locality area to ensure coordinated responses based on local need.

The Early Help workforce was restructured over the summer to bring together professionals for under 5's, primary school children and adolescents as a single 0-19 service. The restructure was implemented on 1st October 2018 with early years, family support and youth workers being assigned to work across the three locality hubs.

Early Help data is monitored and compared to national outputs which help inform our baselines and KPI's. Barnet delivers a successful Troubled Families Programme which is integrated into the Early Help offer and provides additional expertise from welfare rights advisors, employment advisors and the newly developed seconded partnership posts.

Strengths and Achievements

- The 0-19 Early Help Hubs pilot have informed the development of whole system change in the provision of Early Help. The Panels have successfully engaged key stakeholders who recognise the benefits of coordinated and collaborative efforts to prevent problems from escalating. The implementation of the 0-19 Locality Based Hub Model in October is consolidating the approach into business as usual.
- The 0-19 Multi-Agency Early Help Panels continue to demonstrate positive partnership commitment to attend and engage in the formulation of solutions to address need early through Early Help Assessment and Plans coordinated by the rapid mobilisation of resources creating a Team Around the Family.
- Each hub panel now has around 6-8 cases for discussion each week (18- 24 across all panels) with over 250 cases now being discussed at panel.
- The 0-19 Early Help locality based model provides and coordinates a range of expertise at a local level including social workers that support the management of complex cases at risk of escalation or stepping down from Children's Social Care
- Co-located Early Help CAMHS services including school based clinicians and children's wellbeing practitioners. These roles closely align to the Resilient Schools Programme that has been piloting Mental Health First Aid training and dedicated access to psychotherapy trainees from a local training provider that are based within schools.
- The creation of the Early Help IT system has enabled managers to have stronger oversight of children referred and allocated to Early Help Services. The system enables multi-agency reporting and recording on children's records. It is being further developed enable tracking of group work and Family Support at the Universal Plus level.

Focus for the year ahead

- To implement and embed co-located and integrated working within the new 0-19 Locality Hubs. This and other areas of focus link to the Improvement Plan themes 'systems leadership for children', 'enhancing practice leadership for children' and 'right interventions, right time' (thresholds).
- Provide training to the Early Help workforce that facilitates the development of skills in working with children across the age range of 0-19.
- To work with key stakeholders to agree resourcing and contributions in relation to the use of shared space.
- To engage with local communities through representative membership at locality Steering Groups and user forums to develop the locality model in response to local need.

- To implement the Barnet Creative Spaces Project (funded through the Home Office Trusted Relationships grant) and align intelligence and interventions for vulnerable adolescents.
- To deliver preventative programmes through early years settings, primary and secondary schools, aimed at prevention and diversion from exploitation, criminality and violence.
- To develop and embed a traded services model for alternative education and Duke of Edinburgh Awards.
- Work with the performance and systems team to develop reporting/dashboard for the hubs that includes universal plus work.

MASH

Summary

The Ofsted SIF inspection found that not all children receive the right help at the right time. Thresholds were not consistently applied resulting in delays for children and in some cases left risk unassessed for too long. Ofsted completed a monitoring visit in November 2017, and during this visit inspectors acknowledged that senior leaders understand the improvements required to raise the standard of social work practice. They noted that the pace of change has been consistent and focussed, with evidence that Barnet has started to make progress to improve services for children and young people, including:

- increased use of, and findings from, quality assurance activities, that are verified by Barnet's improvement partner Essex County Council;
- positive staff morale, with staff reporting that they have benefited from increased training, staff conferences and communications from senior leaders;
- structural changes within the MASH, including additional levels of staffing including business support, which has increased capacity, and in turn, improved and consolidated partnership working;
- improved application of thresholds and management oversight in the MASH and Intervention and Planning Teams

Improvements in the MASH were noted by Ofsted in the January Monitoring Visit to have been consolidated, with staff increasingly confident in their roles, and systems and processes to manage workflow better aligned. This has meant that arrangements for signposting cases to Early Help services are appropriate for children and their families. The next monitoring visit in November 2018 will once again focus on the front door, with audit activity currently in process to assist in forming a narrative.

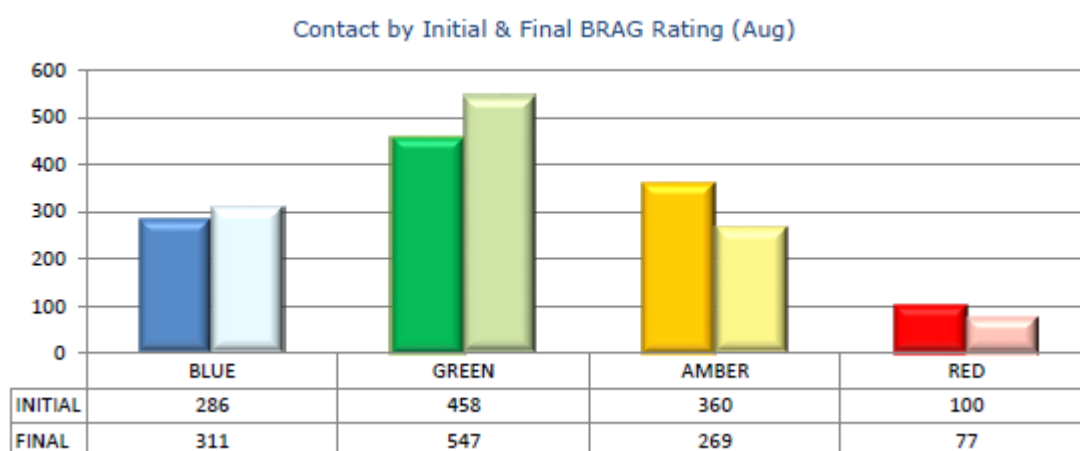
The MASH has strengthened consistency in decision making which has been supported by the development of clear operational protocols, practice standards and a revised continuum of help and support that has been agreed by the multi-agency partnership.

The MASH Steering Group is providing a forum for the multi-agency partnership to examine the effectiveness of operational arrangements and referral data and trends, which is enabling targeted threshold discussions with referring agencies. As a result, the MASH team have improved professional relationships with key stakeholders and referrers, which is strengthened by putting in allocated links to the Early Help Panel, MARAC, MAPPA, and a range of local adult and community

based services. Positive feedback has been received from schools, community providers and health services about the improvements in the service.

Strengths and achievements

- Continued evidence of better working relationships with partners including more confidence and challenge in these relationships. We have concentrated on identifying who our referrers are and where more support and an understanding of the MASH is needed. Providing feedback to referrers is now embedded practice in the MASH.
- Audits provide evidence of more robust decision making and curiosity in MASH. There is an improved analysis of contacts underpinned with signs of safety. Analysis of performance information has shown that decision making thresholds in MASH have improved. This is evidenced in the comparative data between Initial and Final BRAG ratings which remains low.
- Close collaboration and co-location of MASH social workers within Barnet Homes to ensure homeless 16/17 year olds are jointly assessed and/or diverted to Early Help provision for targeted support at home
- Improved understanding across the partnership of the services available at universal, universal plus, targeted and statutory levels, which is supporting an improvement in the quality of referrals to the service.
- The daily tracker has been embedded for Team Managers to track the timeliness of work completed by Social Workers. This is monitored daily by management and data shows that this has had a clear positive impact on performance.



Focus for the year ahead

- Monitor the increase in contacts to MASH and the management of this within the current staffing levels. This and other areas of focus link to the Improvement Plan themes 'systems leadership for children', 'enhancing practice leadership for children' and 'right interventions, right time (thresholds)'.
- Further monitoring of application of threshold in MASH, and how this contributes to achieving the right outcome of our children and their families. This will include developing a service user feedback process.

- Build a renewed interface between the MASH and newly implemented 0-19 Locality Based Hubs that strengthens understanding of the full range of resources available within Early Help.
- Analysis and further monitoring of the information gathering visits undertaken in DATS, ensuring that learning from this feeds in to learning and development of the MASH.

Duty and Assessment

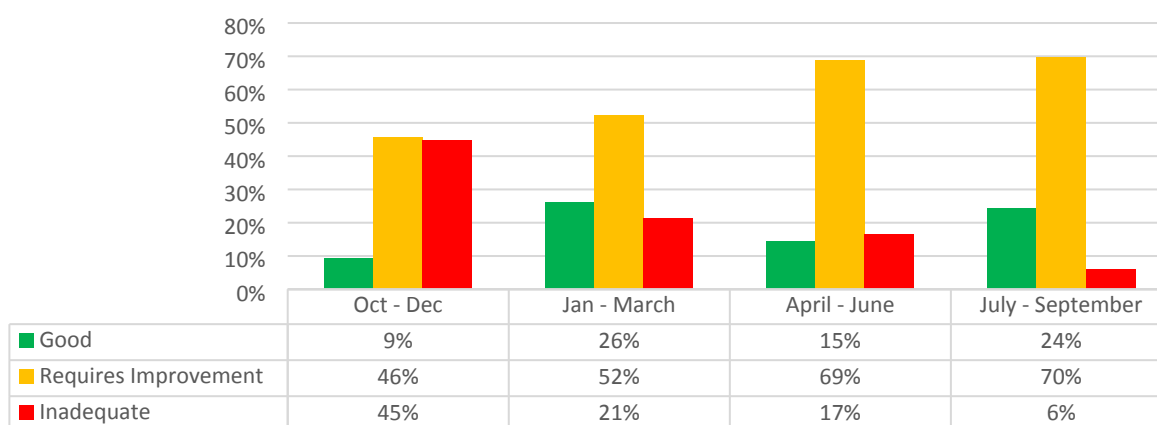
Summary

Improving the quality of assessments was identified by Ofsted as a recommendation following the full inspection in 2017. Poor quality assessments did not effectively analyse risk of harm and lead to reassessment and poor planning. Too many children were reassessed meaning they drifted in the system and were delayed in receiving intervention. This had an adverse effect on their outcomes. Over the past year, there have been a number changes within the Duty & Assessment Service to improve the quality and timeliness of assessments, aided by additional social work and management capacity to assist with throughput of the high volume of cases held within the teams. . An assessment 'double lock' was introduced using the additional management capacity to quality assure assessments. This ensured that assessment quality was not further compromised whilst case volume was higher.

In consultation with Essex County Council, information gathering visits were introduced within the Duty & Assessment Teams where families met the threshold for a statutory response based on referral information. The visits have ensured that children are seen by social work professionals and are safe and well, and has also determined whether a statutory assessment is required to meet the child's needs. The visits have enabled families to swiftly exit from statutory services into targeted and early help provision, thereby reducing unnecessary scrutiny in their lives.

Case numbers at manageable levels has released additional capacity of social workers and managers and the quality of work held within the service has been steadily improving. There is increasing stability in the workforce either through permanent staff or a cohort of agency social workers who have remained committed to Barnet.

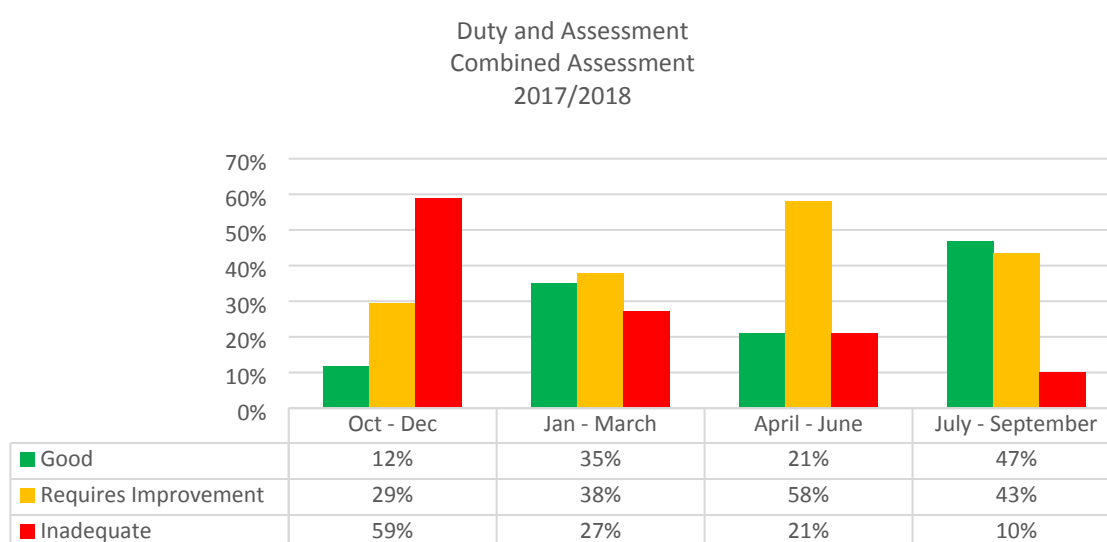
Duty and Assessment Overall Gradings 2017-2018



The quality of practice audited in the combined assessment domain in the chart below shows a significant improvement in the quality of assessment from the end of year position in 2017 to the audit grades reported across July – September 2018; the graph below evidences a movement from 12% of assessments graded as Good to 47% over the period.

The Duty & Assessment Teams are more consistently using evidencing management oversight as well as using Signs of Safety tools to assess and analyse risk and to meaningfully engage children in their assessments. 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.

Pre-birth assessment and planning needs to be smarter; a joint Health & Family Services Protocol for unborn children has recently been launched providing guidance to health and family services professionals on practice expectations, more recent audits of work with unborn children is demonstrating a positive shift in practice as a result.

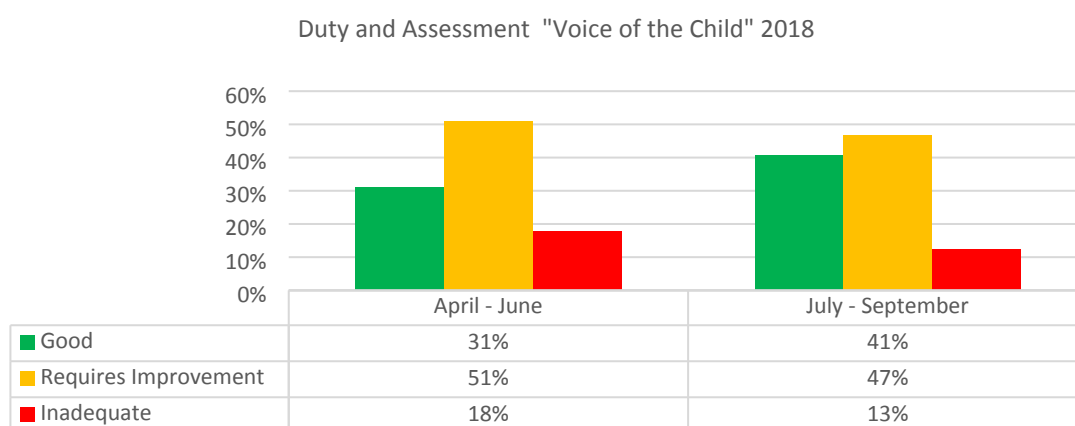


The consistency of statutory partner contributions to Strategy Discussions is better; flexible communication approaches and continued focus discussion in partnership forums is improving dialogue for managing, embedding and monitoring required practice changes. In their January Ofsted visit, inspectors noted that strategy discussions are timely and that there had been improvements in police attendance – our data now shows 100% police attendance and high levels of attendance from both health and education colleagues.

Strengths and achievements

- The service is maintaining manageable caseloads and is providing timely responses to children following the reintroduction of 'business as usual' staffing levels.
- The quality of assessment is improving.

- Staff morale is good.
- There are now 3 permanent, confident and competent Team Managers who are making a positive contribution to the improvements needed in the service; the 4th post was recently vacated and is filled by a strong interim manager who is committed to joining the permanent workforce.
- The 'grow your own' approach to recruitment and retention has enabled newly qualified social workers appointed last year to progress into vacant social work posts this year.
- The Practice Development Workers are providing valuable and welcomed individualised and team support which is creating positive practice change.
- Embedding integrated Clinical Service will support greater join up of social work and clinical assessments/interventions provided to children and their families. The integrated model provides opportunities for consultation and training that will enhance social workers skills and knowledge in working with vulnerable children and families.
- Inspectors commented on improvements in the involvement of children in their assessments evidenced by children contributing their views, aspirations and feelings; this has been tracked through audit activity.



Focus for the year ahead

- Our focus for the year ahead falls under the improvement themes of 'enhancing practice leadership for children', 'right interventions, right time (thresholds)', 'strengthening assessment for children', and 'strengthening planning for children'.
- Recruitment and retention of good quality social work staff, building on the 'grow your own' approach which is proving successful.
- Achieving consistently good quality assessments across all domains of audited practice.
- Embed Joint Protocol for Unborn Children to ensure consistently timely and effective pre-birth assessment and planning
- Ofsted Monitoring Visit in April evidenced that the quality of assessments remains variable and not all assessments routinely explore parental capacity or analyse historical issues within families to inform understanding and planning.
- Ensure targeted use of Practice Development Workers to build knowledge and skills within the Duty & Assessment workforce in accordance with Practice Standards.

- Monitoring the effectiveness of the new integrated Clinical Service in joining up social work and clinical assessments/interventions, and in enhancing social workers' knowledge and skills.

Intervention and Planning

Summary

Following the Ofsted inspection in 2017, we knew that we needed to improve poor planning that was not focussed on outcomes and was unresponsive when children's circumstances changed. We wanted to see more child-centred planning, and plans that achieved best outcomes, tackling drift and delay.

The Intervention & Planning Service leads on Children in Need, Child Protection, PLO/Pre-Proceedings and short term Looked After Children episodes where the plan is for the child to return home.

The Team Managers in the service have been at the core of focussed improvement activity in the service with an emphasis on improving the quality of management oversight and supervision of cases in order to drive up the quality and timeliness of planning and outcome focused intervention activities. This work remains an area of on-going focus

Alongside the Practice Development Workers, practitioners are starting to develop stronger skills in undertaking direct work with children. This has been evidenced in clearer recording that reflects the voice of the child and their lived experience. Structures in place for vulnerable adolescents has enabled strengthened risk assessment and recognition of vulnerability which creates a coordinated and robust safeguarding response. The Ofsted visit focussing on vulnerable adolescents noted that:

“For vulnerable adolescents at high risk of exploitation, regular and effective strategic multi-agency sexual exploitation (MASE) meetings and operational ‘Pre-MASE’ meetings provide effective scrutiny, advice and guidance to multi-agency partners and social workers. This is leading to improved safeguarding practice. Recent plans to broaden the scope of these meetings to become a vulnerable adolescent risk panel is positive.”

With increased management oversight, thresholds for child protection are becoming better understood and this is leading to a higher volume of children subject to Child Protection Plans. Multi-agency audits reflect stronger care planning arrangements for children subject to Child Protection Plans with evidence of multi-agency input. The Conference and Reviewing Officers have developed appropriate mechanisms for challenge and recently improved systems for escalation are beginning to have a positive impact on the effectiveness of casework

A dedicated post to track PLO and Court Proceedings has led to more timely and robust decision making to enter and exit pre-proceedings PLO and/or enter into Care Proceedings. This is leading to more timely conclusions and better longer-term planning for children. Children in care proceedings are also tracked through Permanency Tracker Meetings to ensure their journey towards permanency is timely and transitions are smooth, tackling historic issues of drift and delay.

A Child in Need Panel was established to improve management oversight of children subject to Child in Need Plans; practice in this area has been weaker and remains an on-going area of improvement focus. The Panel reviews all Child in Need Plans that have been open for six months or longer to ensure: targets for change are SMART; safeguarding concerns are escalated to Child Protection or Public Law Outline when change is not evident, and; children and families are stepped down to targeted and universal early help support when their circumstances improve.

Strengths and achievements

- Audits' evidence of stronger practice for children subject to Child Protection Plans and Looked After Children are enabling focused and targeted interventions from the Practice Development Workers.
- Children's diverse backgrounds and needs are being better considered with the introduction of identity and diversity workshops facilitated by the Practice Development Workers.
- The Practice Standards are setting clear expectations for staff.
- The April 2018 Ofsted Monitoring Visit found that practice for children at risk of Child Sexual Exploitation is well embedded operationally and strategically. Inspectors also found improving progress in the quality of social work practice. Immediate risks for almost all children are adequately addressed. Less case work was of an inadequate standard than on previous monitoring visits, and most children were being appropriately safeguarded.
- The CiN and Transfer Panels are maintaining oversight of throughput and ensuring that thresholds for interventions are applied consistently.
- Performance data is helping to identify those teams where recording and practice is weaker, allowing for targeted intervention and greater scrutiny of practice related issues.
- The service is recruiting stronger managers who understand what good looks like and who are committed to driving better practice in their teams.

Focus for the year ahead

- Our focus for the year ahead falls under the improvement theme 'strengthening planning for children', along with 'systems leadership for children' and 'enhancing practice leadership for children'.
- Embedding reflective supervision and improved management oversight that effectively drives care planning that leads to change for children. Team Managers have been provided with supervision training and a large number have started the Graduate Certificate in Systemic Practice this year.
- Practice Development Workers and the Integrated Clinical Service are supporting and co-facilitating group supervision using Signs of Safety and systemic practice tools.
- The quality of care planning for Children in Need will be under continued scrutiny to improve to ensure that care planning drives timely change for children and their families.
- Practice development days and workshops focusing on equipping practitioners with direct work skills are being delivered to strengthen and develop practice, and to equip the workforce with the skills they need to intervene effectively
- Scrutiny and monitoring of caseloads to ensure that cases are closed, stepped down or progressed to permanency without delay.

- Strengthened pre-proceedings assessment frameworks by better mobilising existing resources to ensure that only those children that require their planning arrangements to be agreed in court enter into proceedings
- Front loading assessments to strengthen analysis and planning requirements for children who are entering into proceedings, which will reduce the court being used as a framework for assessment and further ensure court time care proceedings timescales are met.

Children in Care

Summary

OFSTED found services to looked after children to be inadequate in April 2017. Since the Ofsted inspection the leadership and management of the service was revised and three smaller Children in Care Teams were established. Performance management has been strengthened to ensure social work practice for all children in care improves at pace.

Ofsted noted in their monitoring visit letter in August that:

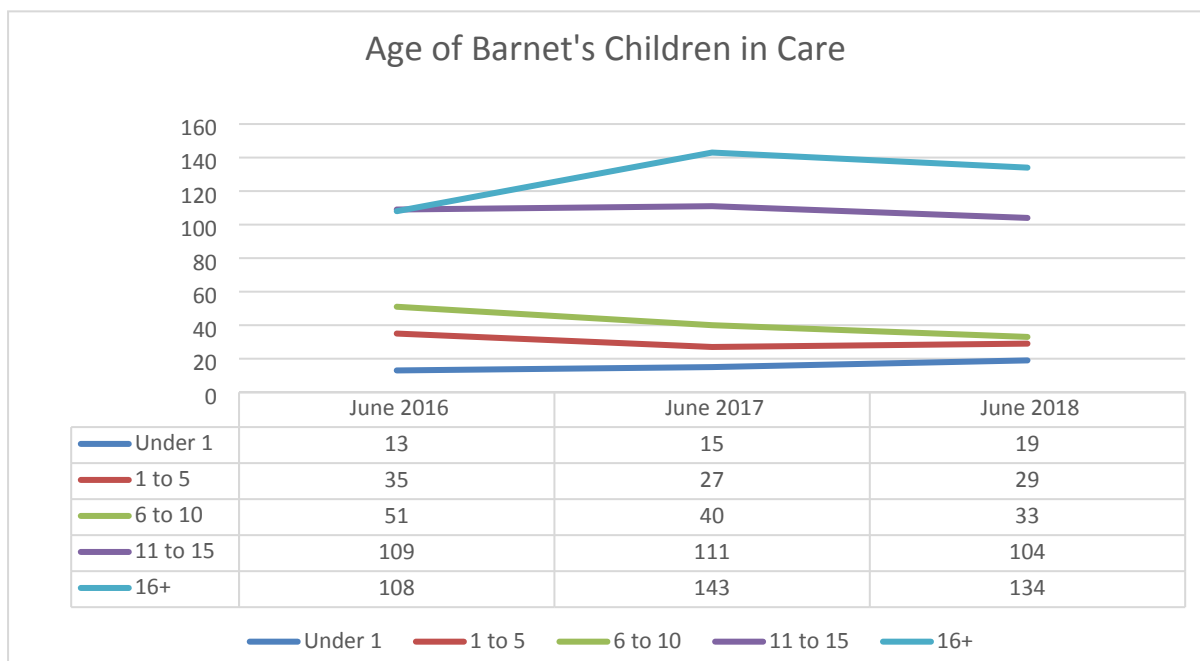
“Managers have made considerable progress in widely embedding the quality assurance framework and particularly the use of audits for children looked after. This is making a difference and strengthening practice. Changes have been made to improve processes and practice. These changes have tightened management oversight and decision-making for children who need permanence, including the assessment and support for connected carers.”

“Inspectors found a stronger core of improved practice, with children seen to be appropriately looked after, and their needs for permanence and stability being mostly met. Child centred practice is beginning to embed, and this is making a positive difference to the quality of social work practice and the understanding of children’s lived experiences, informed by their views.”

The Corporate Parenting Pledge is comprised of 5 themes:

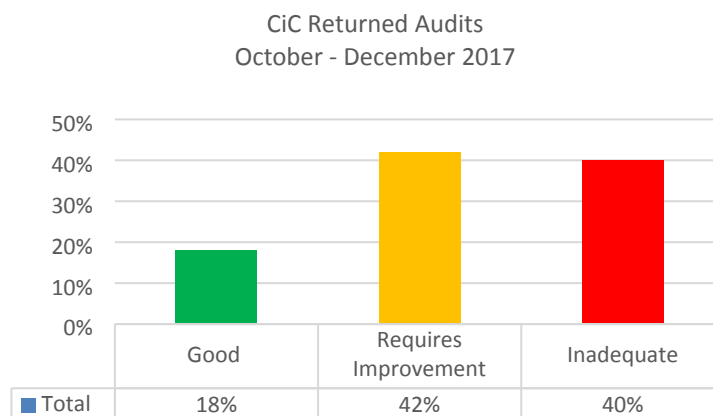
1. Good Education,
2. Sense of Belonging,
3. Keeping Healthy,
4. Staying Safe and
5. Championing Needs.

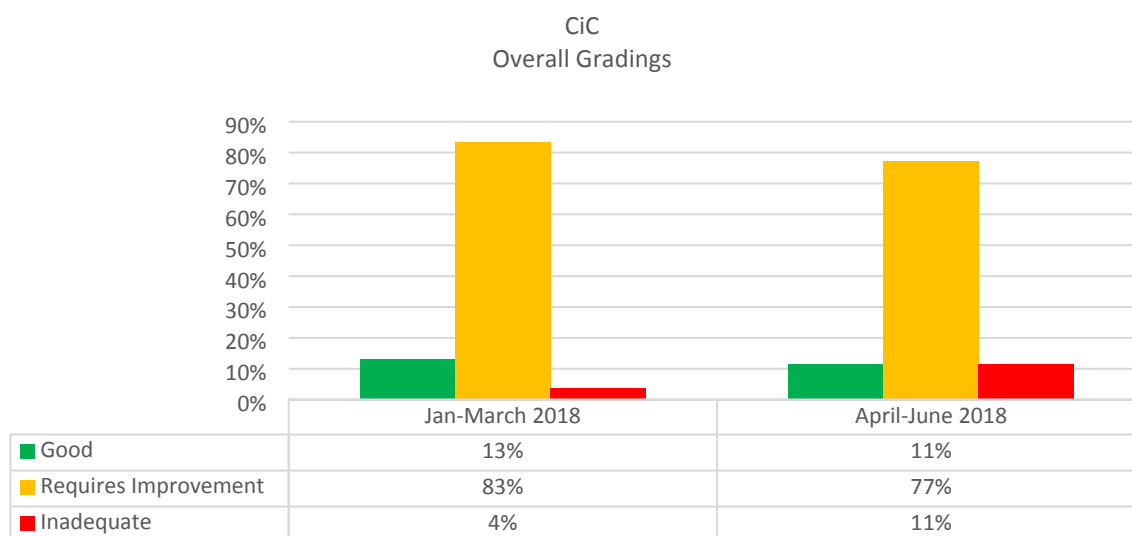
Within Family Services, the Pledge and the wider Corporate Parenting Plan is delivered by the Corporate Parenting Officers Group. This multi-agency group includes: Children’s Social Care, Health, Education (16+) & the Virtual School, Advocacy service, Housing, Voice of the Child Service, the IRO service, and young people, and delivers an action plan which is aligned to the Pledge themes and includes young people in the monthly scrutiny and review of the plan.



Strengths and achievements

- The re-aligned corporate parenting advisory panel is more effective at enabling Members to hear from, and engage with, children and young people. The refreshed terms of reference helps young people to be more effectively part of the conversations and planning within corporate parenting. 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 children in planning and consultation.
- The Voice of the child within plans and assessments is improving and social workers are better able to express and communicate the views and feelings of the child on file and within meetings.
- Audit activity over the last year is evidencing a marked improvement in practice. There has been a shift from having 40% inadequate audits in October 2017 to 8% inadequate and 80% requires improvement to be good in June 2018. The audits completed in September for looked after children were all graded good however this was a very small sample and we know further work on consistency of practice is required.





- The introduction of 'in house' clinical support provided by 3 clinicians (2 are in post) dedicated to our children. The practice development worker and the addition of a new assistant head of service have all contributed to the renewed enthusiasm and child focus practice.
- Improvement in educational attainment for young people in care in certain key stages, and in progress 8 figures.
- Social workers are demonstrating confidence in their direct work with children within their care arrangements, whilst visits to children are more purposeful and timely, with better planning on complex cases in relation to placement type and support.
- Embedding stronger permanency planning through the newly established Permanency Tracking Meeting is ensuring smart and timely planning for children.
- The health outcomes for looked after children has consistently improved with initial health assessments taking place more often within the first 28 days of being in care (approx. 90%). All under 9 year olds are assessed by a paediatrician as part of the initial assessment and where possible UASC are seen by paediatricians or are seen by the local GP whose allotted time has been increased for these assessments.
- The stability of placements for the children who have been in care for 2.5 years has improved from 58 % of children being in the same placement for 2 years to 70% of children.
- OFSTED noted that *"Placement choice for children is improving with the positive recruitment of more foster carers"*
- Tackled more effectively an over tolerance of risk in young people going missing through the implementation of the SEAM approach
- The assessment process for privately fostered children has been streamlined and strengthened. All privately fostered children are held within children in care by a dedicated social worker and the awareness raising activity across the borough has increased through visits to schools, children centres and GP surgeries. A new media campaign is in the planning.

Focus for the year ahead

- Our focus for the year ahead falls under the improvement plan themes of 'enhancing practice leadership for children' and 'strengthening planning for children'.
- More work is needed to provide consistency across the service. The Permanency Tracking Meeting is seeking to identify children potentially in need of alternative care arrangements as early as possible so that alternative carers where needed, are ready to receive children at the earliest opportunity and unnecessary transitions are avoided through strong matching.
- Group supervision that will include all the key players in a child's life and the clinicians will collaborate to identify the appropriately supported, resilient and robust alternative family resources for children.
- Embedding the practice that now centres on the voice and needs of the child and further develops creative and innovative direct work with children and young people. Further improvement is needed in relation to the ongoing assessment and analysis of the child's experience and needs.
- Assessment of the child's needs, care plans, Pathway plans and reports for reviews are not consistently timely or of good enough quality, nor are they co-produced frequently enough. This is an area for improvement over the coming year.
- Embedding the new assessment approach for looked after children across the whole system that reflects children's changing needs and a responsive system around them.
- The child's journey through the system has necessary points of transition. Effective planning for transition and introducing leaving care to adolescents earlier, to improve the move to adulthood, is in progress.
- Audits of Children in Care show that approximately 70% of plans require improvement to be good, with smarter outcomes and stronger evidence of the IRO's footprint in the planning.
- Monitor the effectiveness of the new clinical services support, and Practice Development Workers.
- Ensure the newly constituted Corporate Parenting Advisory Panel continues to facilitate the engagement of Councillors, and that children and young people's voices are heard as part of the planning and decision-making process.

Fostering and Adoption

Summary

Whilst the Carer, Recruitment and Assessment Team (CRAT) met the target set for recruitment for the financial year of 2017/18, it must be noted that 80% of those approvals were presented to panel after Aug 2017. This was the point at which the responsibility of SGO assessments was transferred to frontline social work teams, which created the time and space for CRAT to focus on fostering recruitment - a previously neglected area within the service. Recruitment will continue and the managers are working with the communications team to devise and explore exciting and dynamic ways to recruit carers. Ofsted noted the impact of this work in their July 2018 monitoring visit, stating that "there are significantly more approved 'in-house' carers, and some foster carers who have transferred from independent fostering agencies to benefit from the support packages on offer in Barnet"

The CRAT has been expanded to provide social work teams with support in improving the quality of viability assessments and where necessary will complete Special Guardian Assessments.

Services to children requiring adoption was assessed as requiring improvement to be good in April 2017. The Adoption Team tracks children with a potential plan of adoption or long term fostering through the weekly permanency tracking meetings. This enables the Adoption Team manager to allocate children to a family finder at the earliest opportunity and always before the conclusion of care proceedings and the granting of a Placement Order/ Care Order. Currently the adoption scorecard shows that children with Placement Orders are matched without delay and that once the formal match is confirmed the children are placed within 20 days. The time between a child becoming looked after and being placed for adoption remains too long despite improved timescales on care proceedings and needs further analysis.

Since 2017 the numbers of children requiring adoptive placements has increased with 13 adoptions confirmed in 2017/18. The pool of available adopters was insufficient in the beginning of 2017 so an active recruitment campaign - in conjunction with two other boroughs within the North London Adoption Consortium - was undertaken aimed at BAME adopters and those willing to consider foster to adopt and sibling groups. The work with the North London Adoption and Fostering Consortium has provided positive opportunities for family finding for adoption and fostering. Since April, five children have been placed for adoption.

Strengths and Achievements

- More children are placed in in-house fostering arrangements local to Barnet.
- More long term fostering placements have been matched as permanent, enabling children to have a sense of stability into the future.
- More children have been adopted.
- More children are accessing support through the ASF due to the development of our clinical services.
- A refreshed Fostering and Adoption Panel has been established to drive improvements in quality of decision making.
- The 'More to Give' recruitment campaign launched in September 2017 is ongoing and is due to be reviewed in the coming months. The campaign has had a positive impact, resulting in a higher level of interest than previous campaigns, with increased website traffic, initial visits and 20 'Form F' assessments being undertaken. 22 new foster carers were approved directly from this campaign and it has continued to generate interest over the last year as campaign materials were refreshed and sent out across the borough on a regular basis.
- The recruitment team have a new more ambitious target of approving 10 supported lodgings providers who can assist in providing young people over the age of 16 with accommodation that supports them to independent living with additional care and training. The first supported lodging provider was approved by the Adoption and Fostering Panel in June. There is also the intention to recruit 5 families who can provide respite and link care to children with disabilities and two parent and child foster carers who can provide short term support to both the child and their parent for periods of assessment.
- The Foster Carer Recruitment and Assessment Team continue to deliver monthly the compulsory Skills to Foster course to prospective carers which is key to enabling timely

recruitment. The training is run in partnership with foster carers, care leavers and social workers.

- In 2017/18, 13 adopters were successfully approved and 14 are currently being assessed.
- The feedback from Ofsted on life story work has resulted in a more robust approach to developing the adoption life story books and to ensure the quality is consistently good for each child. Life story training has taken place and life story work is extended to include children in SGO placements and long term foster placements with additional capacity being added to the team.

Focus for the year ahead

- Our focus for the year ahead falls under the improvement plan themes of 'enhancing practice leadership for children' and 'strengthening planning for children'.
- We continue to need foster carers for adolescents, with complex needs, and will be updating the Placement Sufficiency Strategy in October 2018 to plan how this need can be met.
- To have sufficiency of foster placements, we need to recruit approximately 60 new foster carers.
- A further response to the shortfall in foster carers therefore, will be the undertaking of a travel Fellowship in August 2018 by a member of the Strategy and Insight Team. This research will specifically focus on foster carers for adolescents with complex needs, and aims to identify opportunities for learning around foster carer recruitment strategies and support used in France, Germany and Sweden.
- Permanency planning at the earliest opportunity for children at risk of coming into care and those looked after, will be the focus of senior management tracking, monitoring and challenge.
- The planning for regionalisation in North London is underway and will go live in July 2019. It will be hosted by Islington and the final business case will be delivered to the committees of the 6 boroughs in January 2019.
- Ensure the learning from the life story training is reflected in improved work with children in SGO placements and long term foster placements.
- Promoting information in relation to Private Fostering through partner agencies.
- Embedding arrangements for connected carers.

Onwards and Upwards

Summary

As at 31 August 2018 there were 239 Care Leavers aged 18 to 25 being supported by Barnet's Leaving Care Team, Onwards and Upwards. Of these 196 care leavers are under 21. As at 31 August 2018, 84% of care leavers had an up to date Pathway Plan, which refers to plans created or updated within the past 6 months; this compares to 79% in 2017.

The staff compliment in Onwards and Upwards has been expanded to ensure that the service can address the needs of 18 to 25 year olds. The Personal Advisors have had access to a variety of training that has enabled the creation of lead roles across aspects of the service i.e. mental health, UASC, financial matters. Young people now have open access to several drop in sessions at the Onwards and Upwards centre. These include sexual health, money matters, benefits advice and

careers advice. The Onwards and Upwards centre hosts regular social events to encourage interaction and social confidence in care leavers.

Strengths and Achievements

- An improved mental health service offer has been established in February 2018, to support care leavers with emotional or mental health difficulties. This support for care leavers is for those over the age of 18 who do not meet the threshold for adult mental health services. The service also aims to support staff that work with this cohort of young people, to enable them to work therapeutically. The service is part of a project with Terapia that provides psychotherapy to care leavers. This service will expand in the coming year as the need for the service has increased.
- Life story work, with the focus on the care leavers' life journey, is firmly embedded in the service and is having a positive impact on young people's emotional wellbeing as we are aware that mental health and life stories intersect. This entails a deep dive into the young person's file, having meetings and developing a timely plan of working through the information with the young person at their pace, with the necessary support and professional direct work in place. The learning from this work has been shared across Corporate Parenting.
- A new Homeless Protocol addresses the need for Barnet to ensure homeless 16 to 17 year olds are thoroughly assessed and offered appropriate, ongoing support to meet their needs by securing good quality, supported accommodation. The protocol includes a focused and personalised plan for each homeless young person, to help them manage independence and access training, education and employment. Some of these young people will qualify for leaving care services and working in partnership with Barnet Homes, has ensured that the young people continue to be housed appropriately.
- Council Tax exemption was agreed this year by Barnet Council which will exempt care leavers from paying council tax for the first 2 years for living independently. This will ensure that young people who choose to go on to higher education or who remain with their carers for a time are not disadvantaged.

Focus for the year ahead

- Our focus for the year ahead falls under the improvement plan themes of 'enhancing practice leadership for children' and 'strengthening planning for children'.
- The local offer is being developed for Barnet care leavers. An information booklet for care leavers is currently in circulation, which contains similar information, however, a full consultation exercise will be undertaken with young people to co-produce a new local offer document by the end of 2018.
- Ensuring Pathway Plans are developed with the young person, and take place early in the young person's life. It is the aim to ensure all 15 ½ year olds have a pathway plan agreed before their LAC reviews in their 16th year.
- A reduction of semi-independent placements to nil over the next 18 months by increasing staying put arrangements and developing supported lodgings in order to provide improved opportunities for independence learning and confidence building for young adults.
- Education, employment and training is in focus and all agencies involved with a young person will be expected to adopt a zero tolerance for NEET.

- Ensuring that the emotional and mental wellbeing of care leavers is assured through a collaborative approach with universal services and other specialist services.
- Changes to the way the leaving care personal advisors work are being introduced to ensure that we respond to young people's feedback on their experience of the service; to improve support around financial planning and tenancies, and; the timing of transition to independence and planning this with the young person.
- To ensure that the housing offer for young people is optimized for care leavers, the Housing Protocol is being updated. This followed multi-agency workshops that reviewed current practices and agreed a joint approach to ensuring early applications for housing and a good housing offer for young people.

0-25 Disabled Children's Service

Summary

Strengthening leadership and management capacity has been a priority for the service. The Team Manager is improving oversight of safeguarding issues across the service and is embedding more consistent supervision. In November 2017, there was a culture of focussing on support rather than safeguarding. Staff did not understand or respond appropriately to safeguarding issues. The current managers are skilled in this area and are providing clear, consistent direction. A Practice Lead has been appointed to ensure adequate case supervision. The management team are working extremely well together and staff report feeling supported with clear direction.

The quality of assessments has been poor. The social workers have various forums in which to think about their assessment such as supervision, group supervision, reflective practice sessions. There has been a significant improvement in C&F assessments being completed within timescales. During the Team Day in May, aspects of assessment were explored and improvements have been seen in how social workers explore issues of identity, inclusion of fathers and siblings.

All allocated cases were reviewed by the Head of Service and reclassified according to the level of need. We have introduced a new way of categorising CWD pathways in order to help staff understand the difference between safeguarding and support and to ensure each child is on the correct plan. This also ensures families have more effective assessments and can access support quicker. We developed 2 pathways: one for support (CWD1 and 2) and one for safeguarding (CWD3). CWD plans will be clear and show the complete multi-agency package.

Strengths and achievements

- The 0-25 service reorganised in September 2017. Since this time the staff group have become more settled and consistent in their approach. Practice has improved across children and adult cases and there is significantly better partnership working with Adult services, SEND and Health.
- The management team work together extremely well and are mutually supportive. There is a free flow of ideas and exchanges of knowledge and expertise. Morale is very good.
- There is a good skill mix across the team. They are highly committed to the children and young people and are motivated to learn.
- Quality Assurance Monitoring panel (QAM), where formerly only adult cases were discussed, has been changed to include children and renamed Disability Resource Panel (DRP). This has helped strengthen and developed workers' understanding of Child Protection and Disability.

- Regular pattern of 1-2-1 and group supervision is happening; the Practice Development Worker has held reflective practice sessions on individual and group basis. The Team Manager is embedding reflective practice supervisions. New multi-disciplinary group supervisions are being held and considered a very positive development.
- There is a better understanding of safeguarding within the service which means that children with disabilities are better protected through this service.
- The Team Manager is assisting with the EHCP audit process working with SEND and has joined a Task & Finish Group to help inform future audit activity. Regular 4R meetings are taking place since November 2017 to encourage learning from any inadequate audits.
- Multi-agency collaboration is stronger and partnership working with parents is developing with the aim to achieve effective co-production this year.
- The recommissioning of Short breaks provision has been launched and parent survey is currently receiving a positive response.
- Transition tracking has been strengthened by relaunching the multi-agency forum and this will work to unblock any transition difficulties across the child or young person's system.
- Joint funding arrangements are managed effectively and senior managers co-chair a panel at which funding decisions are considered and decided on.

Focus for the year ahead

- Our focus for the year ahead falls under the improvement plan themes of 'enhancing practice leadership for children' and 'strengthening planning for children'.
- Finalising all plans for every child and young person to ensure the right plan or packages are in place.
- Quality of practice remains a focus for this service which is being addressed through the practice development work.
- The database, which will hold details of all 0-25 clients from across the LCS and Mosaic systems and enable senior management to have a complete overview of every open 0-25 case, has not yet been completed due to difficulties in securing information from MOSAIC. The development needed for LCS to hold all the 0-25 case files is being explored.
- There are currently high levels of agency staff in the service, so permanent recruitment is a priority along with continuing to support staff in improving practice.
- Ensuring progress continues on the co-production of services with parents and partner agencies.
- Strengthening links with Health colleagues to ensure appropriate CHC and CC assessments for young adults and children as necessary.
- By the end of 2018 this service will have converted the agency staff to permanent employees for all established posts.

Conclusion

The Barnet self-evaluation sets out what we know about the quality and impact of social work practice from our quality assurance, performance management and insight work. We have also used the reflections and evidence collected from our preparation for, and OFSTED completion, of four monitoring visits.

From this we consider that we know ourselves. Social work services to children in Barnet are improving and we are consolidating those improvements at a considered and sustainable pace.

More needs to be done to be assured that all children and young people are benefiting from consistently good services and our updated Improvement Plan, leadership, focus and drive will ensure we achieve that aim.